

## Consultation

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Since the earliest project surveys by JICA in the late 1990s, Nam Ngiep 1 project staff have been consulting people in the Ngiep valley about possible resettlement sites.

The Nam Ngiep 1 Power Company began official public consultations and disclosure of plans in 2007 and the company sees the consultation process as a key component of its work throughout the project. The objectives are to:

- Ensure local people's concerns are incorporated in project design and implementation
- Increase people's awareness and familiarity with the Project
- Ensure transparency in the decision-making process
- Enhance potential benefits by directly involving relevant people

Consultations are carried out at many different levels, from informal village discussions to large stakeholder forums at provincial and national levels. Techniques used to communicate with villagers include focus group discussions and village meetings, and use of visual information such as pictures, diagrams, and three-dimensional models. In selecting techniques, consideration was given to the following:

- Language: consultation activities have largely been conducted in Lao and translated into Hmong, or presented in Hmong directly by NNP1 staff
- The participation of women and vulnerable groups, for example by organising focus group discussions for particular groups
- Literacy rates: where possible consultation has been conducted using face-to-face communication and visual representation of information

The feedback received during these meetings has been used to update and amend the Project design. Examples of changes that can be attributed to consultation include:

- Revisions to the transmission line route, in order to avoid an elephant conservation area;
- Increases in the minimum downstream flows to help sustain environmental values;
- Changes in the location and composition of the resettlement sites, including the community infrastructure and the process and materials to construct the housing.