

The background image shows a wide river with a forested bank in the distance. In the foreground, two people are standing in the shallow water near a muddy bank. A long, narrow boat is partially submerged at the shore, with a blue object (possibly a kayak or a small boat) visible next to it. The text is overlaid on the upper half of the image.

Strengthening Accountability and Inclusiveness in Economic Development Projects: The Case of the Lower Sesan II dam



Background to the Research

- The project is funded by Oxfam Australia and Monash University
- **The central goal of this project** is to investigate existing barriers to *community driven accountability*, and the factors enabling some communities to develop relatively stronger community centred accountability processes than others.
- Examine three cases studies in different geographic locations in Cambodia.
- People impacted by large-scale development projects
- This presentation draws on findings from LSS2 case study.



Introduction

- The ASEAN countries are increasingly looking at hydropower as the solution to power needs.
- Cambodian gov't has signed the agreement for LSS2 dam project in Se San district Stung Treng province.
- Capacity proposed 400MW
- Project Developers
 - RGC with Royal Group, Hydrolancang International Energy Co. Ltd and Electricity of Vietnam (10%)



Presentation question

- How much has the Se San 2 dam project involved affected people in consultation and decision making processes according to the principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)?



Research Methods for LSS2

- Fieldwork from Nov-2012 to March-2013.
- Target Areas: Four villages in Se San district
- Criteria for selection: ethnicity, geographic situation, identified strong & weak networks
- Semi-Structure Interview with provincial departments, district & commune authorities, NGOs, community networks, affected villagers
- Participatory mapping exercises: Time line, Venn Diagram, Force Field Analysis with NGOs, community networks, villagers.
- Secondary data review



What is FPIC ?

Free, Prior and Informed Consent

- FPIC is a right for indigenous people as stated in International law and in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People
 - **Free:** free from force, intimidation, manipulation or pressure by company or gov't.
 - **Prior:** To gov't allocating land for particular land uses and prior to approval of specific project. Gov't must give enough time to peoples consider all information and make decisions.
 - **Informed:** Developers must give all relevant information to affected communities.
 - **Consent:** Requires that the project developers allow affected peoples to say 'yes' or 'no' to **each stage** of the project.



Findings

- **Prior Consent**

- The villagers living in the reservoir area were not informed *prior* to the decision to plan for a dam in Sesan.
- According to interviews, villagers heard about the dam through two main channels, both informal:
 - Canadian Researcher Ian Baird 2008
 - Vietnamese surveyors in 2008
- No official visits from company representatives
- Most information regarding the dam has been received from NGOs.



Findings cont.

- **The right to say yes or no**
 - Whether villagers have been directly asked whether they agree with the project and give their consent, yes or no, is unclear but;
 - Villagers have expressed discontent about the dam project and stated that they did not want it to go ahead.
 - Villagers themselves are unclear about their right to give consent to the project.
 - Frustration that opinions are not being taken into consideration.
 - Don't want to be seen to oppose the 'development' of Cambodia.



Findings cont.

- **Free Consent**

- Affected families have been provided with partial information and do not have a full picture to base their decisions on.
- Forms that families were expected to thumb print were in Vietnamese and people were unable to read.
- Circumstances of meetings have sometimes meant that people are encouraged to agree without being able to discuss their feelings and ideas in more detail.



Findings cont.

• Clear Information

- The affected people have heard about the dam, but few have clear information on what the project involves, what the real impacts will be (+ & -) and what resettlement and compensation was being offered to them.
- They also had NO information on their rights as affected indigenous people to be consulted and to participate in the project planning and dialogue.
- The provision of information has not always been given in the language of the people
- Little is documented at meetings. People rely on their memory of what was said



Cont.

- **Clear Information**

- The provision of information is also constrained by the village context.
- NGOs have helped to provide information to the communities.
- But NGOs also do not have the full information as they have not been able to meet with government and the company to discuss the issues in depth.
- The lack of clear information has meant that people are left guessing about their situation. This has created a high degree of stress and worry.



Cont.

- **Spaces for Community voices to be heard**

- Affected communities have a lack of opportunity to meet with the project developers or the gov't from national level
- Local authorities are still working in a subservient way to the upper authorities and have not been able to raise the communities' concerns to the upper levels.
- Meetings held in Khmer result in some people not being confident to talk.
- Communities are relying on NGOs and sometimes the media to help them to pass the message up to higher levels of government.



Conclusions

- Lack of clear and complete info. about dam project and resettlement.
- Language issues - big barrier to people having information
- Geography- remote area difficult to access the key decision makers of project and the media.
- People are not aware their right to consent and consultation.
- Daily livelihood limits people's ability to participate in meetings.
- Local authorities lack capacity to raise concerns to upper levels (not represent of people)
- Lack of opportunity for dialogue make it difficult to express opinions in a free and informed way.



Recommendations

- Need for government, company developers to respect the right of people to FPIC.
 - Regular consultation and dialogue between developers & communities
 - More capacity for local authorities to raise concerns to upper levels
 - More effort to ensure meetings are clearly documented
 - More effort to ensure meetings are in local languages
 - More effort to ensure people feel comfortable to raise their concerns
- Increase use of media to share information to communities and to raise community concerns



Recommendations

- NGOs to support communities by informing them of their rights to FPIC and by developing strategies and plans for them to use FPIC to protect their rights.
 - Educate communities on FPIC
 - Provide information regarding the projects that can provide an alternative view to that provided by government & developers
 - Act as facilitator to help set up and ensure community participation in dialogue and meetings
 - Brief communities before meetings and assist in documentation of meetings
 - Assist community to facilitate discussion in communities so they can come up with a clear decision and strategy
 - Help communities seek independent advice



Thanks