

- [Fears Asia's Mekong River is in crisis - BBC News](#)

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- **Fears Asia's Mekong River is in crisis**

- *News Reporter:* Now there are fears that the Mekong river, which has one of the richest ecosystems on earth, is in crisis. The Mekong sustains more than 60 million lives as it travels through China and southeast Asia. It's facing an onslaught of dam building, intensified climate change, and sand dredging. Downstream communities living on the region's largest lake, the Tonle Sap in Cambodia, are reporting a decline in fish stocks of more than 80% over the past 20 years. Our Asia-Pacific correspondent Lore Bukeh is in Cambodia to ask if the mighty Mekong can be saved.

*Now the correspondent Lore is talking.*

- *Lore Bukeh:* Mai lives in a world of water, that was once renowned for an abundance of fish. But in recent years he and thousands like him been asking, where are they?

*Now the local fisherman Mai is talking.*

- *Mai:* These past few years there was less and less water and fewer and fewer fish. Now we have children and every morning, I need around 5 dollars to get them to school. And these days, I have no income. It has taken 4 or 5 days, and that's all I get. I have no fish to sell.

*Now the correspondent Lore is talking.*

- *Lore Bukeh:* Since the 1990s some countries have eyed the Mekong river as a potentially powerful energy resource. China has built 11 dams on the mainstream. Laos has 2, dozens more are planned. Experts who monitor water levels in the dams are worried.

*Now the Mekong dam monitor brian eyler is talking.*

- *Brian Eyler:* Rainfall that typically would fall during the wet season is much lower than normal but at the same time upstream dams are restricting water during that wet season, climate impacts and dam restrictions are changing the way that the mekong flows much for the worse.

*Now the correspondent Lore is talking.*

- *Lore Bukeh:* Studies suggest river nutrients and fish are now struggling to make it downstream, and when they do, they are struggling to survive. Elsewhere the Mekong has other gifts to give, sand. 60 million tons of sand is dredged from the Mekong each year to help construct developing south-east Asian cities. That's the equivalent size 950 Olympic size swimming pools. 25 year old Contair was jailed for more than a year for organizing protests to protect the river.

*Now the protestor is talking.*

- *Protestor:* When I see this, it makes me worry about the Mekong's fate and its impact of the Cambodian people as a whole.

*Now the the correspondent Lore is talking.*

- *Lore Bukeh:* The Cambodian government has long been accused of profiting from plundering the country's natural resources. Which it denies.