



Phnom Penh, 6th February 2020

Press Statement

Luang Prabang Dam increases concerns over the change of Lower Mekong River

Fish migration, hydrology and sediment flow are the significant transboundary impacts that would occur from the hydropower projects on the Mekong mainstream that civil society organizations are most concerned about. The concern has been increased after the Laos government proposed for prior consultation on the project, which will be the 5th project to be constructed on the Mekong mainstream in late 2020.

A group of CSOs working on water governance in Cambodia have found that the proposed project together with existing projects will pose a threat on hydrology that would make the lower Mekong be repeatedly faced with low water levels. This would result in the increased fluctuation of hydrology due to the lack of information on water flow and cascade management of hydropower projects upstream. The prediction of the fluctuations has not taken into account the impact of climate change. If climate change in the form of floods or droughts occurs, it would pose a serious impact on the lower downstream areas of the Mekong, however, the proposed project has not had a concrete measure to minimize the impact.

On the other hand, we have also found that the project will contribute to a reduction of sediment flow to downstream of the lower part of the Mekong. This would pose a threat on bank erosion and affect river bank agriculture of downstream riparian’s communities. The project document has recognized a dramatic impact on sediment flow, however the report did not provide possible concrete measure to address the issue.

We are very much concerned over fish migration species that might be affected by the proposed dam as they need to migrate up and down to find spawning and feeding ground on the Mekong river. The project has initiated a good design, however there is a doubt as to whether it works or not. The change of hydrology has an obvious connection with fish reproduction because of the regular hydrology flow that facilitates fish species to migrate to spawning and feeding grounds, and grow up in tributaries such as the Mekong and particularly Tonle Sap Lake, which is the heart of Cambodia.

We are concerned by the timeframe proposed by the Laos Government to commence construction at the end of 2020 as it will not provide sufficient time for developers to conduct more rigorous studies upon the comments and recommendations put forth by relevant stakeholders. We request the Laos Government, project developer and MRC to find appropriate solutions for the cumulative and transboundary impact to ensure the equitable and reasonable use of the Mekong river which is the main principle of the Mekong Agreement 1995.

For further information, please contact:

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