



## 3 S Rivers Protection Network (3SPN) Local News Update

August 2007



### **Recent voices and concerns from the 3S community:**

*I would like to request that the government find a solution to our problems. I want to request that they stop dam construction. We want compensation for the impacts of the dam construction.*

Mr. Roman Taeng, Ta Known village, Andong Meas, Ratanakiri, Sesan River.

*I want to share with you the situation of the Srepok River. The river begins in Vietnam and flows through Cambodia. There are 17 villages on the river and many ethnic groups. We work by cultivating rice and collecting non-timber forest products. Since 2004, there has been changes in the river, deep water pools have become shallow and from 2004-2006, there has been more flooding, occurring a few times in a year, especially in 2006. So the farmers must leave their homes and their cultivation in order to find work. The water becomes dirty and muddy, especially when the water rises up, so community can not use the water. We request to have the river the same as it was in the past. We request that villagers participate in the development process. We want to participate in the decision making of development projects. We request the government to solve our problems facing us here. We need help from the government in order to harmonize living as it was in the past.*

Ms. Taing Lao, Lumpait Town, Ratanakiri, Srepok River.

*We are all concerned about the impacts of the hydropower dams being built in Laos and Vietnam. The Cambodian Government should consider the interests of the people. We should be patient, but use our efforts to raise our concerns to the government. We need help from all stakeholders involved.*

Mr. Ean Eang, Deputy Governor Lumpait District, Ratanakiri, Srepok River

## **Local 3SPN News and Activity Update:**

### **Tropical Storm Causes the Srepok River to Flood**

Nearly 1,500 families were evacuated from their homes and many others were impacted when heavy rains caused by a tropical depression from the South China sea brought flooding on the Srepok River in Ratanakiri province. The flooding began on August 4<sup>th</sup> and began to recede on August 10<sup>th</sup>. The river reached a depth of approximately 15.15 meters in Lumpait district, which was roughly one meter higher than the floods which affected the river last year.

In order to assess the extent of damage and the need for emergency assistance, a team from Oxfam International worked with 3SPN to carry out a rapid appraisal of the situation. The flooding is so far known to have caused damages to people's property and crops and killed some livestock. Small amounts of emergency assistance in the form of food and plastic tarps have been distributed to some communities by the Cambodian Red Cross and government.



Flooded home and bridge (Photographs by Oxfam International)

### **Sesan EIA Meeting Held despite Local Complaints**

On July 5<sup>th</sup>, a stakeholder meeting on the Electricity of Vietnam's *Environmental Impact Assessment Report on the Cambodian Part of the Se San River due to Hydropower Development in Vietnam* was held in Phnom Penh. The meeting was organized by Electricity of Vietnam, the Vietnam National Mekong Committee and the Cambodian National Mekong Committee. The meeting was held in order to review the EIA report, which was paid for by Electricity of Vietnam and was written by SWECO Grøner in association with the Norwegian Institute for Water Research, and two Vietnam based consulting firms: ENVIRO-DEV and ENS Consult.

3SPN and other members of the Rivers Coalition in Cambodia (RCC) declined to attend the EIA meeting as a copy of the EIA report and an invitation to the meeting was received only a week prior to the meeting, the EIA was only available in English language and was not translated into Khmer as had been previously requested, and representatives of the Sesan River were not invited to participate or attend the meeting. Statements regarding the unfair process were made by Sesan community representatives and NGOs and were sent to the organizers of the meeting and the media. 3SPN is requesting that a fair review of the Sesan EIA report be held with the participation of the Sesan community in the near future.

It is reported that at the meeting, Vietnam agreed to work with Cambodia in order to minimize the negative impacts of the Vietnamese dams on the Sesan River. For more information please see in the news updates *Vietnam Promises to Protect Water Resources* listed below.

The Sesan EIA report can be found on NGO Forum's website at: [www.ngoforum.org.kh](http://www.ngoforum.org.kh).

### **3SPN Participates in Action Research Training on Illegal Fishing Activities**

From March to July, four 3SPN staff members participated in a community level action research course entitled Analyzing Development Issues (ADI), which was organized by the Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC) in cooperation with 3SPN. The course began with a two week training in Banlung Town and was followed with a study that researched the current illegal fishing situation in Lumpait district on the Srepok River. The research team worked in collaboration with 3SPN District Focal People and community representatives to assess the current illegal fishing situation and the effectiveness of current activities which have been taken to protect some of the river's deep water pools from illegal fishing. The research team found that the communities on the Srepok River have seen an increase in large-scale illegal fishing activities on their river during the past two years and that there is a strong interest by the communities to implement a project which will protect their river's fisheries. As a result of this training, 3SPN hopes to continue working with the Srepok communities to help establish a Srepok Community Fishery Project in the future and is currently seeking funding for this project.

### **3S Rivers Celebration**

Approximately 250 community representatives from the Sesan, Srepok and Sekong Rivers participated in this year's 3S Rivers Celebration on June 14-15th. The celebration was held in Lumpait Town on the Srepok River and attending the celebration where community representatives from the 3S Rivers and the Tonle Sap, US Embassy officials from Phnom Penh and Bangkok, His Venerable Monk Hiek Sopheap, District Governors and Commune Chiefs from the Sesan and Srepok Rivers, Provincial Department Officials and NGO representatives from Cambodia, Japan and the Philippines.

Prior to the start of the official ceremony on the 15<sup>th</sup>, 30 community representatives from the 3S Rivers met with three officials from the US Embassy to discuss the impacts being felt by hydropower development on each of the rivers and the communities concerns. The US Embassy officials promised the community representatives that they would raise the concerns of the community and the 3S issue to relevant stakeholders in the region. A press conference followed this meeting with statements made by community officials and one-on-one interviews were conducted.



### **3S Rivers Celebration Community Statement:**

The following statement was written by representatives of the Sesan, Srepok, Sekong, Mekong and Tonle Sap communities at the 3S Rivers Celebration. The statement was sent to the Government of Cambodia and other relevant stakeholders.

**Joint Statement of the Sesan, Srepok, Sekong, Mekong, and Tonle Sap Communities  
at the Fifth Annual 3S Rivers Celebration**

**June 15, 2007**

**Lumpait, Ratanakiri, Cambodia**

**RESPECT TO:**

**THE ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF CAMBODIA**

We, 260 community representatives from the Sesan, Srepok, Sekong, Mekong, and Tonle Sap, who are facing difficulties caused by hydropower dam development and other development projects along the rivers, have gathered together in Lumpait District, Ratanakiri on June 15, 2007 and would like to raise the following problems and requests:

- The rivers' water regime fluctuates irregularly,
- There has been a decline of fish species, riverbank vegetables, and other animals whose lives depend on the rivers,
- Villagers have had to move their villages away from the riverbank due to fears of unpredictable flooding and riverbank erosion,
- Rice yields, vegetables and the property of people has been seriously destroyed due to unnatural flooding,
- Human and animal health has been affected by the water quality of the rivers,

We also continue to have the following concerns:

- The above problems have negatively threatened the rivers' biodiversity, fishery resources and the livelihoods of the people living along the rivers.
- Without adequate study and policy, hydropower dam projects will continue to threaten the livelihoods of the communities living along the Sesan, Srepok, Sekong, and Mekong.

According to the problems and concerns mentioned above, we would like to request the following:

1. We request the government and relevant stakeholders to solve the problems above,
2. We request to the dam builder to guarantee the lives of the downstream villagers and provide compensation for all the past, present and future damages,
3. We request that all development along the rivers must study the environmental and social impacts with full participation from the local people,
4. We request to donor countries to consider to grant if without process of governance and accountability to environmental, social, and specially for the livelihood of the people along the rivers,
5. We request that all Mekong governments effectively respect and implement the 1995 Mekong Agreement.

We hope that the Government of Cambodia and other relevant stakeholders will seriously take into account all the problems and concerns mentioned above and will find appropriate solutions for our communities.

**Community Representatives of the Sesan,  
Srepok, Sekong, Mekong, and Tonle Sap**

### **3S Villagers from Stung Treng Visit Ratanakiri's Srepok Community Network**

Twenty community representatives from the Sesan, Srepok and Sekong Rivers in Stung Treng traveled to Ratanakiri province in late May, in order to meet with 3SPN staff and the Srepok Community Network. The exchange visit was facilitated by partner organization, CEPA in order for the communities to better understand common issues occurring in both provinces and to help improve cooperation between the community activists.

During their visit to 3SPN's office in Banlung, the Stung Treng team gave a presentation of their findings which included an overview of the main problems facing the Srepok villagers and the lessons learned from their network's work. They also gave three recommendations to 3SPN and the Srepok Network. Firstly, they recommended that the Srepok villagers should to be better linked to other communities and establish a communication mechanism between communities, government authorities and other stakeholders. Secondly, they recommended developing a strategy to improve people's participation as some villagers are too busy worrying about future flooding and are considering moving their villages. And finally the team recommended that the community should develop ideas on how to create small-scale income generation, in order to increase their livelihoods beyond rice production and fishing.

### **3S Rivers Forum**

A community dialogue was organized in Lumphat district on February 25-26, so that community representatives from the 3S area could come together to discuss, reflect and define the problems affecting them and in order to think about future advocacy work. The dialogue also allowed the community to reflect on the Srepok EIA meeting that was held in January and discuss the meeting's outcomes. Over the course of the two days, the community representatives brought up all the negative impacts they are suffering from the dams built upstream in Vietnam and Lao PDR, which included: water quality deteriorating, a lack of food security due to the increased number of floods, water fluctuations, and a decline in fish catches in the river, problems with human and animal health, and difficulties in securing their livelihoods. Besides the problems with the hydropower damming, other issues affecting the communities which were raised included: land encroachment, illegal logging, illegal fishing, and domestic abuse. Approximately 75 local community network members participated in the dialogue.



### **News on 3S Hydropower Developments and Transboundary Cooperation:**

#### **Two Vietnamese Banks Agree to Finance Sekaman 3 Dam**

Vietcombank and the Bank for Investment Development of Viet Nam (BIDV) have agreed to provide US\$66 million in financing for the construction of 250 MW Sekaman 3 dam, which is currently being built on a tributary of the Sekong River in Sekong province, Lao PDR. The two

banks agreed on the finance deal with Viet Nam-Laos Electrical Investment & Development Joint Stock Co., which is the developer of the dam. The dam is expected to be complete in 2009 (“Asia banks agree to finance deal for Sekaman 3,” International Water Power and Dam Construction Magazine, 02 August 2007)

### **Vietnam Offers to Build Two Dams on the Sesan in Ratanakiri**

Suy Sem of Cambodia’s Ministry of Industry, Mines and Energy reported that Vietnam has agreed in principle to build two hydropower dams on the Sesan River in Ratanakiri province. After feasibility studies have been completed, a 420 MW dam will be built on the confluence of the Srepok and Sesan rivers and another 90 MW dam will be built on an upstream tributary of the Sesan River. The two dams are estimated to cost \$510 million. (“Vietnam Offers to Build Two Hydropower Dams in Ratanakiri,” Cambodia Daily, 20 July 2007)

### **Vietnam to build Re-Regulating Dam on Sesan River**

Vietnam has agreed to build a re-regulating dam on the Sesan River in response to the complaints about upstream dams causing flooding in Cambodia. Pich Dun, the Secretary General of the National Mekong Committee said that the dam will be completed in August and will help to regulate the water coming from Yali Falls dam. (“VN Building Dam To Stabilize R’kiri River Flow,” Cambodia Daily, 12 July 2007)

### **Vietnam Promises to Protect Water Resources**

At the July 5<sup>th</sup> meeting held on the environmental impacts of Vietnam’s hydropower dams on the Sesan River in Phnom Penh, Vietnam agreed to discuss measures with Cambodia to minimize the impacts of the dams on the environment and the people living near the river. Nguyen Hong Toan, General Secretary of the Vietnam National Mekong Committee (VNMC), stated that Vietnam is committed to following the obligations and responsibilities necessary to protect the water resources and environment. He also stated that the dams have helped promote socio-economic development in the Cambodia-Laos-Vietnam Economic Development Triangle. Mok Mareth, the Cambodian Minister of the Environment stated that the meeting was aimed to help bilateral cooperation between the two Mekong River committees as well as the Cambodian Ministry of the Environment and the Vietnamese Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. At the meeting, SWECO Grøner representative, Tur Hagel, said that research and documented references had shown that Vietnam’s dams have not polluted Cambodia’s part of the Sesan River. (“Vietnam Pledges To Protect Water Resources,” The Financial Times Limited Thai Press Reports, 9 July 2007)

### **Srepok 3 Dam Signs Agreement with China**

China has signed an agreement with the Electricity of Vietnam (EVN) in early July. Under this agreement, China will help supply various equipment worth \$40 million dollars to the Srepok 3 dam. Construction on the Srepok 3 dam began in early 2006 and will be completed in 2010. The total cost of the dam will be approximately \$300 million dollars. (“Srepok 3 supply contract awarded,” International Water Power and Dam Construction magazine, 2 July 2007).

### **Sesan 3A Dam Loses Turbine**

During the third week of June, the Sesan 3A dam had to operate at half-capacity after one of its two turbines broke down. Shortly after this turbine broke, the second turbine experienced problems. The dam could then only operate at less than half-capacity and is expected to be fixed sometime in mid-July. (“Power plant loses turbine, at half-capacity on shaky standby,” Thanh Nien News, 27 June 2007)

### **Vietnam to carry out feasibility studies for two dams in Cambodia**

Electricity of Vietnam (EVN) will undertake a feasibility study on the construction of the Lower Sesan 1 (90 MW) and Lower Sesan 2 (420 MW) hydropower dams on the Sesan River in northeastern Cambodia. An agreement to carry out these studies was signed in Phnom Penh

on June 15, by EVN Deputy General Lam Du Son and Cambodian State Secretary Khlaut Randy, in charge of the Industry, Mines and Energy Ministry. If constructed, the power from these dams will be exported back to Vietnam. (“EVN to look at Cambodian power project,” Vietnam News Agency, 16 June 2007)

### **Sweden Discusses Transboundary Cooperation with Vietnam and Cambodia**

Sweden has offered the Mekong River Commission (MRC) a grant of USD 6.4 million in order to support the MRC’s environment programme, basin development plan, fisheries programme and institutional support. During a visit to Hanoi, Swedish Development Minister Gunilla Carlsson expressed concern over the unresolved transboundary conflicts between Cambodia and Vietnam due to hydropower development. While stressing the importance of the MRC in relation to transboundary issues, she stated that the MRC does not “proactively address potentially conflicting interests of benefit sharing” and that “the agreement lacks binding clauses and it appears that the members states sometimes have difficulties reaching agreements on more contentious issues. It has at times been easy to get the impression that the Agreement lacks the full political support of the member countries.” She also said that Sweden would be ready to “move one step further” and give additional support or funding if three conditions were met: a demonstration of political will by Mekong states to support the work of the MRC, that an effective monitoring and evaluation system is put in place to measure the MRC’s progress, and that the financing of the MRC’s activities have greater economic responsibility. (“Carlsson presses Vietnam on hydro damages in Cambodia,” Development Today, 3 May 2007)

### **3SPN Organizational Update:**

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#### **3SPN Staff Changes for 2007-08**

3SPN would like to announce that 3SPN’s former Community Based Research Officer, Meach Mean has been appointed to the position of Deputy Coordinator and will serve as Acting Coordinator from August 2007 to May 2008. This transition has occurred so that Kim Sangha may pursue his MA in Development Studies from IMAS Asia, University of Geneva. During this transition period, Sangha will continue working for 3SPN on a part-time basis.

3SPN has also recently hired Phou Bunthann as our new Community Based Research Officer and Vong Lyna as our Financial and Administrative Assistant.



Meach Mean

Phou Bunthann

Vong Lyna

#### **New Contact Information**

Please note that 3SPN has changed its email address from [sesan@camintel.com](mailto:sesan@camintel.com) to [sesan@camshin.net](mailto:sesan@camshin.net).

**3 S Rivers Protection Network is a local coordinating body supporting dam affected communities on the Sesan, Srepok and Sekong Rivers. For more information, please contact us at: 3S Rivers Protection Network, P.O. Box 89007, Banlung Town, Ratanakiri Province, CAMBODIA. T: +855 (0)75 974 112, E: [sesan@camshin.net](mailto:sesan@camshin.net)**