



LOWER SESAN 2 DAM

The Lower Sesan 2 (LS2) dam is a hydropower project that began operating in 2017 on the Sesan River in Cambodia, 15 miles upstream from where it meets the Mekong River. The dam will have a drastic impact on the Lower Mekong region as a whole. Community members near the dam site have organized to stop the project. EarthRights partners with these frontline communities to demand that the LS2 developers consult local populations and provide remedies when their rights have been violated. EarthRights provides legal support to a coalition that includes community leaders, the [3S Rivers Protection Network](#), [Mekong Watch](#), [Save the Mekong](#), and other civil society groups.

Project Impact

The Sesan River is an important migration route and breeding ground for fish species from the Mekong. [A study](#) conducted in 2012 predicted that the LS2 project would lead to a 9.3 percent drop in fish stocks across the Lower Mekong Basin and push over 50 species to extinction. Experts have also warned that the LS2 dam will change the hydrology and flood patterns of the Mekong River and the connected Tonle Sap Lake, “the beating heart of Cambodia,” affecting both ecosystems and agriculture. The LS2 dam will have a [larger impact](#) on fish biomass than any other dam currently planned for construction on tributaries in the Lower Mekong.

The cultures and livelihoods of many communities depend on the health of these rivers. Cambodian communities [rely heavily](#) on fish from the Mekong and its tributaries as an essential source of food. Since the beginning of the project, communities affected by the LS2 dam have been left out of decision-making processes and denied basic information. The Environmental Impact Assessment was conducted in 2008 and estimates that the LS2 project will displace almost five thousand people. But [a 2009 report](#) shows that ninety thousand villagers will be negatively impacted by the dam as fish populations disappear and water quality changes.

Our Solution

The affected communities are asserting their right to be fairly consulted about resettlement and compensation. The current resettlement plans have not been shared with the communities. Villagers who would be affected have not been offered compensation. In the reservoir area, 100 households from the Kbal Romeas and Srekor villages have rejected the resettlement plan and refuse to relocate. Villagers downstream from the dam have also maintained **an organized resistance** to the project.

In 2012, EarthRights published *Land, Water, Rights*, a collection of writing from sixteen students of the EarthRights Mekong School. It includes "Watering Down the Law: A Legal Analysis of the Proposed Lower Sesan 2 Dam Project" by Panha, a human rights lawyer for Legal Aid of Cambodia. Mr. Panha's analysis and stories from earth rights defenders across the region can be read **here**.

In late 2014, a group of 18 civil society organizations from Cambodia and the Mekong region **issued a statement** calling for LS2 project developers and the Cambodian Government to conduct a new Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and release information on a redesign of the dam. The original EIA showed no assessment of alternatives, insufficient baseline data, and no assessment of transboundary impacts. EarthRights has conducted community training and capacity building around this process, supporting demands for free, prior, and informed consent and the rights of Indigenous people in the affected area.



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