

Causes and Impacts of China-built dam on Ecosystem and Livelihoods

The beginning of the problems was building a dam in Mekong river basin, Cambodia, as a part of Chinese's Belt and road initiative (BRI) project. The construction involved cutting off two main rivers which were branches of Mekong river causing the following issues. The impacts were largely on livelihoods of the water species and locals, while other impacts happened in consequences. To begin with, cutting off river routes resulted in number of native fish species disappeared by disturbing their feeding and reproductive cycle. As a result, fishery yields had declined; considering Cambodian's main cuisine was fish so this harshly affected the locals' as well as nation's way of living and income. Therefore, locals were firmly against this dam, but they were branded as troublemakers instead, and were forced by the government officials to leave their homes. To worsen, communities were cornered by flooding on their fishing areas and croplands. Subsequently, people's way of lives changed - fishery, agriculture, and forest product - as they had to travel to do fishing; soil were not suitable to farm; the income from selling forest products were gone. Locals who refused to emigrate tried to make their living by fishery, but the outcome were 20 times lower than it used to be. Furthermore, they were lack in fund, so they could not buy fertilizer for farming neither. Finally, they had to buy drinking water since the ground water was not consumable. Moreover, the government did not adequately compensate them to their losses. The amount that officials had traded for this dam was questioned by the economists if the costs and the generated electricity were actually possible to supply a reliable energy at cheaper costs or not; and whether the dam-produced power was worth the losses in fishery income and occurring problems or not. Despite those facts and the fact that Cambodia's geography was not befitted for hydroelectric power - thus, creating high carbon footprints- the government still arbitrated the construction due to Chinese's loan policy. As mentioned, the dam was a part of BRI, so China lent without borrowers' obligations to uphold their precaution to communities - exploiting the environment and people standard of life. Thus, economically, it was Cambodian government's failure to ignore the market value and prices of environment (fishery income and forest products) that they chose to forgone.

In a conclusion, due to easily-achieved loan, there was no incentive for the officials to use the funds while being considerate toward their people and resources. Thus, the losses were doubtfully weighable to what they had earned. Therefore, for correction, government should have done more in term of renegotiating and assessing along with relocating new alternative energy sources. Also, for protection, international institutions could set a stricter qualifications for Cambodia to receive their loan harder in the future if they continue to ignore the issues. In addition, they could have initiated environmental pricing/rating to restrain the officials' selfish decision; this was to against the free-ride problem.