



Pak Lay is the fourth dam planned on the mainstream of the Lower Mekong Basin. The government of Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR) is going to put this project into the Prior Consultation process with other members of the Mekong River Commission (MRC). This consultation is planned to be carried out after the construction of hydropower dams on the mainstream of the Mekong river, namely Xayaburi (2012), Don Sahong (2015) and Pak Beng (planned in 2017).

Vietnam Rivers Network (VRN) and its members have decided to boycott the consultation for Pak Lay dam to be held by MRC on September 20th, 2018 in Vientiane (Lao PDR). Our reasons are as below:

- **The government of Lao PDR did not respect recommendations by non-governmental organizations and communities living in the downstream area when constructing Xayaburi, Don Sahong and Pak Beng dams.** These recommendations include a request the government of Lao PDR to delay construction process until having a full assessment on environmental and social impacts of the above mentioned three dams, in particular a specific sharing about changes in the design of the fish ladder of the Xayaburi dam; sharing results of the consultations; postponement of these hydropower projects' construction until MRC's Transboundary Impact Assessment Report was released. In 2015, VRN and its members shared the concerns of communities living in the Mekong Delta about serious impacts of Don Sahong dam on environment and livelihoods in a consultation meeting held by MRC in Pak Se. However, we have not received any feedback from MRC and the government of Lao PDR on this matter.

- **The Transboundary Environmental and Social Impact Assessment Report for Pak Lay dam project has copied and pasted upto 90% from that of the Pak Beng project.** The Pak Lay report uses a large part in the Impact Assessment of Pak Beng dam with only changes in the site name and location of the project¹. It proves that the investors did not seriously conduct the field survey and environmental and social impact assessment of the Pak Lay hydropower project, leading to negative consequences, causing great losses to the ecosystem, environment and food security of the people living in the lower Mekong. Sections in the Pak Lay's report duplicated from the Pak Beng's one included: public consultation conducted in 2011; flow rate analysis (pages 219 - 222); tables on status of hydropower dams in Laos (page 40, table 18, page 135); the

¹ <https://draftable.com/compare/EGrLQTTQdMsD>

social and environmental policies which were cited in the Pak Lay dam's report is currently using the Laotian Sustainable Development Policy in 2005, while the government of Lao PDR has published hydropower policy and implemented guidelines for using this policy in 2015 and 2016; data on fisheries and hydrology were not updated, etc.

- **The government of Lao PDR holds the view of continuing to build hydroelectric dams in Laos at all costs despite the potential adverse impacts on the ecosystem and people's livelihoods in the lower Mekong.** The incident of Xe Pian Xe Namnoy dam collapse on July 23rd 2018 has severely damaged people and property in the downstream area in south-eastern Laos and raised concerns about dam safety in the upper Mekong. It also brought serious impacts to downstream areas including Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. The government of Lao PDR had an urgent meeting on August 7th, 2018 and decided to suspend new hydropower plants and conduct safety inspections for all existing and ongoing dams². However, the government of Lao PDR is still promoting the consultation process for Pak Lay dam, the fourth largest hydropower project on the mainstream of Lower Mekong Basin, which is contrary to previous governmental declarations made on August 7th, 2018.

VRN has realized that recommendations of non-governmental organizations and communities living in the lower Mekong have not been respected and carefully considered by the government of Lao PDR. The upcoming consultation of Pak Lay hydropower again shows that consultation is only a formality. The government of Lao PDR will likely continue to build the Pak Lay dam after two rounds of Procedures for Notification, Prior Consultation and Agreement (PNPCA) as required by the MRC. This will take time, effort and money from the stakeholders involved in the consultation process. Therefore, we have decided to boycott the consultation on the Pak Lay hydropower dam in Vientiane on September 20th, 2018.

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² <https://news.mongabay.com/2018/08/lao-government-says-it-will-suspend-new-hydro-projects-after-dam-collapse-kills-31/>