



INNOVATION  
FOR CHANGE  
EAST ASIA



Uncle Jamrat  
and Auntie Cream  
live here!

directly  
affected

# The Thai fisherfolk and their dying river

STORIES  
of the Impact  
of China's  
BRI

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Hello,  
everyone!

I have some important stories to tell. These are the stories of Uncle Jamrat's and Auntie Cream's folklife.

They both live by the Ing River. Through the years, they have witnessed the many changes in the lives of the people, communities, and biodiversity around the river.





Uncle Jamrat  
& Auntie Cream  
are fisherfolk.



Here's a  
map of the  
surrounding  
area.

The Ing River  
is a tributary of  
the Mekong River.

Ing  
River

Mekong  
River



I  
live  
here!

Here's  
my  
home!



These  
two rivers  
are at the heart  
of the fisherfolk's  
way of life.



Chiang Rai, Thailand



Uncle Jamrat told us about the life he has lived by the Ing River, which has been home to him since his childhood.

In his younger days, he used to row a boat and drop a hooked bamboo fish trap in the water to catch fishes every day.



He remembers catching so many fish of all sizes.

In the past, the Ing River was my source of livelihood. I used to fish in the Ing's waters during the flood season.



Asian redtail catfish



Wallago cat fish



Thai carp

The fishes he got weighed 4-10 kilograms.

He recalled that some years, the fishes he caught from the Mekong River were so big that they weighed up to 50 kilograms.



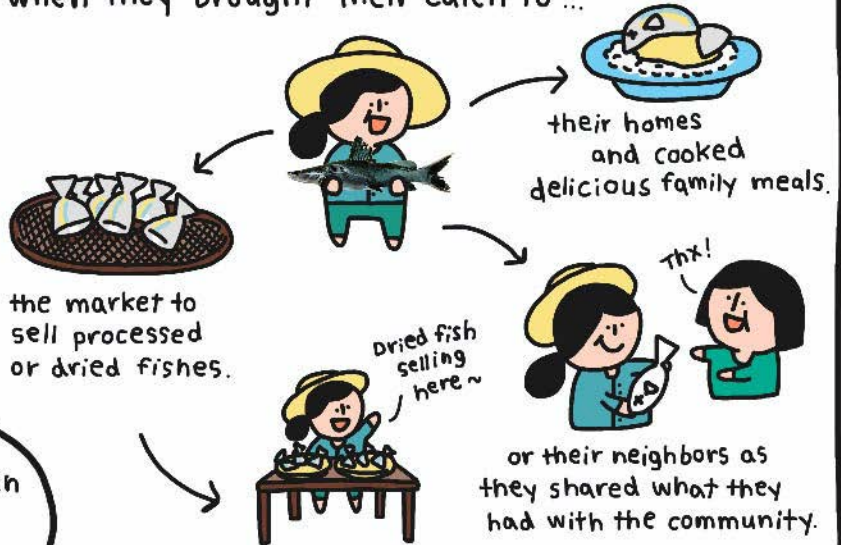
Uncle Jamrat  
Fisherman, 84 years old

Auntie Cream also told us about her childhood and how she turned her hobby into a job.

I love fishing in the wetland.

Since I was a kid, fishing has been a sufficient source of my income.

When I was 12 years old, I liked to go with the elder fisherfolks when they brought their catch to ...



I always went fishing at the Ing River both in times of drought and the flood season.

You can find fish in the sand along the shore during times of drought.



New fish emerge in the waters once the flood season begins.



Auntie Cream  
Fisherfolk,  
65 years old





Why did Uncle Jamrat and Auntie Cream catch so many fish back then?

Let's start talking about the Mekong River.

As stated earlier, the Ing River is a tributary of the Mekong River.

The Mekong River is biodiverse and rich in resources, with numerous varieties of



Plants



Fish



Folkways

that, in turn, provide many benefits



food supply



1,245 species of fishes



water supply

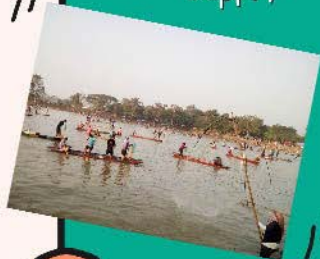
more than 60 million people depend on the Mekong River and its resources.

Here's the Mekong River flowing through Thailand. (This is the lower Mekong River basin.)



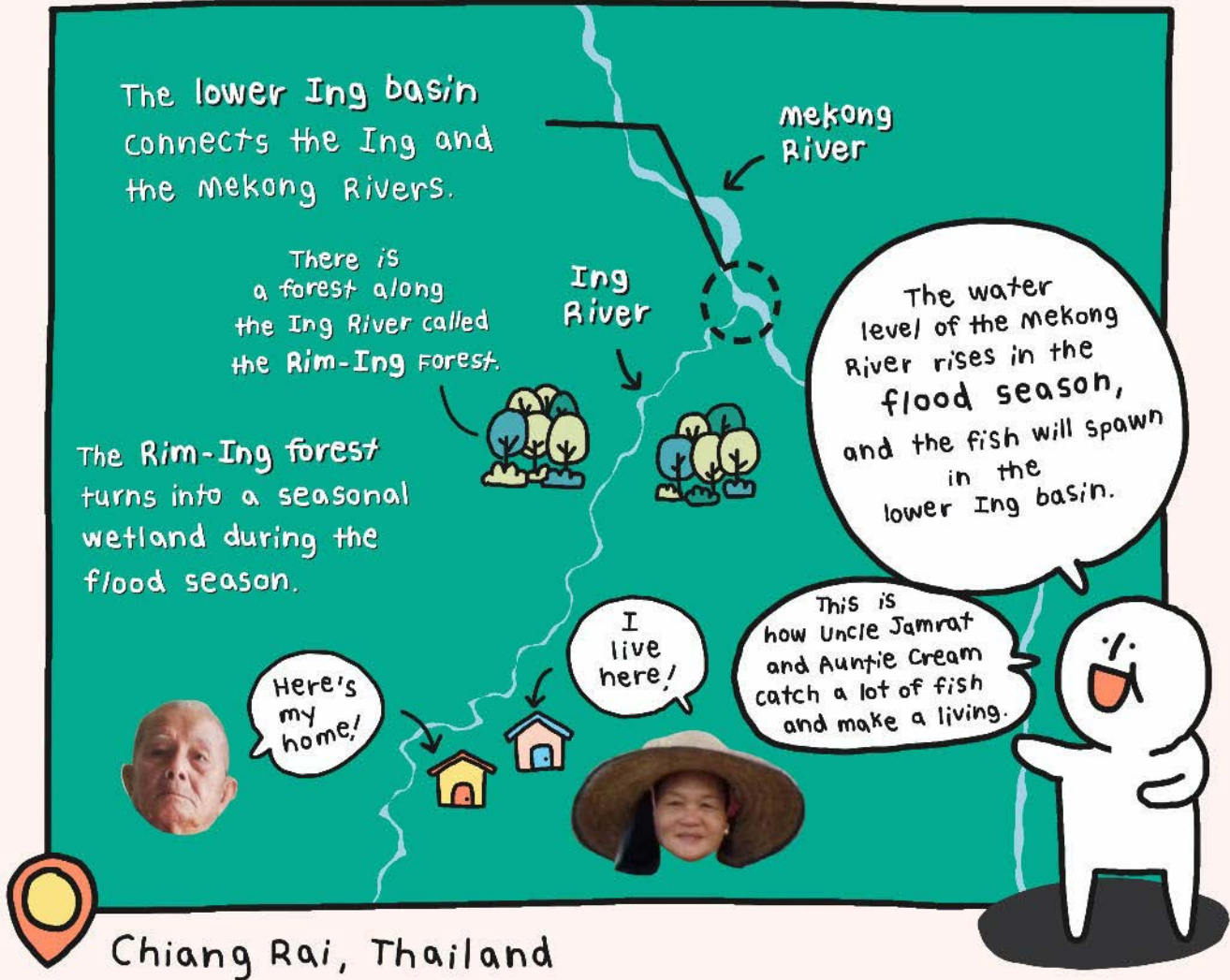
This is the lower Ing River

Including Uncle Jamrat & Auntie Cream!



Chiang Rai, Thailand

Let's learn more about how the Mekong River affects the Ing River!

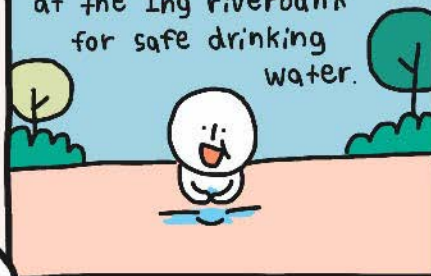


Uncle Jamrat tells us about the current situation.

Everything has changed!  
What was once a wooden boat is now a boat made of steel. Water from the river is no longer edible because of chemical contamination.

Then

We could dig sand wells at the Ing riverbank for safe drinking water.



The Ing River flooded during the year, and there used to be water inflow from July to December.

Plenty of fish spawned in season.



Tons of fish in the river.



Now

Water from the Ing River is now contaminated due to the use for off-season agriculture. So we now have to buy drinking water.

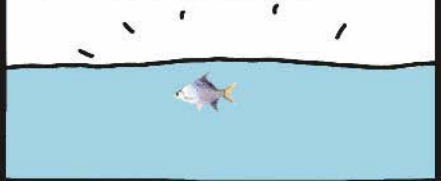


The water has dried up. Inflow only occurs for 1-2 weeks, and then the drought season begins again.

The fish now migrate during the off-season.



Number of fish and other freshwater creatures have declined.





Auntie Cream agreed with Uncle Jamrat that everything has changed.

Catching fish is harder these days, and the water is no longer the same.

Last week, I walked 500-600m along the stream of the Ing River trying to catch fishes with a square dip net. I only got a horseface loach lying on sand. It is so different from the past that I could catch 3-4 kg. of fishes each time.

Then



Now



I wish water still flowed into the forest and swamps so that our fish and other freshwater creatures could thrive again.



# Why are Uncle Jamrat and Auntie Cream facing this situation?

1967

Uncle Jamrat & Auntie Cream were still able to catch fish and make a living.



The Ing River was still abundant.

1991

6 Mekong countries (where the Mekong River flows) formed a partnership under the Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation Program (GMS)!



Focusing on infrastructure



1996

Hydroelectric dam 'Manwan' project

2002

A push to use natural resources began, especially to get hydroelectric energy from dams.

The Mekong River started being controlled and managed commercially...

while ignoring dissenting opinions and criticisms from downstream countries.

2010

Hydroelectric dam 'Xiaowan' project

2009

'Jinghong' dam project

2003

Gravity dam 'Dachaoshan' project

2012

'Nuozhadu' dam and 'Gongguoqiao' dam projects

2014

'Guodou' dam project

2018

'Miaowei' dam and 'Dachaoqiao' dam projects

2019

'Huangdeng' dam and 'Wunonglog' dam projects

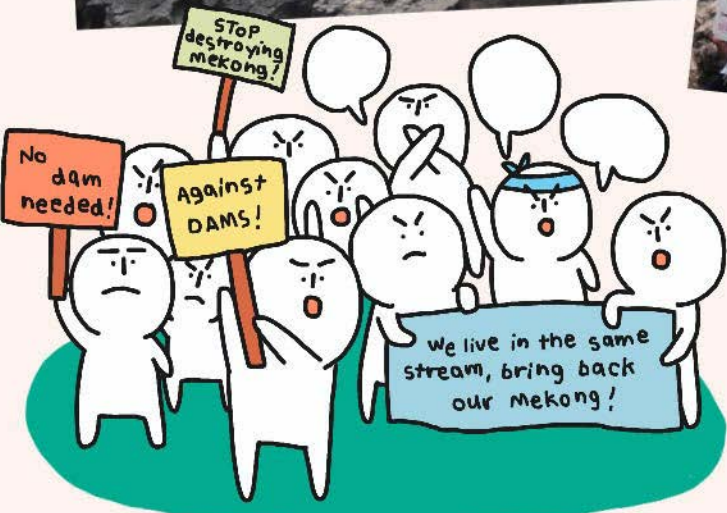
Now 2021



The local villagers and fisherfolks always stood up to protest these dam projects through the years.

They refused to be silenced.

They fought for their rights and ways of life with the hope that the Mekong River would be restored to its abundance.



Local villagers stand in solidarity to oppose any project that destroys the Mekong River. They launch campaigns and organize awareness-raising activities during the International Day of Action against Dams, World Wetlands Day, and tree ordination and life-prolonging ceremonies, etc.

Dam Project Status

— completed

— pending

— ongoing


No matter how long and hard the people protest, these projects still manage to continue as planned.

Currently, there are

13 dam projects completed

excluding the ongoing projects!  
and the 9 other pending projects!

All these dam projects are Chinese investments and/or operated by China.

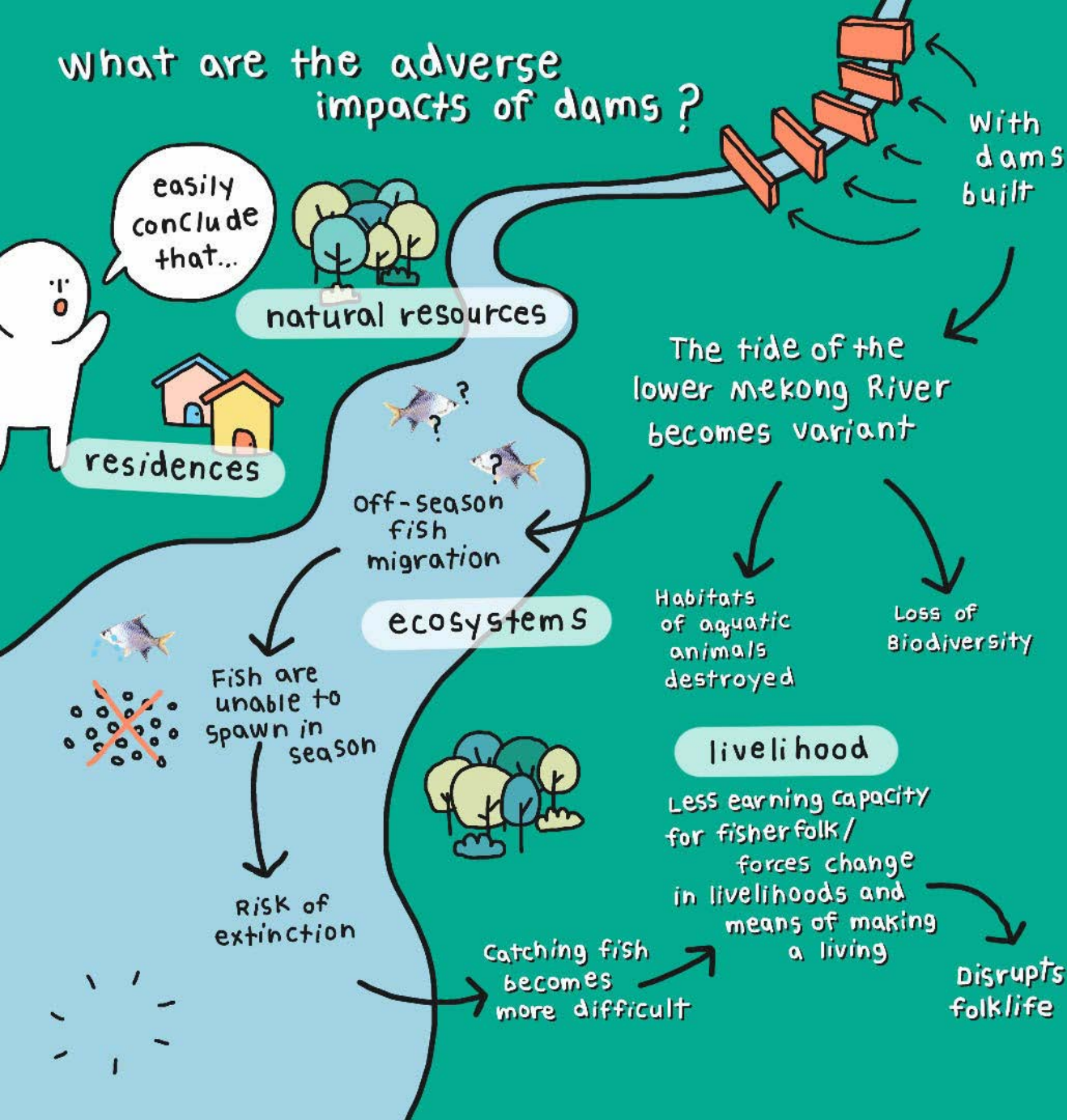


Uncle Jamrat  
and Auntie Cream  
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directly  
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The Mekong River has turned into an area controlled by Chinese hegemony.

# What are the adverse impacts of dams?



# What happens in the Mekong River affects the Ing River, and changes the way of people's lives.

When the water level in the Mekong River is variant, the water in Ing River is not enough for fish to migrate and spawn. People living downstream like Uncle Jamrat and Auntie Cream are directly affected!

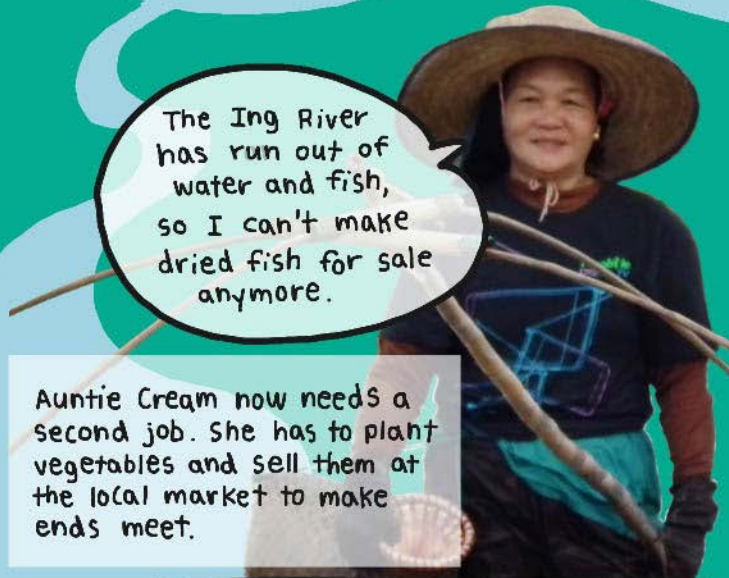
It's been five to six years since I quit being a fisherman because of my health and other family concerns.

Auntie Cream now needs a second job. She has to plant vegetables and sell them at the local market to make ends meet.

If this situation goes on, our next generation will no longer be able to preserve our traditional folkways.

This is really sad.

His children are not fisherman like him. They are mostly hawkers working in the city (Bangkok); some are local farmers.



This story is just a small glimpse of a bigger picture!

Uncle Jamrat and Auntie Cream aren't the only ones experiencing this situation and suffering from the effects of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

BRI also affects all other ASEAN households and communities!

