

How a China-Built Dam Destroyed an Ecosystem and Livelihoods

For the past, the villages in Cambodia accommodated between 4500 and 5000 people. They relied on three main sources of income: selling fish, which was their main source of protein, and working for a living. Second, the fruits, vegetables, and rice that are grown near the river. Third, the forest goods that they own and sell and can use. Following the construction of the Lower Sesan 2 dam, which was finished in 2018, thousands of people were compelled to abandon their homes.

Many economists and environmentalists criticized the dam once it was finished. This dam, which also generates hydroelectric power, is inappropriate for Cambodia's geography. When you build a dam on vegetated land, the dead plants will release large amounts of methane and carbon dioxide. China Huaneng Group Officials and Cambodian Prime minister Hun Sen attend the Lower Sesan 2. By constructing this dam, the Cambodian government is demonstrating how the Chinese government committed a trillion dollars in the BRI project to promote global development and Chinese foreign policy objectives. If people noticed or didn't ignore a 2008 environmental impact study that was predicted, the damage to people would decrease. The local communities were threatened by Cambodian government officials and the Chinese state-owned power generation company which was responsible for building the dam. They were offered about US\$6,000 to build new homes, but this operation didn't match the value with what they lost. When we compared the fishery income with the gigawatt hours of the dam, it was not worth the cost.

Due to the exposure of the abuses might lead the Chinese government to renegotiate compensation packages. The Huaneng Group, the majority owner of the company responsible for the construction of the dam, should ensure that abuses are mitigated. Also, the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China who provided the financial fund for the construction should exercise more control over the initiatives it funds. The Cambodian government will still struggle to get funding in the future even though donors and other financing institutions raise their concern in this particular area. It is necessary for the Cambodian government to reconsider how to handle the impact of infrastructure projects. They need to offer appropriate compensation, give people new skills by providing a program, and consult with the communities about alternative strategies, for example, aquaculture or fish stocking opportunities. The government will have to explore alternative energy sources since Cambodia's energy policy cannot be centered around hydropower.

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