

How a China-Built Dam Destroyed an Ecosystem and Livelihood

Summary

Since the completion of one of Asia's widest dams, the Lower Sesan 2 attended by China Huaneng Group officials, in Cambodia's Making River Basin, Thousands have lost their homes and livelihoods. The dam has cut off vital migration routes for native fish species, and displaced numerous Indigenous and ethnic minority communities.

The dam prevents fish from traveling up and down, disrupting their feeding and reproductive cycles. Therefore, whole species have died and fishery yields have plummeted. Moreover, the dam has also flooded villages, thousands of local communities were forced to leave their homes when their fishing grounds and ancestral farming lands were flooded. Everything the dammed-up rivers provided – food, water, an income from fishing – is gone.

Not only environmentalists but economists also had opposed the dam. The country's geography is not suited for hydroelectric power. From all of disadvantages, the government needs to reassess how it handles impact assessments for infrastructure projects that give people new skills, and consult with the communities about alternative mitigation strategies.