

Cumulative Impact Assessment in the Sekong River Basin



The Government of Lao PDR has prioritized the expansion of renewable energy generation for domestic consumption and export. While this has great potential to help the country meet its development targets, careful management is required to avoid significant negative impacts over time on the environment and communities.

The Sekong River Basin is particularly important as one of the few remaining major Mekong tributaries with high biodiversity value and few hydropower projects in operation. The development of additional hydro, wind and solar power projects, together with expanded industrial operations such as mining, logging and plantation forestry, present significant risks of negative cumulative impact on the environment and the health and livelihoods of communities in the basin.

The Cumulative Impact Assessment (CIA) seeks to identify the best balance between renewable energy development, and the sustainable use and protection of the Sekong's environment and communities.

- Stakeholder consultations will provide guidance on which environmental and social risks to avoid.
- A Steering Committee provides ongoing guidance and information to help achieve a well-informed, well-balanced final assessment.
- Expert discussions will offer important feedback on technical and scientific issues.

The CIA will assess both environmental and social factors. This includes such things as the physical features, habitats, wildlife populations, the ecosystem services, the water and nutrient cycles, and the micro-climate in the Sekong River Basin. It also includes the health, well-being, culture, and livelihoods of communities in the area.

The CIA will integrate elements of a collaborative river basin power optimization assessment. Identifying key criteria and parameters, it will draw and analyze a variety of power generation scenarios which would minimize cumulative impacts whilst still meeting need for the development of renewable energy sources.

The CIA will provide evidence-based recommendations to decision makers on how to sustainably develop renewable energy in the Sekong River Basin. The final report and recommendations will be widely shared and available in English and Lao languages on the IFC website. The CIA is funded by the Government of Australia.

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The steps of the Cumulative Impact Assessment

