



**H.E. Samdech Akkak Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen,
The Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia**

Dear His Excellency,

We, the Rivers Coalition in Cambodia (RCC), write to you to express our grave concerns regarding the proposed Don Sahong Dam, located in Khone Falls, less than two kilometers from the Lao-Cambodia border. If built, the Don Sahong dam would create a non-passable barrier across the Hou Sahong channel, recognized by fishery experts as the main channel in Khone Falls which is passable year-round (Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in [p. 31&94]). Fish migration across Khone Falls is critical to the life cycles of many fish species in the Mekong, and building a dam across the Hou Sahong will severely negatively affect the productivity of inland fisheries upon which the Cambodian economy and people heavily depend.

As the recent study by IFReDI highlights changes in availability of inland fisheries is likely to have major negative impacts on food and nutrition security and public health, which in turn decreases the likelihood of Cambodia achieving their Millennium Development Goal commitments. .

It is of great concern to us that the project's cumulative impact assessment downplays the impacts on Cambodia, claiming that the dam would not have significant cumulative impacts on Mekong River flows, fish migration or fisheries. This assessment goes against available scientific evidence which highlights the serious risks that the project poses for fisheries and livelihoods of people in the Lower Mekong Basin, including Cambodia. The mitigation measures proposed by the dam developer are untested and unproven and have never successfully been used in the Mekong basin or any other tropical river, and far from guarantee any success.

Moreover, the Government of Laos is now claiming that the Don Sahong Dam is not located on Mekong mainstream, and that it only needs to provide 'prior notification' rather than engage in prior consultation process with neighbouring countries. Don Sahong is a mainstream dam which will clearly have transboundary impacts being located only two kilometres from the Lao-Cambodia border. As such, the Don Sahong dam must undergo 'prior consultation' according to the Procedures on Notification, Prior Consultation and Agreement (PNPCA) under the 1995 Mekong Agreement. This is consistent with the findings of the 2007 review of Don Sahong EIA conducted by the MRC Secretariat, which stated that the project is subject to 'prior consultation'.

To date, there has been no genuine effort to meaningfully consult Cambodian government authorities or affected communities downstream in Cambodia. The cumulative impact assessment admits that "an official public consultation or other meeting to inform concerned authorities about the DSHPP ([Don Sahong] was not carried out [p.35])." Given the serious risks that the Don Sahong poses to Cambodia, potentially affected communities, Cambodian authorities and other Cambodian actors must have a say in decisions over the project. Furthermore, given the gaps in the cumulative impact assessment, there is also a need to undertake a comprehensive and participatory transboundary impact assessment.

We appreciate that the Cambodian National Mekong Committee has already called for the Don Sahong Dam to undergo ‘prior consultation’. The risks are too high for the project to proceed without due consideration to impacts on Cambodia.

We understand that a special meeting of MRC Joint Committee will take place in Vientiane on Tuesday 14 January to discuss the Don Sahong Dam. At this meeting, we request the Cambodian Government to:

- Urge the Government of Laos to suspend the Don Sahong Dam and respect the Mekong Agreement by submitting the Don Sahong Dam to ‘prior consultation’
- Request the MRC Secretariat to conduct independent reviews of Don Sahong project
- Ensure that a comprehensive transboundary impact assessment is undertaken, which takes into account the views of communities and other stakeholders in Cambodia
- Call for a moratorium on all mainstream dams while the Joint Platform reviews, clarifies, and resolves existing shortcomings in the MRC consultation procedure, to reach consensus agreement on its interpretation through regional-level decision-making based on the principles of transparency and full participation of all stakeholders.

Thus, we, **Rivers Coalition in Cambodia (RCC)**, urge His Excellency to demand the immediate cancellation of the Don Sahong Dam and moratorium on decisions over other mainstream projects for the overall benefit of people throughout Cambodia and the Mekong region.

Please, Samdech, accept our highest esteem.

Phnom Penh, Date: 10th January 2014

Representatives: Rivers Coalition in Cambodia:

The NGO Forum on Cambodia (NGOF)

3S Rivers Protection Network (3SPN)

Fisheries Action Coalition Team (FACT)

Culture and Environment Preservation Association (CEPA)

My Village Organization (Mvi)

Cambodian Volunteers for Society (CVS)

Save Vulnerables Cambodia (SVC)

Community Economy Development (CED)

Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)

Khmer Farmer’s Association (KFA)

Northeast Rural Development Organization (NRD)

Ponlok Khmer

Mlub Prumvihearhor Center

Enviromental Cooperation and Tourism Organization (CETO)

World Wild fund for Nature (WWF-Cambodia)

Cc:

- Cambodia National Mekong Committee (CNMC)
- Tonle Sap Authority
- Ministry of Environment (MoE)
- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (MAFF)
- Ministry of Mines and Energy (MoME)
- Ministry of Tourism (MoT)