

Nam Tha 1



The Nam Tha 1 Hydropower Project is located in the mountainous northwest corner of Laos. Nam Tha 1 would require the resettlement of nearly 8,000 mostly indigenous people. It would also impact downstream communities along the Nam Tha River and the mainstream Mekong.

While a contractor for the state-owned Guangxi Electric Power Industry Investigation Design and Research Institute (GXED) conducted an EIA and SIA for the project, according to a [new report \(/en/southeast-asia/southeast-asia/mekong-mainstream-dams/laos/don-sahong/power-surge-the-impacts-rapid-d\)](#), the assessments were rushed and underestimated the environmental and social impacts of the dam. In particular, it failed to take into account the effects the dam on water quality, aquatic ecosystems, and the challenges that the resettled population would have to face.

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Nam Tha 1: A Khmu community on the banks of the Nam Tha in Luang Namtha Province

David J.H. Blake

Among the major concerns expressed in the report is the fact that 34 villages will have to be resettled either to uphill regions that do not accommodate rice paddy plantings or to the forests of the Nam Ha National Protected Area (NPA). This situation may lead to increased deforestation, as villagers will need to clear land for dry-land rice production. While the dam is also expected to flood only a small portion of the Bokeo Reserve and the Nam Ha NPA forests, it could have immense negative effects on these national parks through a loss in aquatic resources, an increase in hunting pressure and logging, and a loss of forest cover and erosion due to road building and power line installation.

First proposed in the early 1990s, the Nam Tha 1 dam only recently started to move forward due to the involvement of [China Southern Power Grid \(/node/2314\)](#). Pre-construction has started but researchers are uncertain about the project's cost-effectiveness and the potential market for its power. In addition, in violation of the National Hydropower Policy, construction of an access road is reportedly underway despite the lack of a complete report on the dam's environmental and social impacts.

[See the latest report \(/node/3964\)](#) for more information on Nam Tha 1 and other dam projects underway in Laos.

More information:

[Power Surge: The Impacts of Rapid Dam Development in Laos \(/node/3964\)](#)

[Letter Calls on China Southern Power Grid to pull out of Southeast Asia Dams \(/node/7438\)](#)