

Since the completion in 2018 of the Lower Sesan2 dam, which is one of the broadest dams in Asia, Cambodia has struggled with the disastrous effects, while people constantly question whether the dam was worth the trade-off. The fact that the dam spreads over a distance of six kilometers and cuts off major tributaries to the Mekong River, communities around the area were experiencing the full impact of this massive construction. Several points have been taken into consideration after the critical complains and reviews from the locals who once settled around the construction area. To illustrate the seriousness of the problem, it is best to mention both the causes of the Lower Sesan2 dam and its harmful effects on Cambodia's society.

The dam has been able to significantly impact Cambodia's communities mainly because of the Cambodian government's careless behavior. Evidently, warnings were being completely ignored and the oppositions were being unfairly treated. Even when there was a clear prediction that the effects would be detrimental to the ecosystem, since the dam will cut off two rivers that are major branches of the Mekong, authorities still decided to go along with the project. Succeeding the completion of the dam in 2018, locals were facing numerous issues that significantly affected their lives and their communities. Ultimately, these damaging effects escalated to a macro-level, and not long after that, the seriousness of the harm was felt across the country.

The fact that millions of people who live along the Mekong River make their living from catching fish, the importance of the fishing industry in Cambodia can clearly be indicated. Shockingly, up to five thousand people who live in the villages where the dam was built received the total impact. Moreover, most of their source of income is either from fishing or growing crops along the rivers. This resulted in mass destruction in the source of fishery and crops. To be specific, the marine life cycle is being interfered by the dam which blocks the pathway where fish naturally travel. Since then, there is a noticeable decline in the number of large fish breeds, leaving behind just small breeds that people can barely make any profit from selling them. Besides, other than the apparent loss of forests that are replaced by the dam, crop fields are no longer fertilized by the silt during rainy seasons, making them unsuitable for growing any crops like in the past. Thus, people who resist the resettlement are left with very little chance of how they would make a living. However, those who accept to resettle can not really escape the follow-up damages. Cruelly offered, these people were allowed to choose between pre-fabricated houses or sixty thousand US dollars. Relating with relationship between economics and environment, opportunity costs matter as environmental resources are scarce. The opportunity cost of resettlement to build new homes would be losing their normally income from fishing. This obviously can not counter multiple aspects they have lost, such as the reliable source of income, villages that have been passed on from generation to generation, and religious monuments. In the end, the trade between the construction of the dam can not be compared with these horrible losses the people need to suffer from.

All things considered, instead of ignoring and overlooking the obvious issues that the dam has brought to Cambodia's society, the government should consider extreme losses their citizens have to encounter. In other words, when focusing correctly, it should be clear that the Lower Sesan2 dam's harm outweighed the benefits it has brought to the society.