

CEPF Final Project Completion Report

Organization Legal Name	<i>International Rivers Network</i>
Project Title	Protecting the Mekong River's Critical Ecosystem and Biodiversity from Hydropower Development
CEPF GEM No.	64043
Date of Report	30 April 2016
Report Author	Kate Ross and Grace Mang
Author Contact Information	kross@internationalrivers.org , grace@internationalrivers.org

CEPF Region: Indo-Burma

Strategic Direction: 6. Engage key actors in mainstreaming biodiversity, communities and livelihoods into development planning the priority corridors.

Grant Amount: \$200000.00

Project Dates: 2014/3/1 – 2016/2/29

1. Implementation Partners for this Project

(list each partner and explain how they were involved in the project)

Our key partner group is the Save the Mekong Coalition. International Rivers has worked closely with a broad range of partner organizations from throughout the Mekong region in developing the work plans and strategies carried out in this grant through regular consultation and coordination, meetings, updates, strategy discussions and occasional re-granting opportunities.

During the project period, we had a strong engagement with Thai communities living along the Mekong River and Pianporn Deetes, our Thailand Campaign Coordinator continues to help coordinate the Thai Network of Eight Provinces.

We continue to seek strategic advice from other international conservation groups, including WWF, Conservation International and Greenpeace (with respect to sustainable energy solutions for the region), and experts in the region and despite the challenge of persuading experts to speak publicly about the projects we continue to have trusted relationships within these networks that allows us to share information and gain useful knowledge about the mainstream dam projects.

2. Describe how your project has contributed to the implementation of the CEPF ecosystem profile

International Rivers contributed to the implementation of CEPF's Indo-Burma ecosystem profile (strategies 6.1, 6.2, 6.4) by engaging key actors in mainstreaming biodiversity, communities and livelihoods into development planning in the Mekong River Basin.

During the three year project period, we have provided technical support, capacity-building, research and strategic analysis to civil society groups as well as decision-makers in the Mekong region to analyze Mekong mainstream dam plans, and evaluate their impact on the river's fisheries and other key ecosystem services provided by the Mekong River and its tributaries. A key component of the project has been to conduct targeted outreach to local people, journalists and decision-makers, including governmental officials, donors and staff of the Mekong River Commission in order to educate them about the impacts of planned Mekong mainstream dams, the availability of alternatives and the risks involved in proceeding with projects that will potentially destroy the biodiversity of one of the world's last great river ecosystems.

Through this project, we have been successful in maintaining a high level of regional awareness about plans for dam development on the Mekong River and in re-framing the debate to highlight the value of the Mekong River's critical ecosystem and biodiversity; and the importance for riparian communities. This has led to sustained regional and international concern over the Xayaburi Dam, the first dam to begin construction on the lower Mekong River mainstream in 2012, along with strong opposition to the Don Sahong Dam, the second dam planned in the cascade.

3. Summarize the overall results/impact of your project

The Mekong River is integral to the lives and culture of mainland Southeast Asia; home to the world's largest inland freshwater fishery, the Mekong supports the food security of millions of people throughout the region, and the river's extraordinary aquatic biodiversity is second only to the Amazon. Since mid-2006, Thai, Malaysian and Chinese companies have been preparing detailed studies for a cascade of eleven large hydropower dams on the Mekong River's mainstream. Seven of the dam sites are in Laos, two are in Cambodia, and two are on the Thai-Lao border. In November 2012 construction began on the first dam within the cascade, the Xayaburi Dam despite the absence of agreement between all four Mekong governments and no resolution to the MRC's Prior Consultation process. While construction has progressed at a rapid pace, we have learned that as a result of ongoing pressure, at least \$200 million more has now been spent on fish research and passage re-designs. The Governments of Laos and Thailand have tried to deflect conversations and focus from construction of the Xayaburi Dam, and yet it has continued to be an issue in the media and linked to decision-making over the Don Sahong Dam, has led to an examination of the MRC's regional decision-making processes, along with greater scrutiny of the responsibility of developers, consultants and state agencies involved in the project.

There was a significant milestone in the Xayaburi campaign on June 24, 2014 when the Thai Supreme Administrative Court accepted a lawsuit filed by 37 Thai villagers - who would be directly impacted by the project - against the signing of the Xayaburi Dam's Power Purchase Agreement. The lawsuit, filed against five government bodies, including the National Energy Policy Council, the Thai Cabinet, and the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT), who is set to buy 95% of the power from the Xayaburi Dam, claims that approval of the project's

Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) is illegal under both the Thai Constitution and the 1995 Mekong Agreement. In accepting the lawsuit, the Court recognized the potential transboundary impacts from the Xayaburi Dam, particularly to communities living in Thailand threats of transboundary impacts from the Xayaburi Dam to communities living along the Mekong River in Thailand. On December 25, the Administrative Court delivered their verdict to dismiss the case. Despite the verdict, Thai communities are determined to continue to seek justice and voice their concerns over the Xayaburi Dam. As a result, on January 25th an appeal was filed with Thailand's Supreme Administrative Court, requesting for the case to be re-examined. The lawsuit has been very important in maintaining public awareness and regional concern about the impacts of the Xayaburi Dam, and the poor precedent that the project sets for future development plans. The lawsuit sets an important precedent for future cases around the extraterritorial obligations of state entities and private companies in the region.

In the case of the Don Sahong Dam, the governments of Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam expressed concern since first notified about the project in November 2013, calling for a transboundary impact assessment and the need for the project to undergo the MRC's Prior Consultation process. At the Mekong Summit in April 2014, Cambodia and Vietnam publicly reiterated their concerns, recommending that all further progress on mainstream dams be delayed until two studies currently underway – the Mekong Delta Study and MRC Council Study – could be completed. Due to sustained pressure, in June 2014, the Government of Laos finally agreed to submit the project for Prior Consultation between the four Mekong governments. Lessons learned from the weaknesses of the Xayaburi Dam's Prior Consultation Process did have an impact on national consultations held in Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam for the Don Sahong Dam, and in our own advocacy work along with that of our partners. For example, pressure from Mekong communities in Thailand and ongoing opposition to the dam forced the Thai National Mekong Committee to add additional meetings and invite a greater number of communities from the Mekong, who had previously been excluded, to participate. In Cambodia we supported capacity building activities and information sharing ahead of the consultation meetings, so that participants were better informed about the project before taking part in these meetings. In Vietnam, partners from Vietnam Rivers Network organized a series of workshops to share information about the Don Sahong Dam, and the media were able to attend and cover issues related to Don Sahong and Mekong dams.

Sustained pressure over the course of the MRC's Prior Consultation process, resulted in the governments of Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam, at the the MRC's Joint Committee meeting in January 2015, all requesting an extension to the process and further studies to be carried out, including of the project's transboundary impacts. Given the strong positions put forward by neighboring countries, and Laos's declared determination to continue development of the project, the four governments could not reach an agreement, and therefore the matter was raised to a ministerial level. In June, the MRC announced that due to continued regional dispute the matter the matter would be raised to a diplomatic level. Disappointingly, in January, despite no resolution to the Prior Consultation process, and no regional agreement between Mekong Governments, the Government of Laos held a ground-breaking ceremony to mark the start to construction of the cofferdam. There continues to be public concern voiced by government officials in Cambodia and Vietnam, along with strong opposition from communities along the Mekong in Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam, who are calling for a halt to construction of the project and further studies to be conducted.

We have supported and maintained a level of open communication and information sharing among partners and within the Save the Mekong Coalition which has led to a more informed and active civil society movement within the Mekong and helped to strengthen national and regional activities around planned mainstream dams.

Planned Long-term Impacts - 3+ years (as stated in the approved proposal)

Recognition by regional decision-makers of the value of healthy, free-flowing rivers results in a commitment to keep the Mekong River's mainstream largely free of destructive hydropower dams apart from the Xayaburi Dam, thus protecting the river's biodiversity and habitats, and the livelihoods of people dependent upon the sustainable use of the river's natural resources.

4. Actual progress toward long-term impacts at completion

Through this project, we have been successful in maintaining a high level of regional awareness about plans for dam development on the Mekong River and in re-framing the debate to highlight the value of the Mekong River's critical ecosystem and biodiversity; and the importance for riparian communities. Through our work, we have highlighted the responsibility of regional governments, developers and companies involved in destructive hydropower projects on the Mekong, and called for greater accountability and scrutiny of the role of these actors through judicial and non-judicial mechanisms, as well as advocacy and media work. The exploration of new avenues for accountability and justice, including through the Xayaburi Dam lawsuit in Laos, OECD guidelines complaints and complaints with National Human Rights Commissions has set important precedent for future cases and led to increased regional awareness around the extraterritorial obligations of state bodies and companies investing in projects overseas.

While construction on the Xayaburi Dam continues, and construction of the Don Sahong Dam began this year, we have seen strong opposition from Mekong communities and sustained concern from neighboring governments over the cumulative impacts of dam development on the Mekong, and the failure of regional decision-making processes. The Governments of Cambodia and Vietnam reiterated calls for a moratorium on dam building on the Mekong, to allow for further studies, including completion of the Vietnamese led Mekong Delta Study, and MRC led Council Study, to help inform decision-making. Hydropower development on the Mekong River continues to be seen as controversial, and one of the greatest threats facing the Basin.

Planned Short-term Impacts - 1 to 3 years (as stated in the approved proposal)

The planned short term impacts as stated in the approved proposal were as follows:

- *The Xayaburi Dam is seen as setting a bad precedent for regional decision-making over the Mekong, as Cambodia and Vietnam maintain their positions of concern to the project;*
- *Our partners' capacity will continue to grow, as we provide technical, strategic and coordination support for their efforts to effectively challenge the building of the Mekong mainstream dams in the region;*
- *Awareness amongst the public, international donors and regional decision-makers regarding the need to protect the Mekong River and threat of the Mekong mainstream dams will continue to grow;*
- *The Mekong River Commission recognizes the need to reform its procedures due to the problems of the Xayaburi Dam's prior consultation process and commits to work together to resolve the agreement's ambiguities, in order to improve and strengthen regional cooperation over the shared river;*
- *Due to pressure by civil society and regional governments, the Don Sahong Dam will be required to undergo the regional consultation process and neighboring countries will express their opposition to the project;*
- *Coordinated and successful campaigns will be established to challenge the role of the companies and investors involved in the Mekong mainstream dams, as well as regional governments, in order for them to fully understand the risks involved in developing the Mekong mainstream dams and encourage that the most destructive projects are cancelled; and*

- *Regional governments will begin investigating and developing alternative energies to the mainstream dams.*

5. Actual progress toward short-term impacts at completion (Grace)

Short Term Impact 1: The Xayaburi Dam is seen as setting a bad precedent for regional decision-making over the Mekong, as Cambodia and Vietnam maintain their positions of concern to the project.

The Thai Administrative Court lawsuit and the subsequent appeal has generated significant media attention, particularly in Thailand, and overall the case set a very important precedent with respect to due diligence on the transboundary impacts of mainstream Mekong dams, and the extraterritorial obligations of state agencies in overseas investment, an issue which will continue to be significant particularly in Thailand's plans for future investments on the Mekong River.

As a result of ongoing pressure on the project's developers and regional decision-makers, at least \$200 million more has now been spent on fish research and passage re-designs, reportedly the most that has ever gone towards a large project globally. However final designs for the project, documenting these changes and additions have not been made public. The Governments of Laos and Thailand have deflected questions around construction of the Xayaburi Dam, and yet it has continued to be an issue in the media and is linked with the Don Sahong Dam in terms of regional impacts and the problems with decision-making.

We have also addressed our impact on the Governments of Cambodia and Vietnam on Mekong mainstream dams in the sections (Short Term Impact 3) below.

Short Term Impact 2: Our partners' capacity will continue to grow, as we provide technical, strategic and coordination support for their efforts to effectively challenge the building of the Mekong mainstream dams in the region.

Our work to support local NGO partners through the Save the Mekong Coalition (StM) was highly valued by local partners and international allies and partners.

In addition to our work with the StM, examples of our support work which has resulted in more local NGOs questioning and challenging the development of the Mekong mainstream at the local and national level, includes:

- The publication of regular briefings on Mekong dams in Thai for the Thai Network of Eight Provinces, which was distributed to partners. Briefings included updates on the status of dams on the Lower Mekong mainstream to community groups in North and Northeast Thailand who are a part of the Thai Network of Communities in Eight Mekong Provinces. Update on the Pak Beng and Sanakham Dams are of great concern to communities along the Mekong in Thailand, given their close proximity. We also regularly updated communities on progress with the Xayaburi Dam lawsuit.
- In 2015, we supported two days of activities in honor of the International Day of Action for Rivers on March 14th. More than 500 people from 10 different river basins throughout Thailand gathered along the Mekong River in Chiang Khong to raise awareness about the ongoing threats to the Mekong River posed by the Xayaburi and Don Sahong Dams, along with dams upstream in China. The activities included a panel discussion and open forum on Mekong mainstream dams, followed by a boat parade along the

Mekong, under the banner of "The Mekong River Is Not For Sale."

Short Term Impact 3: Awareness amongst the public, international donors and regional decision- makers regarding the need to protect the Mekong River and threat of the Mekong mainstream dams will continue to grow.

Mekong mainstream dams have received widespread coverage in local, national and regional media contributing to greater public awareness over the threats facing the Mekong River. Our media and communications work has provided a key source of information and analysis to partners, decision-makers and international donors. We remain a critical resource and contact point for journalist covering issues related to the Mekong River.

Our work has contributed to sustained concern of downstream countries, as evidenced by a statement from the government of Cambodia and Vietnam at the Mekong Summit in 2014, reiterating calls for a moratorium on dam building on the Mekong mainstream. Both countries have also been involved in the Mekong Delta Study, which was initiated to examine the impacts of mainstream dams on the Cambodian floodplain and Vietnamese Delta. This study, along with the MRC Council study which is still underway came about as a result of the recognition by Mekong governments of knowledge gaps which still remain in understanding the full impacts of planned dams on the lower Mekong mainstream.

We have also continued to highlight the need for transboundary impact studies, meaningful consultation with Mekong communities, as well as the responsibility of the developer to prove the efficacy of proposed mitigation measures before making a decision to proceed with a project. Through the Don Sahong Dam campaign, we undertook significant media work over the period to do this. In their reply forms following the first six months of the Prior Consultation process for the Don Sahong Dam, each country called for an extension to the consultation process, and further studies on the project's transboundary impacts and proposed mitigation measures.

Short Term Impact 4: The Mekong River Commission recognizes the need to reform its procedures due to the problems of the Xayaburi Dam's prior consultation process and commits to work together to resolve the agreement's ambiguities, in order to improve and strengthen regional cooperation over the shared river.

There is evidence of the MRC's recognition of the weaknesses of implementation of the PNPCA process for the Xayaburi Dam and Don Sahong, and through the Joint Platform there has been a broad commitment to examine all the MRC's procedures. However no concrete steps for reform have yet come out of this commitment. In February, the MRC held a workshop in Bangkok to examine the "lessons learned from the PNPCA process." However as a whole, the MRC has become increasingly weak over the last few years due to poor leadership, which has become even more apparent during the past months while there has been no CEO in place in 2015 and the difficulty between the four governments to reach agreement over a new riparian CEO. At the same time, MRC donors are questioning the lack of leadership and political will of the four governments to work together. We continue to demand reform of the MRC procedures, while seeking alternative models for regional water governance.

Short Term Impact 5: Due to pressure by civil society and regional governments, the Don Sahong Dam will be required to undergo the regional consultation process and neighboring countries will express their opposition to the project;

The need for Prior Consultation and an assessment of transboundary impacts of the Don Sahong Dam remained strong from regional governments, NGOs and civil society and has received broad regional media coverage. As a result of sustained pressure from neighboring governments, Laos agreed to submit the project for Prior

Consultation, at the 20th MRC Council meeting held on June 25, 2014. In our media and advocacy work we were able to remind key actors about the lessons learned from the weaknesses of the Xayaburi Dam's consultation process, which did have an impact on national consultations held in Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam for the Don Sahong Dam. Throughout the Consultation process we continued to call for a suspension of the process, and a halt to all construction, so that transboundary impacts assessments and further studies could be carried out; stating that the burden of proof rests on the project developer to show that mitigation measure can work and that impacts will be minimal. Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam echoed many of these concerns and in their reply forms following the first six months of the Prior Consultation process called for more time to assess the project, along with further studies of the project's transboundary impacts and proposed mitigation measures. Despite ongoing concern from neighboring countries and no resolution to the Prior Consultation process, construction on the Don Sahong Dam began in January 2016.

Short Term Impact 6: Coordinated and successful campaigns will be established to challenge the role of the companies and investors involved in the Mekong mainstream dams, as well as regional governments, in order for them to fully understand the risks involved in developing the Mekong mainstream dams and encourage that the most destructive projects are cancelled

We engaged Chinese companies, including Sinohydro and Datang, involved in or developing mainstream Mekong dam projects on the business risks associated with the social and environmental impacts of the projects. We recommended that Sinohydro consult with regional experts on the risks associated with pursuing mainstream Mekong dam projects. In addition we supplied briefings the company on key developments such as the lack of outcome of the PNPCA process. We also approached Datang International to discuss their involvement in Pak Beng and Sanakham Dams. We were able to meet with senior leaders in Beijing and it was the first time they had met with an international NGO on the issue. We briefed Datang on the serious risks and sensitivities associated with their projects, which they were not aware of. We were able to collect key information about the project's progress, as well as gain better insight into their role as developer to support future campaign strategy development.

We also worked with partners to challenge the role of Mega-First in developing Don Sahong Dam; with partners, we filed a complaint to the Malaysian Human Rights Commission against Don Sahong Dam's Malaysian developer Mega-First and the company's lack of public consultation in Cambodia and Thailand. While the complaint was ultimately unsuccessful, it resulted in greater scrutiny over the role of Mega-First and the impact of the Don Sahong Dam.

We have also coordinated and supported other activities designed to apply scrutiny and accountability on the corporate actors involved in Xayaburi.

Short Term Impact 7: Regional governments will begin investigating and developing alternative energies to the mainstream dams.

Our analysis and response to the publication of Thailand's 2015 Power Development Plan led to a new narrative over the hidden costs of Thailand's energy plans in terms of social and environmental impacts; as well as calling into question the lack of transparency and accountability in the planning process. The Alternative Power Development Plan for Thailand, published in 2011 continues to provide important arguments for why the Xayaburi Dam and other planned hydropower projects are not needed in Thailand, and where a reform to planning processes and investment in energy efficiency measures can respond to real energy demand.

We have provided input into a number of studies being undertaken to look at alternative power visions for the region, including WWF's Power Sector Vision, and work being done by PHD students at the University of California Berkeley.

There are still significant challenges to the acceptance and development of alternative energy solutions to mainstream dams by Mekong Governments. However we continue to work closely partner in the region, including Mekong Ecology and Energy Network, and experts who are focused on these issues, and with whom we are able to share information and support more public awareness over the viability of alternatives.

6. Describe the success or challenges of the project toward achieving its short-term and long-term impact objectives

We continue to face challenges associated with sensitivity around hydropower issues in the region and an increasingly lack of transparency and accountability when it comes to decision-making processes and project development. We maintain strong relationships with groups and communities working in Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam and through these networks share and seek information. We also continue to explore new ways to gather information through web-based resources and social media.

7. Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?

The transition of leadership in the MRC, and pulling of funding by key donors has increased questions about the future of the Commission and its relevance in the region - this was something we had not expected. The transition has continued to be a challenge to gain information from the MRC, particularly regarding the Prior Consultation process for the Don Sahong Dam, they appear to have removed themselves from the process, absolving them of responsibility. There is potential with a new CEO that there could be improvements, particularly to engagement with stakeholders, however this has yet to be demonstrated.

Project Components and Products/Deliverables

8. Describe the results from Component 1 and each product/deliverable

Component 1

The movement to protect the Mekong River will continue to strengthen at the local, national and international levels.

By helping to coordinate annual meetings of the Save the Mekong coalition during each year of the project, as well as quarterly strategy meetings with key partners from the region; civil society groups regionally and internationally have been able to better share information, stay up-to-date on national and regional issues, and more effectively coordinate advocacy actions aimed at protecting the Mekong River from destructive dam development. Through regular communication within the Save the Mekong Coalition, through the listserv and strategy meetings, as a Coalition we have been able to raise awareness at a local, national, regional and international level of the value of the Mekong River and the threat of Mekong mainstream dams; through public events, advocacy actions, capacity building and media work.

The Save the Mekong website has served as an important platform to share updates, press releases, statements and advocacy letters. In recognition of the potential for the Coalition to strengthen its external communications work, a decision was taken at the end of 2015 to refresh and update the website, with a specific view to having greater communications in regional languages and creating a more dynamic public facing platform for the Coalition. The new website was launched in March 2016.

Our technical, strategic and coordination support for the Thai Network of Eight Mekong Provinces in North and Northeast Thailand has resulted in sustained pressure and advocacy efforts around the Xayaburi Dam, along with the Don Sahong Dam and planned projects. We have worked closely with partner NGOs in Cambodia through the Rivers Coalition of Cambodia and in Vietnam through the Vietnam Rivers Network, to help strengthen their advocacy work at a national level through technical and strategic support and the regular sharing of information.

We have been able to support the critical work of partners in Thailand and Cambodia through strategic re-grants, including to the Buddhist Association for Environmental Development in Cambodia, to organize nine public forums in Cambodia in Kratie and Kampong Cham provinces to raise awareness about on Mekong mainstream dams; to Thailand's Hill Area Development Foundation to support advocacy efforts on the Xayaburi and Don Sahong Dams, along with Day of Action for Rivers events and a media trip for Thai journalists to the Vietnamese Delta; and lastly to the Mekong Community Institute in Thailand to begin independently monitoring and documenting the impacts of Mekong dams in Thailand.

9. Describe the results from Component 2 and each product/deliverable

Component 2

In order to address one of the greatest threats to the biodiversity and ecological value of the Mekong River, we will work to stop the most destructive Mekong mainstream dam projects by researching the companies and banks involved, advocacy, monitoring project developments, holding companies and banks accountable, demonstrating financial and reputational risks, reviewing project documents, and helping provide analysis and responses to key issues that arise.

In March 2015 we held a training workshop on Thai banks and overseas investment, in Bangkok. The workshop built awareness around the emerging role of Thai Banks in overseas investment of large infrastructure projects such as dams, and how best NGOs, academics and others can respond and engage with these actors. As a result of the workshop participants submitted a letter to the Mekong River Commission requesting clarification on the status of the 4 member countries towards the Xayaburi Dam, to be used as evidence to engage and challenge the Thai banks involved in the project. The training was a first step in ongoing efforts to build knowledge and capacity among partners in Thailand to respond to the growing role of Thailand in financing of overseas projects, in particular dams on the Mekong River.

We have been able to successfully raise awareness about the concerns related to the Don Sahong Dam through an independent expert analysis of the project's EIA, revealing many technical flaws and weaknesses in the studies; along with legal analysis of the project and the requirements under the 1995 Mekong Agreement and international law, as well as the publication of a factsheet on Don Sahong, and media kit on International Rivers' website. This analysis and these tools have helped to contribute to the strong positions of neighboring countries in calling for further studies, including a transboundary impact assessment and greater focus on the need for the developers to prove that the proposed mitigation measures will be effective. They have also been translated and used by partners in their region to inform advocacy work and government engagement at a national level to raise concern over the Don Sahong Dam. During the project period, we helped to support the filing of a complaint to the Malaysian Human Rights Commission (SUHAKAM) against the Malaysian developer of the Don Sahong Dam, MegaFirst Corporation Berhad. The complaint centred on the project's dire implications for human rights to food, health, culture, life and livelihoods, and the rights of indigenous people. While SUHAKAM ultimately found that they were unable to conduct an investigation or proceed further with the inquiry because of the extraterritorial nature of the issues, the complaint raised the profile of Mega First's involvement in the project, and helped to strengthen advocacy efforts to stop the project, particularly in Cambodia.

Site visits to the Don Sahong Dam, along with the proposed sites of the Pak Beng and Sanakham dams, which are expected to be the next projects put forward for Prior Consultation, have enabled us to share information about the situation on the ground, create relationships with communities in the areas to follow up with, and monitor ongoing development of these projects.

10. Describe the results from Component 3 and each product/deliverable

Component 3

Through local, regional and international media outreach, there will be increased awareness amongst decision-makers and the public about the value of the Mekong River and the impacts of mainstream dams.

Mekong mainstream dams have continued to receive widespread local, regional and international media coverage with hundreds of articles, broadcasts, and documentaries covering the Mekong River and its rich ecosystem and the impacts from planned dams. We continue to be a key source of information for journalists covering Mekong dams, through the regular publication of press releases, op-eds and blogs. Over the course of the project International Rivers has been quoted in more than 100 articles covering the Mekong River, in regional and international outlets including, The Wall Street Journal, Time Magazine, Reuters, The Economist, National Geographic, The BBC, The Bangkok Post, The Phnom Penh Post and Thannien News.

Within the project period, we helped to organize two media trips for journalists from Thailand, one to the site of the Don Sahong Dam and one to the Vietnamese Delta, to learn about concerns over Mekong dams and share experiences from Thailand. The trips resulted in direct media coverage, with articles appearing in outlets including The Bangkok Post, The Nation and Thai PBS, as well as sustained interest from these journalists and others to follow and report on news related to the Mekong River.

11. Describe the results from Component 4 and each product/deliverable

Component 4

Promote improved Mekong River Basin Management: We will advocate for improved Mekong River governance focused on renewing regional commitments to protect the Mekong River, which is based on participatory, transparent and accountable approaches.

The credibility of the MRC's Prior Notification and Prior Consultation Agreement (PNPCA)'s process has been significantly weakened and the need for change made evident by public recognition of the failures of the Xayaburi Dam's PNPCA process, and ongoing challenges to the Don Sahong Dam's consultation process which is widely recognized to have followed the same flawed path as that of the Xayaburi Dam. Our efforts in making public reviews of the Xayaburi Dam's PNPCA process by the Government of Australia, who funded the process and the Danish Government have strengthened evidence of the weaknesses of the process and its implementation. Throughout the Prior Consultation process for the Don Sahong Dam we remained critical of its implementation and worked with Save the Mekong Coalition and national partners to put forward requirements for consultation with riparian communities along with recommendations for reform of the process.

MRC donors have used their statements at MRC Council meetings and Joint Committee meetings to call for greater transparency over the Don Sahong Dam's Prior Consultation process, and for information about steps being taken to make changes to MRC procedures, to respond to the lessons learned from the Xayaburi Dam. Within these statements they have also sustained pressure on the Lao Government to release the final designs of the Xayaburi

Dam. Donor's own concerns over the credibility of the MRC have been made evident by the withdrawal or phasing out of funding from a number of key government donors.

In May 2014, Vietnam became the 35th country to ratify the UN Convention on Non-navigational uses of International Watercourses (UNWC), resulting in its entry into force. Vietnam has also called on other Mekong governments to sign on to the convention, which offers additional avenues, beyond the 1995 Mekong Agreement to manage the shared Mekong River. Discussion over the UNWC has increased public debate over the weaknesses of the MRC, the role of international law, and the gaps in existing procedures to equitably and sustainably manage the Mekong River.

12. Describe the results from Component 5 and each product/deliverable

Component 5

Promote sustainable energy solutions for the Mekong Region: We will challenge the Mekong countries to develop more sustainable and realistic energy forecasts, employ more sustainable technologies, utilize more decentralized solutions and increase energy efficiency measures. This work will be done through the publication of popular education materials and by providing support to partners working on these issues.

Thailand's new Power Development Plan (PDP15) was approved in May 2015. Through participation in a public meeting held by the Thai Ministry of Energy, and media work including an Opinion Piece in The Bangkok Post, we were able to respond swiftly to the approval of this new plan and shape an alternative public narrative over the hidden costs of Thailand energy plans, particularly highlighting the transboundary social and environmental impacts of the projects which Thailand plans to invest in under the new plan, along the Mekong and Salween Rivers. We have helped to support a network of people who would be affected by Thailand's PDP to raise concerns and call for a revised plan; and have continued to highlight the problems of the energy planning process in Thailand and its role in driving destructive dams and other energy projects in the region.

We have continued to monitor energy studies underway in the region, and provide information to partners and through communications efforts on the viability of alternatives to large dams. We have also been involved in a number of consultations around WWF's Alternative Power Sector Vision.

13. Describe the results from Component 6 and each product/deliverable

Component 6

Ensure compliance with CEPF Social Safeguard Policies.

14. If you did not complete any component or deliverable, how did this affect the overall impact of the project?

A detailed research report was already being prepared for Mega First by one of our partners based in Cambodia, and an assessment of Chinese companies involved mainstream Mekong dams (Datang for the Pak Beng Dam and China Southern Power Grid, Guodian for Sambor Dam) was completed in Q1 2016 by our China office and is currently being finalized for release and circulation. As a result, we did not hire consultant to research the financial flows and investment portfolios associated with the companies and financiers involved in Mekong Mainstream dams.

The annual Save the Mekong meeting for 2016 took place in March, outside of the project period, and we therefore supported this meeting through funding from other sources. This was due to schedules of Coalition members, however the result was still a productive meeting with progress made towards a Terms of Reference for the Coalition and strategic planning for 2016.

15. Please describe and submit any tools, products, or methodologies that resulted from this project or contributed to the results

- *Gambling with the Mekong: The History of the Xayaburi Dam* – An interactive timeline of the Xayaburi Dam. <http://www.internationalrivers.org/node/9200>
- *Media Kit, Xayaburi Dam Lawsuit* - which provides background to the lawsuit, along with key press releases and blogs put out by International Rivers, as well as some international media coverage. <http://www.internationalrivers.org/node/9230>
- *Don Sahong Dam: Gambling with Mekong Food Security and Livelihoods* – A factsheet on the Don Sahong Dam. http://www.internationalrivers.org/files/attached-files/dsh_factsheet_2015_-_english.pdf
- *Media Kit, Don Sahong Dam* - which provides background to the project, key studies, factsheets, along with press releases, blogs and op-eds put out by International Rivers, as well as some international media coverage. <http://www.internationalrivers.org/resources/media-kit-on-the-don-sahong-dam-8103>
- *Don Sahong Dam Map* – Showing the project area, resettlement sites and proposed construction in the area. <http://www.internationalrivers.org/resources/8382>
- *Legal Analysis: How International Law Applies to the Don Sahong Dam*: A legal report that examines the Don Sahong Dam within the requirements of the 1995 Mekong Agreement and customary international law. <http://www.internationalrivers.org/node/8340>
- *Technical Review of the Don Sahong Dam Environmental Impact Assessment* - a report commissioned by International Rivers in which four experts provide a review of the project's EIA - <http://www.internationalrivers.org/node/8241>
- *The Mekong River Means Life: Stop the Don Sahong Dam* – International petition organized with Rainforest Rescue which gained 99,369 signatures and was submitted to Mekong Governments. <https://www.rainforest-rescue.org/petitions/979/the-mekong-river-means-life-stop-the-don-sahong-dam>
- *Swindling Rivers: Run of River hydropower* – A factsheet examining the term run-of-river, aimed at dispelling the myth that ROR projects have few adverse impacts. <http://www.internationalrivers.org/node/10332>
- *World Rivers Review: Focus on the Mekong* – International Rivers' quarterly publication focused on the global significance of the Mekong River and the threats from hydropower projects, with articles from staff and experts, along with an infographic. <http://www.internationalrivers.org/node/8456>
- *The Hidden Cost of Thailand's New Power Development Plan* – An analysis on International Rivers' blog of Thailand's Power Development Plan. <http://www.internationalrivers.org/node/9032>

CEPF Global Monitoring Data

Respond to the questions and complete the tables below. If a question is not relevant to your project, please make an entry of 0 (zero) or n/a (not applicable).

16. Did your organization complete the CEPF Civil Society Tracking Tool (CSTT) at the beginning and end of your project? (Please be sure to submit the final CSTT tool to CEPF if you haven't already done so.)

n/a

	Date	Composite Score
Baseline CSTT		
Final CSTT		

17. List any vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered species conserved due to your project

n/a

Hectares Under Improved Management

Project Results	Hectares*	Comments
18. Did your project strengthen the management of an existing protected area?		<i>List the name of each protected area</i>
19. Did your project create a new protected area or expand an existing protected area?		<i>List the name of each protected area, the date of proclamation, and the type of proclamation (e.g., legal declaration, community agreement, stewardship agreement)</i>
20. Did your project strengthen the management of a key biodiversity area named in the CEPF Ecosystem Profile (hectares may be the same as questions above)		<i>List the name of each key biodiversity area</i>
21. Did your project improve the management of a production landscape for biodiversity conservation		<i>List the name or describe the location of the production landscape</i>

** Include total hectares from project inception to completion*

22. In relation to the two questions above on protected areas, did your project complete a Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT), or facilitate the completion of a METT by protected area authorities? If so, complete the table below. (Note that there will often be more than one METT for an individual protected area.)

n/a

Protected area	Date of METT	Composite METT Score	Date of METT	Composite METT Score	Date of METT	Composite METT Score

23. List the name of any corridor (named in the Ecosystem Profile) in which you worked and how you contributed to its improved management, if applicable.

n/a

Direct Beneficiaries: Training and Education

<i>Did your project provide training or education for . . .</i>	Male	Female	Total	Brief Description
24. Adults for community leadership or resource management positions				
25. Adults for livelihoods or increased income				
26. School-aged children				
27. Other				

28. List the name and approximate population size of any “community” that benefited from the project.

Community name, surrounding district, surrounding province, country *Population size*

n/a

29. Socioeconomic Benefits to Target Communities

Based on the list of communities above, write the name of the communities in the left column below. In the subsequent columns under Community Characteristics and Nature of Socioeconomic Benefit, place an X in all relevant boxes.

If you marked “Other”, please provide detail on the nature of the Community Characteristic and Socioeconomic Benefit:

n/a

Lessons Learned

29. Describe any lessons learned during the design and implementation of the project, as well as any related to organizational development and capacity building. Consider lessons that would inform projects designed or implemented by your organization or others, as well as lessons that might be considered by the global conservation community

Through our work, we are continuously learning, while reflecting upon its effectiveness in the ever-changing geopolitical landscape of Southeast Asia. One of the most important aspects we have learned over the year relates to the limitations of the Mekong River Commission (MRC) in influencing policies and decisions over the Mekong River. The MRC has become increasingly weak over the last few years due to poor leadership, which became even more apparent in 2015; there was no CEO in place for the majority of the year. A new riparian CEO began in 2016, however there is a lot of concern over the ability one riparian national to overcome the politics in the region in order to effectively do his job. The lack of leadership and ability of the CEO to sit at the decision-making table in order to help provide advice has meant that outside communications over the Mekong dams has become quieter than usual, and it is even more difficult to gather information. This has also meant that the MRC has also placed unnecessary restrictions and limitations on its role within regional hydropower decision-making.

At the same time, MRC donors, questioning the lack of leadership and political will of the four governments to work together, have significantly cut funding for the organization. While we continue to be critical of the MRC and will continue to demand reform, the lack of better options to promote improved governance over the Mekong continues to be a challenge. We have been encouraging national governments to ratify the International Watercourses Convention (UNWC) as a means to strengthen regional cooperation and the role of the MRC. However, it's unclear what the best form and shape of an inter-governmental body might be, such that it could replace the MRC and the limitations of its 1995 Mekong Agreement. As such, we have begun to request and encourage academics to think about articulating, through op-eds, articles or blogs, a shared future for the Mekong and the type of institution needed, so that more debate can begin to take place within the region and a better alternative to the MRC can be developed in the future.

One critical area of learning from the case of the Xayaburi Dam has been the Prior Consultation process. This process was tried for the first time with the Xayaburi Dam, and revealed many flaws. We were able to use the lessons from the Xayaburi process to identify key areas of improvement and articulate our expectations for the Prior Consultation process for the Don Sahong Dam, including communicating about the need for a reform to the process, minimum measures for meaningful consultation, what information is provided ahead of time, including impact assessments, and the timeline for consultation.

30. Project Design Process (*aspects of the project design that contributed to its success/shortcomings*)

Given the ever changing political situations and changing space for civil society engagement on sensitive issues such as hydropower in the region, flexibility throughout the project design process has been essential. In this regard, we found the project design to be appropriate to this situation and that minor changes to the design could be made through the performance tracking reports submitted to CEPF.

31. Project Implementation (*aspects of the project execution that contributed to its success/shortcomings*)

The challenges associated with sensitivity around hydropower issues in the region and the lack of transparency and accountability has made it more difficult to gain information and updates about projects as well as conduct site visits within Laos. Our strong relationships with partners in Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam has been very important in being able to share information, and learn more about decisions being made a national level, in a climate of increasingly limited transparency.

32. Describe any other lessons learned relevant to the conservation community

One of the challenges and lessons that we have learned in the Don Sahong Dam campaign, has been that arguments and discourse around the Don Sahong Dam in particular have become highly technical, for example related to hydrology and fisheries. This makes it challenging for local groups in Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam to engage in the debate and communicate effectively. The Laos government has been able to use the technical nature of the information which has been made public to shape their argument, and criticize opposition. In terms of media work it has also proved challenging to sustain media attention when the discourse does become highly technical. Within our work we have tried to explain some of the key technical aspects of the project, creating a briefing of key messages on the project which was used by partners, and also holding conversations with journalists to explain the key issues. It has been an important lesson in the need for different communications tools and messages for different audiences.

Overall more work is needed to promote energy solutions in the region, in order to show that there are better options than large dams for meeting the region's energy and development needs.

Sustainability / Replication

33. Summarize the success or challenges in ensuring the project will be sustained or replicated

One of International Rivers' major goals is to ensure the long-term sustainability of our work to protect rivers in the Mekong River Basin. In order to do this, we take a multifaceted approach, which includes public awareness raising of the importance of protecting the Basin by targeting and tailoring communications for the general public, local authorities, and national and international governments and agencies. We also work in close collaboration with scientists, policy experts, and local, national and international civil society organizations and NGOs, while helping to coordinate advocacy efforts and build our partners' knowledge and capacity on the issues to effectively advocate and hold decision-makers accountable. While our work has helped to empower our partners to be able to work more effectively, we believe that more can be done in the near future in terms of coordinating advocacy efforts and providing help in terms of opening up space for more dialogue on the sensitive issue of hydropower development in the region.

34. Summarize any unplanned activities that are likely to result in increased sustainability or replicability

n/a

Safeguards

35. If not listed as a separate Project Component and described above, summarize the implementation of any required action related to social, environmental, or pest management safeguards

This has been addressed under our reporting for Project Component 6 above

Additional Comments/Recommendations

36. Use this space to provide any further comments or recommendations in relation to your project or CEPF

We would like to express our gratitude to CEPF for continuing to support our work to protect the biodiversity of the Mekong River. Through your generous support such a critical time, we were able to designate a significant amount of our human and financial resources towards this work. We plan to continue this important work over the upcoming years, and hope that our efforts will lead to increased recognition in the region of the importance of healthy rivers, so that future decisions over hydropower projects will adhere to a more precautionary approach and the most destructive projects will not proceed.

Additional Funding

37. Provide details of any additional funding that supported this project and any funding secured for the project, organization, or the region, as a result of CEPF investment

The following sources of funding were secured to support our SE Asia Program more generally, rather than this specific project.

Donor	Type of Funding*	Amount	Notes
Oxfam Australia	Program Co-Financing	135,000	Over 24 months
The McKnight Foundation	Program Co-Financing	225,000	Over 36 months
John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation	Program Co-Financing	500,000	Over 36 months

* Categorize the type of funding as:

- A Project Co-Financing (other donors or your organization contribute to the direct costs of this project)
- B Grantee and Partner Leveraging (other donors contribute to your organization or a partner organization as a direct result of successes with this CEPF funded project)
- C Regional/Portfolio Leveraging (other donors make large investments in a region because of CEPF investment or successes related to this project)

Information Sharing and CEPF Policy

CEPF is committed to transparent operations and to helping civil society groups share experiences, lessons learned, and results. Final project completion reports are made available on our Web site, www.cepf.net, and publicized in our newsletter and other communications.

We would like to discuss publishing the full report on the CEPF website due to the sensitive nature of working mainstream Mekong dams in the SE Asia region. As the report currently stands, **we would like to request that the full report not be shared**. We would be happy to revise a version for online sharing and communications.

Please include your full contact details below:

38. Name: Grace Mang and Kate Ross

39. Organization: International Rivers

40. Mailing address: International Rivers, 2054 University Ave, Suite 300, Berkeley, CA, 94704

41. Telephone number: +510 848 1155

42. E-mail address: grace@internationalrivers.org, kross@internationalrivers.org