

The Summarize of “How a China-Built Dam Destroyed an Ecosystem and Livelihoods”

The Mae Krong River is an important fishery economy for Cambodia. The cooperation of the Lower Se San 2 Dam between Cambodia and China is likely to affect the lives of Cambodian people and their natural life, especially thousands of fish. The Lower Se San 2 Dam is a large dam with a distance of over six kilometers, which is a long distance and greatly affects the surrounding indigenous communities. The three main issues in the essay are why people oppose the construction of the Lower Se San 2 Dam, the economic impact of agriculture and the use of hydroelectric power.

Mae Krong River is a clean river and thousands of fish species live in this river, but the presence of the Lower Se San 2 Dam caused the route to be cut and thus the ecosystem changed. Fish is the main food that Cambodians use for their livelihood and there are also many people engaged in fishing. When there are few fish left because the reproductive cycle is not possible because the live path is cut and blocked, it affects people who are engaged in fishing because there are fewer fish. There are 4,500-5,000 people who have to relocate and most of them are ethnic people. Their main income comes from three ways: fishing, which is an economy where people choose to pursue a career in fishing because they can eat and sell. The second is rice, vegetables and fruits. Lastly, soil-growing crops like mushrooms, beans, and herbs were also gone. Leaving most people reluctant to move and there was resistance, but was threatened by the Cambodian government and the head of the dam construction team from China, according to the 2008 environmental impact study, apparently, people disagreed and opposed the construction of the Lower Se San 2 Dam for fear that it would reduce their livelihood income, but they were threatened by the Cambodian government and the Chinese dam construction supervisors, forcing more than a thousand households to move from their homes. It shows that the existence of the Lower Se San 2 Dam has made the lives of some people worse and they have to give up their own land to make things that they don't even appreciate. Moreover, it has also destroyed the ecosystems where more than a thousand species of fish live, which is an important economic resource for Cambodian people.

Fisheries and agriculture are very significant economies for people in waterfront communities. In the past, people could fish up to 40 kilometers long, but after the dam construction, people had less than 2 kilometers to fish and most of the fish are small because the fish growth cycle is quite bad because it is blocked from the dam. This is a signal to the wisdom of agriculture and fisheries because the scarcity of the market will increase and the fishermen will work harder. In agriculture, new areas where the state has built houses, it is not conducive to farming because the soil is dry, so, it is difficult to grow crops and need to use compost which makes farming have higher costs and lead to a higher selling price as well. When the price of goods is higher, it will affect consumers who will have more expensive living costs. Moreover, ground water is not viable because it is not clean enough, forcing people to spend more money to buy drinking water instead. This is another factor that may increase the cost of living for people. Even if the government gives away a new home or chooses to pay \$6000 to build it, it still isn't worth the cost of housing, farmland, and ease of fishing.

Cambodia has begun to use hydroelectric power, as evidenced by a 2019 interview about hydroelectric power and green house gas, where water is tested in a lab for contaminants and whether it affects nature. However, the country's geography is not suitable for hydroelectric power as the country has few mountains or basins that can be reservoirs. Moreover, it must be ensured that the water pressure is sufficient for the hydroelectric turbine. Although dams may be of some benefit to hydroelectric power, having dams kill crops and largely contribute to global warming because they emit large amounts of carbon dioxide and possibly fossil fuels. The hydroelectric power is still not very reliable in Cambodia and Cambodia should find alternative energy instead, and should find alternative solutions for people in the community, such as cultivating fish for reservoirs or offering compensation that more appropriate. Nevertheless, the main reason Cambodia needs this dam, its main purpose is not to build something new, but to finance it because the project is worth trillions of dollars and is also part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

In conclusion, building the Lower Se San 2 Dam has both advantages and disadvantages. The advantage is that we may be able to build something new as hydroelectric power, but Cambodia still lack of geographic competence and therefore is inappropriate to use hydroelectric power. The disadvantage is that it blocks the livelihood of many community people and river animals, which also has a wide impact on the economy. Obviously, most people are against dams but the government is willing to build them because they are largely funded by China's Belt and Road Initiative. Therefore, the government should have a better policy to help people and not be intimidating.