

# LUANG PRABANG HYDROPOWER PROJECT

## WHS Heritage Impact Assessment

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October 2023



An aerial photograph showing a town with traditional houses and a river, set against a backdrop of mountains under a clear blue sky. The image is partially obscured by a white curved shape on the right side of the slide.

# Commission

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Government of Laos commissioned CBA to prepare a new independent **World Heritage Site Heritage Impact Assessment** for the **Luang Prabang Hydropower Project** in March 2023

CBA are an independent UK based, award-winning heritage and landscape consultancy with extensive experience in the World Heritage sector, including producing numerous HIAs.

Work being undertaken in accordance with the 2022 UNESCO guidance on Heritage Impact Assessment

HIA is focused on potential impacts of project on the Luang Prabang World Heritage Site

# Scheme overview

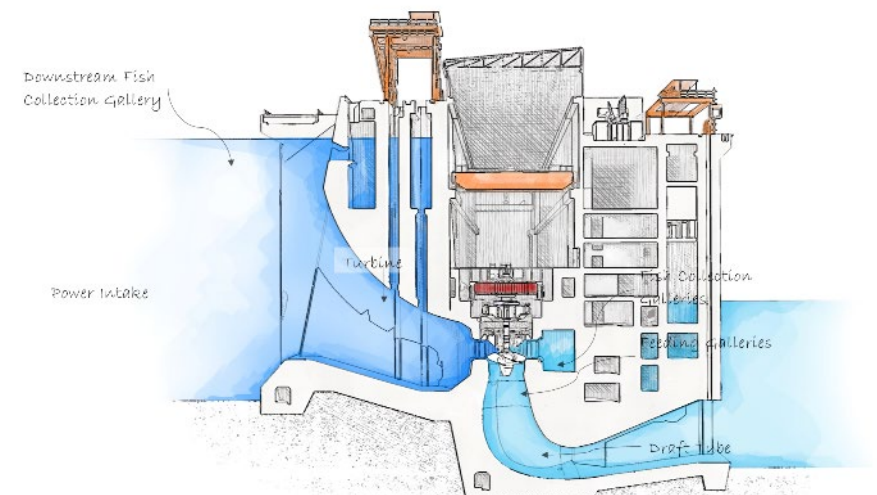
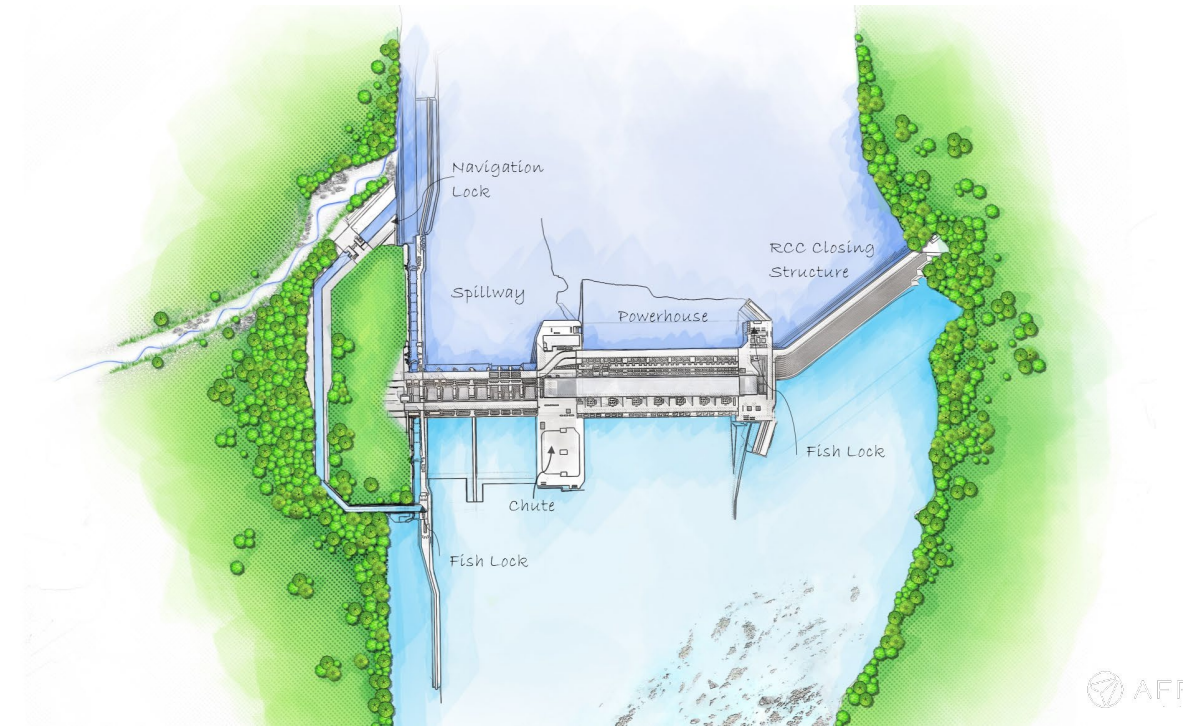
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Run-of-River Power Project,  
not a Storage Dam  
Does not alter flow of river

Located c.27km upstream of Luang Prabang

Element of LAO PDR national strategy to  
deliver economic and social benefits, and  
address climate change

Developed in accordance with all national  
and international design standards





# HIA Progress

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**Scoping Report** – end of April 2023 (complete)

**Interim HIA** – end July 2023 (complete)

**Anthropological Fieldwork** – September 2023 (complete)

**Draft Final HIA** – mid-December

**Final HIA** – late January 2024

Scoping and Interim HIA already issued to UNESCO

Final HIA will be issued with State of Conservation report in January 2024



# Interim HIA

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Focused on developing:

- Baseline understanding
- Attributes of OUV – tangible and intangible
- Understanding changes associated with development
- Initial Impact Assessment

Report issued end of July 2023

# Baseline

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Extensive analysis and assessment:

- History of Luang Prabang
- Urban form and architecture
- Religion and belief
- Customs, traditions and ways of life
- Setting and wider context

Addressed concerns raised on previous HIAs



# Attributes of OUV

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Identified 9 Attributes of Outstanding Universal Value – Intangible and Tangible

Addressed all aspects of the Property's value including :

- Architecture
- Urban form
- Religious practice
- Beliefs
- Customs and traditions

Foundation for impact assessment





# Changes associated with LPHPP

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Extensive analysis of potential changes arising from scheme

Informed by existing factual material, engagement with developer, engagement with external advisors

Covered a range of areas including:

Earthquake risk

Flooding

Fish and river ecology

Sedimentation

Water Levels

Power connections

River navigation

Construction period impacts

Flood risk warning

Cyber attack





# Initial Impact Assessment

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No significant impacts on Attributes of OUV, and Integrity and Authenticity identified in initial Impact Assessment

- Failure of barrage due to earthquakes, extreme flood events, and cyber attack addressed through design – no impact
- Design of scheme means no changes in water levels past WHS (flow in=flow out) – no impact
- Navigation along Mekong maintained – no impact
- No change to natural flood patterns – no impact
- Construction population managed – no impact



# Initial Impact Assessment

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- Temporary negligible to minor negative impacts due to construction period disruption to navigation
- Permanent minor to moderate positive impacts due to improved flood warning
- Permanent minor negative due to pylon line (now fully mitigated by re-routing of line)

Data on fish and sediment under review



# Proposed Mitigation

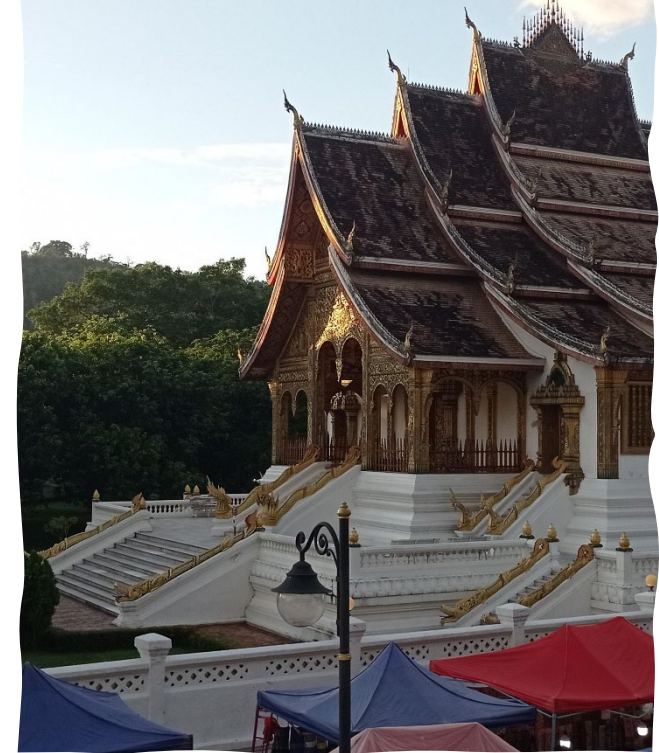
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Additional mitigation recommended in Interim HIA included:

- Minimise impact on navigation during construction phase
- Formalise flood warning procedures with local authorities to ensure greatest benefit for WHS and communities, building on the existing Emergency Action Plan

Additional opportunities for enhancement were identified:

- Employ and support local craft apprentices in work for new temples
- Engage with Luang Prabang communities to explain scheme





# Final HIA

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Ongoing development of the Final HIA:

- Update Baseline and Attributes following Anthropological fieldwork
- Update impact assessment following baseline update and receipt of new data from developer
- Finalise agreed mitigation measures
- Prepare Cumulative Impact Assessment

Final HIA to be issued to UNESCO in January 2024



# Conclusions

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Interim Heritage Impact Assessment has identified no significant negative impacts

Key issues relating to catastrophic flooding due to dam failure and changes to water levels on the Mekong have been addressed through revisions to the design and clarification of information

Potential positive impacts relating to flood management have been identified

Further baseline study and impact assessment is ongoing but it is considered unlikely that any permanent negative impacts will be identified