

**Social Assessment**

**Date**

**March 20 2020**  
**CEPF Grant 110304**

**Grantee**

**International Rivers**

***Project Title***

**Minimizing ecosystem and community vulnerability in Cambodia to Lower Mekong  
hydropower**

**Project Location**

**Cambodia**

## **Grant Summary**

1. Grantee organization. International Rivers
2. Grant title. Minimizing ecosystem and community vulnerability to Mekong hydropower
3. Grant number: 110304
4. Grant amount (US dollars). \$150,000
5. Proposed dates of grant. June 1 2020 – May 31 2022
6. Countries or territories where project will be undertaken. Cambodia
7. Date of preparation of this document. March 20 2020
8. **Indigenous People affected:** This section will describe the Indigenous People in the project area.

The project will implement community action research in two villages – Kaoh Chabr and Char Tanol – located along the Mekong River in Sambor district, Kratie province.

Kaoh Chbar village is located near one of the alternative sites for the proposed Sambor dam on the Mekong mainstream. There are 235 families (1,201 people, 731 female), of which 14 families (76 people, 37 female) are indigenous Pnong. The majority of people in the village, including the Pnong, rely on fishing and farming as their main source of livelihoods.

Char Tanol village is located approximately 25km downstream of Kaoh Chbar. There are 182 families (776 people, 373 female). None of the families identify as indigenous. Like Kao Chabar, and many other villages in the area, fishing and farming are major sources of livelihood. Some villagers also work as laborers in nearby cassava and cashew plantations.

9. **Summary of the proposed project:** This section will describe what you plan to do and how you plan to do it, with a particular focus on activities implemented in areas inhabited and/or used by Indigenous People.

The project seeks to minimize the vulnerability of ecosystems and communities to existing and planned hydropower projects in the Mekong and 3S basins. The project has the following three objectives:

1. Build a strong evidence base on dam impacts in Cambodia through community-driven and participatory impact monitoring; and strengthen community and civil society organizing around hydropower impacts at local, national and regional levels.
2. Monitor and disseminate analysis on energy and development plans and policies in Cambodia and Laos with a bearing on hydropower construction on the lower Mekong and 3S basin and opportunities for deployment of non-hydro renewable energy alternatives.
3. Support engagement with Chinese companies, financiers, government and academic stakeholders, on community demands for redress for impacts of existing dams, concerns over planned hydropower impacts on biodiversity and livelihoods, and support for more sustainable alternatives.

Community action research activities under Objective 1 will be implemented in areas inhabited by indigenous people. For the community action research, we plan to:

- Conduct another round of consultations with villagers, including one specifically for Indigenous Pnong in the Kaoh Chabr village, on the community research activities and the project more broadly.
- Conduct an introductory workshop with NGO partners and villagers who have been involved in community action research to share information about the process of community action more broadly, as well as outcomes of previous community research initiatives in other villages in Cambodia.
- In consultation with villagers, identify and select community researchers, ensuring there is a balance between, young and old, women and men; then work with community researchers in the design, scope and methods of the community research.
- Implement community research, and conduct regular trips to provide technical support and monitor progress.
- Facilitated discussions to collate key findings on topic areas and discuss dissemination strategies.
- Facilitate opportunities for community researchers to share their findings with different actors.
- Throughout the action research process, we will consult closely with and seek advice from indigenous people's organizations, including those working with the target communities.

The above activities will be led by our Cambodian community engagement consultant, in collaboration with partners who have supported community research in other parts of Cambodia.

We also plan to organize community exchanges within Cambodia between the Mekong, 3S and Tonle Sap, and one regional exchange between communities in Thailand and Cambodia. While exchange visit participants and locations will be determined in consultation with partners and communities, they may involve indigenous participants and/or visits to sites inhabited by indigenous people, for example, Kbal Romeas community affected by the Lower Sesan 2 dam, who are predominantly Indigenous Pnong. The selection of participants and sites will be done in close consultation with partners and communities they work with, with clear information on the purpose of exchange visits provided to potential participants before they agree to join.

**10. Potential impacts:** This section will assess expected project impacts (both positive and negative) on Indigenous People.

#### **Expected positive impacts**

- Indigenous participants in community research will increase their confidence and capacity to document and articulate issues related to their livelihoods and natural resources
- Through community exchange activities communities, indigenous participants will strengthen links with other riverine villagers/communities

- Increased awareness through development and publication of materials from the community research with villagers, local authorities and other actors

### **Potential negative impacts**

- Indigenous people participating in the community research may be perceived as ‘anti-dam’ or ‘development’
- Participation in project activities could increase time/burden, in particular for women participants.

**11. Participatory preparation:** This section will describe the participation of affected communities during the project design process (i.e. prior to submission of the full proposal), and explain how Free, Prior and Informed Consent was obtained.

International Rivers has visited and developed relationships with indigenous and non-indigenous villagers in Kaoh Chbar village as part of its on-going monitoring of plans for the proposed Sambor dam. In early March, we conducted two meetings with villagers in Kaoh Chbar village, where we informed meeting participants of the broader project, and specifically the community action research component. We shared information about the aims, scope and process of the research, namely that it would be a community and villager-led research, where they will be actively involved in the design, implementation and communication of the research, with support from International Rivers and partners.

The first meeting included the commune chief and villagers, most of whom were Khmer. The second meeting was conducted with Indigenous families, leaders and the commune chief. Participants in both meetings expressed interest and support for the research. In our view, these meetings do not yet constitute Free, Prior and Informed **Consent**, and we will conduct further consultations, especially with indigenous families, prior to implementing the proposed research. However, preparation in the design process was conducted freely, as participation in the meeting was voluntary and no-one was coerced into joining; it has been conducted **prior** to implementation of activities; and the meetings **informed** and **consulted with** participants of the broader project, and plans for the community action-research aims, scope and process, and plans to establish a grievance mechanism through which they can raise and submit concerns and complaints about the project activities in the village.

**12. Mitigation strategies:** This section will outline measures to avoid adverse impacts and provide culturally appropriate benefits.

- We will conduct regular consultations and monitoring visits, which will include discussions with villagers, and at times local authorities to build understanding of the community research as it progresses – i.e. the initiative is about promoting local and indigenous knowledge and perspectives, and not about opposing development.
- Participation in the community research will be entirely voluntary, and time required will be made clear during the design and preparation phase. The research schedule will also take into account key seasons and times, when villagers are busy so as not to place extra burden during busy periods (e.g. of fishing, planting and harvesting).

- As community action research, the community themselves will be closely involved in the research design and implementation. This will help ensure that they have ownership over the research and project and that the research questions and findings are culturally appropriate and fit with community needs. The project methodology will also be designed in close consultation with indigenous people's organizations and local partners who have conducted similar research projects in Cambodia.
- We will also consult Cambodian Indigenous People's Organisation (CIPO) throughout the process to ensure project activities do no harm to – and benefit - indigenous peoples and participants in the community research, as well as project activities more broadly.

**13. Monitoring and evaluation:** This section will explain how compliance with the safeguard policy on Indigenous Peoples will be monitored, and reported to CEPF and/or the Regional Implementation Team. Monitoring and evaluation methodologies should be adapted to the local context, indicators, and capacity.

We will undertake regular monitoring visits, during which we'll hold discussions with researchers and the other villagers. In consultation with CIPO and others, we'll develop a simple tracking/monitoring tool, with key guiding questions that can be used by the Cambodian Community engagement consultant and partners in their monitoring visits, which will be reported to CEPF.

**14. Grievance mechanism:** All projects that trigger a safeguard must provide local communities and other relevant stakeholders with a means to raise a grievance with the grantee, the relevant Regional Implementation Team, the CEPF Secretariat or the World Bank.

We will:

- Conduct another round of consultations with communities prior to implementation of community action research activities, including reiterating grievance mechanism
- In consultation with partners, develop and publish accessible materials outlining the grievance mechanism, which will be placed at different places in the village, and including the key contacts and information as per above.
- During monitoring visits, discuss with villagers e.g. challenges, issues and concerns on project progress.

At a minimum, the grievance mechanism will include:

- Posters in local language explaining the project and grievance mechanism. In addition to placing the posters in public places in the village, each community research will be provided a copy of the poster.
- A feedback box, where participants can place written feedback on the project, and which will be checked during regular community visits by International Rivers and partners.
- The posters will also include the following information and contacts:
  - For any feedback or concerns relate to the project, please contact Mr. Pen Somony, Executive Director, Cambodian Volunteers for Society (CVS) Tel: 012 70 80 93/015 77 88 49E-mail: cvs.cambodia@gmail.com
  - Mr. Gary Lee, Southeast Asia Program Director, International Rivers, Tel: +66 808 099 457 E-mail: [glee@internationalrivers.org](mailto:glee@internationalrivers.org)

- CEPF Regional Implementation Team, please use the following: Lou Vanny, IUCN Cambodia Program, Room 592, 5th Floor, Phnom Penh Center, St. Sothearos, Sangkat Tonle Bassac, Phnom Penh, Tel. +855 12 703 033, Email: [Vanny.lou@iucn.org](mailto:Vanny.lou@iucn.org).
- We will share all grievances – and a proposed response – with the Regional Implementation Team and the CEPF Grant Director within 15 days. If the claimant is not satisfied following the response, they may submit the grievance directly to the CEPF Executive Director at [cepfexecutive@conservation.org](mailto:cepfexecutive@conservation.org) or by surface mail.
- Note, CVS is the local contact for the grievance mechanism. CVS are a partner in our work under this project, and their contact is provided to give organisational backing of a local organisation in Cambodia to the implementation of the grievance mechanism. They have agreed to take on this role, and our Cambodian community engagement consultant will work closely and coordinate with CVS during the project.

**15. Budget:** This section will summarize dedicated costs related to compliance with the safeguard policy on Indigenous Peoples. These costs should be incorporated into the budget of the CEPF grant and/or covered by co-financing.

The design and publication of grievance mechanism materials to be placed in the village has been budgeted under consultancies and professional services (e.g. design and printing services).

Costs associated with regular monitoring visits are incorporated into the Cambodian community engagement consultant's travel costs, as well as SEA Program Director's trips to Cambodia.