

The dam is part of the Chinese government's large-scale "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI) which spans well over six kilometers, has cut off vital migration routes for native fish species, and displaced numerous Indigenous and ethnic minority communities. Warnings that it would leave fishing communities worse off were ignored. Millions of people on the Mekong River system live off catching and selling fish. If people want to fish, they have to travel because the area they were resettled to is far from any river. The soil where they live now is rocky, dry, and difficult to farm. The government was persuaded by offering a new house for \$6000. But it doesn't match what they lost in both their land and career or environment.

To determine the economic viability of a dam, compare its cost and the power it is expected to generate to the economic impact the additional generated electricity will have. When you compare losses to fishery income and the cost of displacement caused by this dam with the gigawatt hours the dam is supposed to generate, there are serious questions about whether it was worth the costs. Also, the country's geography is not suited for hydroelectric power. The dam had to be so wide because the country lacks large mountains and gorges that could act as reservoirs and ensure the falling water creates sufficient pressure to power hydroelectric turbines. That in itself creates problems. When you dam up this much land, especially heavily vegetated land, all of that dead vegetation emits large amounts of carbon dioxide and methane – for years. Some hydroelectric dams have carbon footprints that equal that of fossil fuel plants.

In conclusion, The Cambodian government's dam construction is an idea that it hopes to develop, but it will come with many environmental and economic problems. The Cambodian government itself needs to reassess how it handles impact assessments for infrastructure projects, be they a road, an electricity line, or a power plant. The authorities need to offer appropriate compensation, create programs that give people new skills, and consult with the communities about alternative mitigation strategies such as aquaculture or fish stocking opportunities for the reservoir. And lastly, Cambodia's energy policy going forward cannot be centered around hydropower. The government will have to explore alternative energy sources.

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