

## How a China-Built Dam Destroyed an Ecosystem and Livelihoods

To begin with, building this dam has caused many issues whether in the environmental aspect or the livelihoods of the local communities. This is a part of China's Belt and Road Initiative project led by the Chinese government. Ironically, the Cambodian government also supported this and threatened those who are opposed to this idea.

First and foremost, the dam has taken away a huge space from the Mekong River in Cambodia which cuts off the migration routes of the fish in the mainstream. This has not only affected the aquatic ecosystem of the Mekong River, but also the living of Cambodian people whose occupations are dependent on the fishery. Moreover, the land areas along the river that contains fertile soil for farming were destroyed by flood as many people were forced to move out of the area. Worse than that, the areas where they had to resettle were in extremely poor conditions, yet there was hardly any compensation from the government. It is true that the authority has offered around \$6,000 or so to build a new house, but it does not worth what was lost from their income to their livelihoods. What they are doing is basically resolving the consequences of their actions which only has a short-term effect on the people instead of focusing on the root cause and providing the people with some new skills that they could use for earning money.

Moving on to the economic issues, this project is arguably a failure since the goal of building this dam is to produce electricity at a lower cost, but the opportunity costs that are wasted like the disruption of income and livelihoods of the people are even higher than the benefits. In addition, this hydroelectric dam is not suitable for the geographical features of Cambodia and it also produces a large amount of carbon emissions as well.

In conclusion, I personally think that one of the reasons why the Cambodian authorities supported this project is because of the power of China which can easily take over a whole country, especially a small country like Cambodia. It is quite frightening if a superpower country like China is pressuring so Cambodia did not have many choices and would not dare to resist. China is basically taking advantage of another smaller country to make its own look good without considering the ethical issues and overlooking the effects that are going to happen to the local people. Therefore, China should provide adequate funding or support in any form to help those who were affected by this to recover.