Panel of Experts Appointed for Theun-Hinboun

Vientiane, December 9, 2014

The Theun-Hinboun Power Company (THPC) has appointed a panel of experts to assess the performance of its social and environmental programs. Three experts with long experience of analysing the effects of hydropower projects will begin auditing the Company’s performance in February 2015. The panel, or POE, will continue surveying the situation in the villages and natural environment around the Theun-Hinboun plant until at least late 2018.

THPC’s license agreement with the Lao government, signed in 2007 at the beginning of the Theun-Hinboun Expansion Project, details a range of obligations that the Company must meet in order to demonstrate its commitment to improving the lives of villagers affected by the plant and to protecting the environment.

The three members of the POE have been selected to combine a range of complementary attributes and so form a balanced panel that can accurately assess THPC’s progress in reaching its targets. The panel’s leader is Dr Helen Locher, who has 25 years of experience in environmental and social sustainability work and is a qualified auditor and assessor of hydropower projects.

Associate Professor Souphab Khouangvichit of the National University of Laos’s Faculty of Environmental Sciences has been analysing the social and environmental implications of development and industrial projects in Laos for over 20 years, including advising on livelihood adaptation among resettled communities. Completing the team is Francois Obein, who has been working in environmental and social positions in Southeast Asia since 1993. Mr Obein has been involved with major hydropower projects in Laos and led environmental and social panels of experts for hydropower projects in Africa.

The Theun-Hinboun POE is responsible for auditing the attainment of income targets in each project-area village, and for affirming that all THPC’s social entitlements and environmental obligations have been met.

From the beginning of the expansion project until the end of 2013, THPC spent around US$60 million on a broad range of initiatives designed to share the benefits of the project with local people and to minimize disruption to local ecologies. For those people most affected, the Company has built improved housing and public facilities such as clinics, schools, roads, electricity and water supply. THPC also offers livelihood programs to help people improve agricultural and business opportunities plus social assistance including nutritional and sanitation components.

At the beginning of 2014, the Company approved an additional US$50 million of funding for social and environmental programs to be implemented over the following five years.