

## **Social Assessment<sup>1</sup>**

Attachment to “Enhancing Civil Society Capacities to Work on Biodiversity, Communities, and Livelihoods in Regional Networks Across Major Tributaries in the Lower Mekong River Basin” submitted to CEPF

Mekong Watch

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### 1. Indigenous Peoples in the project area

Appendix 1 shows Indigenous Peoples and other socially vulnerable groups known in the project area. The information is based on the following sources, as well as Mekong Watch’s experiences of working in the area:

- 1) Asian Development Bank. 2002. *Indigenous Peoples/ethnic minorities and poverty reduction: Cambodia*. Manila, the Philippines, ADB.
- 2) Lewis, M. Paul, Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig (eds.). 2013. *Ethnologue: Languages of the world, Seventeenth edition*. Dallas, Texas: SIL International. <http://www.ethnologue.com>.
- 3) Meach Mean. 2008. Language, culture, and development in northeastern Cambodia. A presentation given at the Institute for Language and Culture for Rural Development, Mahidol University at Salaya, Nakhorn Pathom, Thailand.
- 4) Sugita Rena. 2008. *Voice from the water: Communities’ life threatened by dams*. Tokyo, Japan: Mekong Watch (in Japanese). [http://www.mekongwatch.org/PDF/watervoice\\_full.pdf](http://www.mekongwatch.org/PDF/watervoice_full.pdf)

A figure in parentheses next to a group’s name gives an estimated population of the group. A group name highlighted in red indicates the location where the largest population of the group live.

The most significant feature of the area, viewed from the goal of the project, is that many communities, especially those that are living along the Sesan and Srepok Rivers, have been severely affected by hydropower development upstream in Vietnam since mid 1990s, and restricted in their access to local natural resources and biodiversity. More

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<sup>1</sup> This document is based on “Policy Requirements” in *CEPF Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework*, pages 3-10  
[http://www.cepf.net/Documents/CEPF\\_planning\\_framework.pdf](http://www.cepf.net/Documents/CEPF_planning_framework.pdf)

recently, the river basin is being threatened by hydropower projects inside Cambodia, as well as on Mekong mainstream. Many indigenous communities through assistance from Cambodian and regional/international NGOs formed the Sesan Protection Network (SPN) in 2001 to protect their life, livelihoods, and access to Mekong's biodiversity and natural resources. SPN was expanded into the Sesan-Srepok-Sekong Protection Network (3SPN)<sup>2</sup> in 2005. The network aims to work with all 74 villages along the Sesan and Srepok Rivers and represents over 70,000 villagers in seven Indigenous Peoples groups in the river basin. 3SPN is now trying to outreach communities living along the Sekong River, too.

## 2. Expected positive and negative impacts of the project

The project is designed, first and foremost, to give high recognition to the biodiversity and natural resources in the Mekong River Basin, which Indigenous Peoples in the 3S area depend on, as well as to their traditional and sustainable ways to utilize and manage them. The project also aims to strengthen indigenous communities' capacities to carry out research, networking, and advocacy activities increasingly independently to ensure that their views and concerns are reflected upon decision-making processes relating to development, especially hydropower projects. Furthermore, the project's ultimate goal is to make sure that development will not harm Mekong's biodiversity and natural resources, as well as Indigenous Peoples who rely on them, in any irreversible way. More specifically, Component 1 of the project helps document Indigenous Peoples' knowledge and wisdom relating to Mekong's biodiversity and natural resources, especially fish, as well as their utilization and management. Component 2 assists Indigenous People in working with other CSOs in Cambodia as well as regionally and internationally, so that they can learn from others and their voice is enhanced. Component 3 provides Indigenous Peoples with opportunities to communicate their views and concerns to key actors to influence decision-making processes.

As such, the project is expected to produce few or no negative impacts to Indigenous Peoples. At the same time, the project does deal with sensitive and divisive issues and may unwittingly contribute to conflicts among Indigenous Peoples. This might dis-empower them contrary to the project's goal. For instance, the project may provide Indigenous Peoples with analysis on hydropower development, which to some may not be readily acceptable, as it appears to be over-critical about the government's plans and

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<sup>2</sup> For more details about 3SPN, see: <http://www.3spn.org/>

policies. Dealing with individual hydropower projects may come into conflict with interest enjoyed by powerful and/or influential figures in society. Resettlement and compensation procedures, as a result of hydropower construction, can be very complicated, too. We may help Indigenous Peoples receive just and fair compensation. However, unless we do so cautiously, our involvement may produce feelings of unfairness or dissatisfaction, whether true or merely perceived, among some members of affected communities, which may lead to community disintegration. Another concern is, while Mekong Watch needs to work with 3SPN and local communities very closely in the proposed activities, if we help them too much, especially at micro-management levels, we might make them over-dependent on us, and they will not be able to work for themselves. This also goes against the project's goal.

### 3. Free, prior, and informed consultations

Mekong Watch has been implementing capacity building activities in the 3S area since 2011 in close collaboration with 3SPN. Our field-based staff in Banlung, Ratanakiri uses 3SPN's office space and works with its staff members, including representatives from Indigenous Peoples, on a daily basis. We have had discussions and obtained prior consent from 3SPN every time there is a new activity, especially ones carried out in and with local communities. Such activities have included production of documentaries and other materials (e.g., video programs and briefing papers), holding community workshops for awareness-building (e.g., film shows), and using various policies for advocacy purposes (e.g., environmental and social guidelines of the Japan Bank for International Cooperation). Most of the activities proposed in the project are similar to those that have been carried out in the past two and a half years, especially in their objectives. Besides, we sought 3SPN's advice and comments on basic concepts of the project before submitting a Letter of Inquiry to CEPF. After we were told to submit a full proposal, we consulted with local communities on the project's activities. We also shared detailed designs of the project with 3SPN and asked for their comments. In short, the project has gained broad consensus from Indigenous People in the 3S River Basin (See also the attached support letter from 3SPN).

### 4. Measures to avoid adverse impacts and provide culturally appropriate benefits

Mekong Watch will continue to work with 3SPM and local Indigenous Peoples on a day-to-day basis, particularly through our field-based staff, to ensure that the project will not cause negative impacts to them. The project supervisor will also visit the 3S area regularly and ask both 3SPN staff and community members if the project is benefiting

them. The project supervisor will share and discuss any feedback with the field-based staff to improve the project, if necessary. All the project's products, such as video programs, recorded narratives, advocacy tools, and other publications, are designed to be accessible to Indigenous Peoples and useful in their own research, networking, and advocacy activities, as they are made, translated, and subtitled at least in Khmer. Documentary and other visual materials are also particularly beneficial to those with limited educational backgrounds and low literacy skills.

#### 5. Monitoring measures

Mekong Watch will submit a compliance report every six months to CEPF. The report will also be shared with 3SPN and Mekong Watch's board members, and discussed if the project's activities are proceeding in accordance with CEPF's safeguard policies and contributing to Indigenous Peoples' empowerment. We will also discuss the project's progress, impacts, and compliance with Mekong Watch's other (part-time) staff members, who are not directly involved with the project, during our semi-annual internal evaluation. We will consult with 3SPN and our board if the project's monitoring measures themselves are functioning effectively, too.

#### 6. Grievance procedures

At the beginning and throughout the project, Mekong Watch will provide Indigenous Peoples and other vulnerable groups in the project area, including 3SPN staff, with the following information at every opportunity, including community meetings and publications:

- 1) Names and contact information (i.e., e-mail address and mobile telephone numbers) of the two staff directly in charge of the project components in Cambodia;
- 2) A contact person on the board (to be decided in March);
- 3) CEPF contact information;
- 4) The project's requirement to comply with CEPF safeguard standards on Indigenous Peoples, as well as the standards in writing;
- 5) Grievance procedures: A complainant can send a grievance to the project staff first, who will respond in writing in no later than 15 days. If the complainant is not satisfied, she/he can contact Mekong Watch's board member and/or CEPF.
- 6) A complaint, as well as how it has been handled, is recorded in a six month compliance monitoring report, unless the complainant requests not to do so. A monitoring report is shared with 3SPN, Mekong Watch's board members, and CEPF;

and

- 7) If Mekong Watch, after consulting with 3SPN, finds that disclosing any part of the above information, for instance, the project staff's name and/or contact information, on a particular occasion is not desirable for the staff's security, we may instead disclose general organizational contact information to Indigenous Peoples.