

How a China-Built Dam Destroyed an Ecosystem and Livelihoods

China-built dam or the Lower Sesan2 is one of Asia's widest dams constructed by the cooperation between China and Cambodia under a trillion dollars investment and infrastructure project of the Chinese government called "Belt and Road Initiative or BRI". It is a plan with a very strong goal that aims to develop trade routes connecting China with the rest of the world. Not only developing foreign policy but making Beijing become globally well known.

The Lower Sesan 2 dam was built with the goal of achieving more power independence and energy security, the project will enable Cambodia to rely less on expensive fuel and long-term fixed electricity prices. Additionally, the project's sponsors stated that it would lessen poverty and generate thousands of new jobs. However, there was a study and deprecation from local people about the construction because it might have some negative effects caused by the dams to the environment and local community. First is losing their home and ancestral farming land that they use to generate income since the government forced people to move out from the construction area and offered them houses and money as compensation which are totally not what local people want. They want to be self-sufficient by having skills and career. Losing their main food resources from land are affected because the land was submerged by water. Therefore, The soil now is dry and rocky since they have moved far from the river and became more difficult to farm. The main source of protein from fish in the river also decreased because of the water obstruction that affects their nature and production cycle. Local people's livelihoods are now changed. Moreover, on the economic side, Economists are still questioning if it was worth enough compared to the loss of income and resettlement.

In conclusion, the causes and problems show the interaction between economy and environment. While the government aims to improve the economic sector, the environment is destroyed. According to the key economic insight, Firms try to maximize profit but end up creating negative effects on the environment. Same as the government that aims to promote the country and produce their own hydropower energy but turns out not to be effective and not environment friendly. Also the opportunity cost of choosing to build the dam will be the abundant nature and the livelihood that has been passed down for generations. This shows how economic growth leads to environmental problems.

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