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***Film Released: Raises Food Security Concerns for Dams on Lower Mekong Tributary, Offers Sustainable Alternatives***

***“Hydropower Impacts and Alternatives” focuses on serious threats to Cambodia’s food security and urges a delay to develop sustainable solutions.***

**Thursday November 14, 2013** (***Phnom Penh, Cambodia*)** – A new short film titled “[Hydropower Impacts and Alternatives](http://youtu.be/Y1M4nFmwQGY)” that focuses on potential effects of dams planned for Cambodia’s 3S River Basin premiered at an event in Phnom Penh today.

Produced by Conservation International and filmmaker Allan Michaud, the film highlights the role of the Sekong, Srepok, and Sesan (3S) Rivers as the most critical tributaries to the Lower Mekong River, as major routes for migrating fish and providing essential water and sediment flows to the downstream floodplains of the Tonle Sap, currently the most productive inland fishery on the planet. The film investigates the rapid hydropower development planned and underway, and how this is altering the way the 3S Rivers deliver their ecosystem services to the Tonle Sap and Lower Mekong.

Today’s premier event brought together critical decision makers and stakeholders to focus on the 3-S River Basin and the opportunities for sustainable hydropower and energy development for the Kingdom.

**Dr. Tracy Farrell, Senior Technical Director of CI-Cambodia,** whoappeared in the film, said at the event, **“**This film recognizes the critical importance of this river system for its energy provision potential, as well as the fish migration, sediment and water flows that nourish critical ecosystems and feed Cambodia’s people.”

**Filmmaker Allan Michaud** advised, “Following on from my [recent film](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f4ej6L_bFh4) on the importance of forests to water security, I felt there was a need for a fact-based film to raise awareness of the threats posed by some dams to future food security in the lower Mekong basin, particularly the planned Mekong mainstream dams and those on important tributaries such as the 3S Rivers. The film attempts to explain the various concerns in plain language, with no agenda other than to educate and hopefully to provide some alternatives to some of these highly damaging dams.”

**Impacts on Food Security**

The greatest concern the film highlights is the affect the dams will have on Cambodia’s food security. It notes that recent studies have predicted that the dams will wipe out a significant portion of fish migration into the Tonle Sap, and block 90% of sediment flows, important for agriculture.

Dr. Cochrane and Arias from the University of Canterbury, New Zealand, and Thanapon Piman from the Mekong River Commission provided the research used in the film. Their findings have been published in this month’s issue of the Journal of Water Resources Planning and Management, in an article titled “Assessment of Flow Changes from Hydropower Development and Operations in Sre Kong, Se San and Sre Pok Rivers of the Mekong Basin”.

Dr. Farrell said, ‘this new information has highlighted the uniqueness and importance of 3-S river system, and the potential serious negative effects the current plan could have. It has enabled us to tell a very compelling visual and verbal story based in scientific fact about eco-hydrology, transport of sediments, fisheries, and considerations for hydropower and alternative energy planning across the 3-S river basin that we hope will influence decision makers to consider alternatives that will have less impact on the ecosystem services on which millions depend”

**Sustainable energy solutions**

The film does not deny that hydropower is a part of the solution for Cambodia’s development. Most of Cambodia’s people still lack reliable access to electricity (some 75-80%), and less than 10% of Cambodia’s total installed capacity has been developed. Hydropower is a clean energy option, from a green house gas emissions standpoint, which is an important direction for Cambodia’s energy development trajectory, as currently more than 80% of the Mekong region still relies on fossil fuels for energy, which is harmful to the environment.

Alternatives to these dams as planned that appear in the film include alternative locations of high impact dams, alternative reservoir operations to minimize alternation of natural flows, designing sediment release mechanisms and scheduling seasonal discharges. They would also include the design, testing and monitoring of fish passage alternatives.

The benefits of sustainable hydropower planning and development are not just ecological, but also economical noting sedimentation issues reducing efficiencies in energy production and noting the large reservoir needed for the 3S River may not be worth the energy produced when compared to other natural capital sustained by this area in its natural state such as food security.

Dr. Farrell said, “We are very excited at CI about the opportunity to open a dialogue about hydropower and alternative energy planning opportunities, that can allow for necessary growth and development, while ensuring food and water security and climate change resilience for Cambodia and its people.

For more information or to contact the producers visit: <http://cambodiahydropower.weebly.com/>

**Available content for media (\*Mandatory image credits as stated in photo caption and metadata\*)**

* For more information or to contact the producers visit: <http://cambodiahydropower.weebly.com/>
* To view the video:
  + In English <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y1M4nFmwQGY&feature=youtu.be>
  + In Khmer [http://youtu.be/4BPpMjhZ9lM](http://youtu.be/4BPpMjhZ9lM" \t "_blank)
* Photos are available for download here: <https://ci.tandemvault.com/lightboxes/8726?tc=Ganpy4psw>

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**Note to editors:**

**Conservation International (CI)** — Building upon a strong foundation of science, partnership and field demonstration, CI empowers societies to responsibly and sustainably care for nature, our global biodiversity, for the long term well-being of people. Founded in 1987 and marking its 25th anniversary in 2012, CI has headquarters in the Washington DC area, and 900 employees working in nearly 30 countries on four continents, plus 1,000+ partners around the world.  For more information, please visit at [www.conservation.org](http://www.conservation.org), or on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/conservation.intl?ref=ts) or [Twitter](http://twitter.com/#!/ConservationOrg).