

## Review the advantages and disadvantages of the Funan Techo Canal project in Cambodia

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### Abstract

The Cambodian government always tries its best to make the country become a civilized one. The Funan Techo Canal project in Cambodia has great potential to boost the country's economic, environmental, and social advancement. Extending across four provinces and providing answers to water management issues, the endeavor is set to serve as a driver for economic advancement, development of tourism, and enhanced regional connections. It offers chances for technological progress, employment generation, and infrastructure improvement, as well as advocating for cultural conservation and environmental protection. Despite its numerous benefits, the project also comes with mini drawbacks such as possible harm to the environment and displacement of communities. Maximizing benefits and addressing negative impacts requires stakeholders to prioritize proactive approaches to environmental management, community engagement, and social inclusion. By effectively tackling these obstacles, the Funan Techo Canal project could change the scenery of Cambodia, promoting sustainable development, resilience, and prosperity for both its inhabitants and the surrounding area.

**Keywords:** Cambodia, Economic development, Environmental sustainability, Funan Techo Canal, Social impact

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## Introduction

Cambodia is a developing country with a lower middle income, and this country has been trying its best to move from a lower middle income as planned to an upper middle income in 2030 and a high-income or developed one in 2050. To achieve these goals, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) has been trying and implementing various methods with experts in each field, including education, healthcare, infrastructure, transportation, economics as well as other sectors ([Em et al., 2022](#)).

Thus, during its Second Legislature of the National Assembly from 1998-2003, RGC diligently carried out the Triangular Strategy, creating a positive atmosphere and essential conditions, both internally and externally, for Cambodia to progress with optimism and certainty toward reforms and continual growth ([Cambodian Corner, n.d.](#)).

Then the Rectangular Strategy implemented in 2004 replaced the Triangular Strategy, setting the core principles of Cambodia's development strategy for the Third Legislature of the National Assembly. From a geometric perspective, the Triangular Strategy proved its ability to withstand tough challenges and remain strong and resolute in any situation. Hence, the Rectangular Strategy could be illustrated as a unified formation of interconnected rectangles symbolizing durability and steadiness similar to how a sturdy table or chair rests firmly on four legs. The Rectangular Strategy aimed to direct RGC's agenda, incorporating elements from various sources such as the Millennium Development Goals, the Cambodia Socio-Economic Development Program, the Cambodia National Poverty Reduction Strategy, and other reform programs. These elements have been developed through extensive consultation with national and international stakeholders, including government ministries, civil society representatives, and donors ([RGC, 2004](#)).

The framework of policies dubbed "Rectangular Strategy" appeared to have been established by RGC with the purported aim of promoting economic advancement and expansion across diverse domains. These strategies centered on four principal domains to attain equitable and enduring progress: augmenting labor force competencies, broadening economic variety, fostering the expansion of the private

sector, and refining infrastructure. Cambodia's primary objectives encompassed fortifying its competitive prowess, magnetizing capital inflows, and ameliorating the welfare of its populace by executing these strategies ([FAO, 2004](#)).

### **Pentagonal Strategy and the Funan Techo Canal**

Following the conclusion of the Rectangular Strategy, RGC has transitioned to the Pentagonal Strategy, a sustainable development plan comprised of five distinct phases. According to [Orm \(2023\)](#), the strategy outlines five main goals symbolized by the edges of a pentagon. First and foremost, the plan is centered on boosting economic growth by implementing actions like promoting investments and developing infrastructure. Secondly, it focuses on tackling unemployment and underemployment by implementing initiatives such as creating jobs and providing skills training. Additionally, it highlights the importance of promoting equal access to resources and opportunities through suggested measures to decrease income disparities and improve societal integration. Additionally, the plan highlights the significance of enhancing the effectiveness of government activities and public services, which may include implementing changes to simplify administrative processes and improve governing. Finally, it emphasizes the importance of environmental sustainability, suggesting measures to address climate change and encourage sustainable development practices. [RGC \(2023\)](#) revealed that the main goal of the "Pentagonal Strategy Phase I" is to promote development, job creation, fairness, productivity, and environmental responsibility within the nation. This strategic framework is a foundational step toward achieving the ambitious vision of Cambodia in 2050. The Pentagonal Strategy Phase I offers a thorough plan for progressing Cambodia's development goals in different aspects to achieve the Cambodia Vision 2050.

The Funan Techo Canal, which will cost 1.7. billion USD for construction ([Ministry of Information, 2023](#); [Rim, 2024](#)), is one of the main strategies for providing Cambodian sustainability in many sectors. It surely fulfills some parts of the Pentagonal Strategy. The project to develop the Funan Techo Canal is considered vital and is expected to significantly change the landscape of the region ([Fresh News, 2024b](#)). The canal will flow through and across four provinces: Kep, Kampot, Takeo, and Kandal, which are in

the Southern parts of Cambodia ( see Figure 1 ), and the water from the canal can also be used in the nearby provinces ( [Fresh News, 2024a](#) ).

In this examination, the article delves into the many advantages ( some are provided in Table 1 ) of the project while also acknowledging a few minor drawbacks ( some are provided in Table 2 ) that need to be considered. The project has the potential to significantly boost economic growth through creating business opportunities, funding, and jobs ( [Mierzejewski, 2024](#) ). Moreover, there is the potential for it to develop into a lively destination for tourists, drawing visitors with its beautiful landscapes and enjoyable experiences ( [Fresh News, 2024a, 2024b](#) ).

The canal plays a significant role in improving food security and sustainable development by effectively managing water issues like floods and irrigation ( [Tan, 2024](#) ). Nonetheless, it is imperative to acknowledge the possible environmental consequences of development initiatives and the importance of addressing social problems like the relocation of communities. By carefully considering these factors, stakeholders can make full use of the innovative opportunities provided by the Funan Techo Canal project while minimizing its drawbacks ( [Eyler et al., 2024](#) ).

**Table 1. Advantages of the Funan Techo Canal project**

Advantages	Descriptions
1. Economic catalyst	The Funan Techo Canal is expected to significantly boost economic development in Cambodia. The canal will create new possibilities for commerce, bring in investments, and generate jobs, ultimately fueling economic growth through improved trade and transportation. With improved connectivity and increased access to waterways, businesses can expand their customer base both at home and internationally. Moreover, the canal's strategic location and efficient transportation capabilities will enhance the competitiveness of Cambodian companies, leading to increased productivity and output levels. Consequently, the canal is ready to play a key role in speeding up Cambodia's

	<p>economic growth path, promoting prosperity, and enhancing living standards for its people (<a href="#">Fresh News, 2024a</a>, <a href="#">2024b</a>).</p>
<p>2. Tourism hub</p>	<p>The Funan Techo Canal can become a major tourist draw that could positively impact Cambodia's tourism sector. Boat tours, dining by the water, and recreational activities along the canal will draw visitors, support local businesses, and generate revenue for the area. The picturesque views of the canal, along with close cultural attractions and historical sites, will create an appealing spot for tourists from both domestic and international locations. Moreover, the canal-side development of tourism facilities like hotels, restaurants, and gift shops will create business and job growth prospects in the nearby area. In general, the canal could transform into a lively tourist center, enhancing the visitor's stay and boosting Cambodia's tourism industry's economic growth (<a href="#">Fresh News, 2024a</a>; <a href="#">Reveal Howto, 2024</a>).</p>
<p>3. Water management solution</p>	<p>Cambodia sees the Funan Techo Canal as a crucial solution to address issues with water, specifically in managing floods and providing irrigation. By managing water flow and ensuring a consistent water supply for agriculture, the canal is projected to improve food security, lower the likelihood of floods, and encourage sustainable water usage. The canal is projected to minimize changes in seasons and ensure a consistent water supply for agriculture by storing and dispersing water, resulting in higher crop yields and safeguarding farmers' incomes. Furthermore, reducing dependence on erratic rainfall and surface water storage is anticipated to mitigate the adverse effects of droughts and water shortages on agricultural ecosystems and food supply networks. In essence, the canal is a crucial investment in water infrastructure to tackle urgent water management issues and create a basis for enduring resilience</p>

	and sustainability in Cambodia's agricultural industry ( <a href="#">Fresh News, 2024a, 2024b</a> ).
4. Environmental stewardship	The Funan Techo Canal project offers a chance to advance environmental sustainability in various ways. Reviving ecosystems and creating homes for a variety of plants and animals will be facilitated by the restoration of habitats along the canal edges. The main goal of the water governance initiative is to improve water quality, decrease pollution, and enhance the health of aquatic environments. The canal endeavor will enhance biodiversity and furnish verdant spaces for the local populace to partake in leisure activities such as strolling, jogging, and avian observation, while concurrently supporting wildlife conservation efforts. Overall, the canal project exhibits a commitment to environmental preservation through infrastructural enhancements that seek to bolster ecosystems and elevate the standard of living for both human and animal inhabitants ( <a href="#">Fresh News, 2024a; Tan, 2024</a> ).
5. Technological advancement	The building of the Funan Techo Canal offers a special chance for creativity and technological progress in engineering and infrastructure development, showcasing the skills of local professionals. A complex engineering approach is needed for the canal project, which is a major infrastructure development, to overcome obstacles like ground excavation, water control, and structure planning. Engineers and construction professionals can use advanced technologies and creative methods to improve project efficiency and effectiveness when dealing with these challenges. Furthermore, the canal project promotes cooperation between local stakeholders and global professionals, encouraging the sharing of knowledge and the growth of skills in the local engineering field. The canal project highlights the resourcefulness and originality of local talent, not only pushing

	<p>forward infrastructure development but also enhancing Cambodia's standing as a center for innovation and technological skills. In general, the building of the canal marks a major achievement in the nation's path toward sustainable growth and highlights the transformative power of infrastructure initiatives in promoting economic advancement and social development (<a href="#">Fresh News, 2024a, 2024b</a>).</p>
<p>6. Regional connectivity</p>	<p>The Funan Techo Canal can greatly improve trade routes and transportation networks in the region, promoting stronger connections between Cambodia and its neighboring countries. The canal's navigable waterway allows for cost-effective and efficient transportation of goods, lessening the need for congested roads and costly air freight. This enhanced connectivity not only makes trade easier within Cambodia but also strengthens the country's role as a regional trading hub, facilitating trade between Southeast Asian countries. Moreover, the canal's advantageous position can act as an entryway to global markets, enticing investments and fostering economic collaboration with nearby nations. By enhancing trade and working together, the canal initiative can boost economic growth and advancement in the area, promoting shared prosperity and reinforcing diplomatic relationships between Cambodia and nearby countries (<a href="#">Fresh News, 2024a, 2024b</a>).</p>
<p>7. Urban development</p>	<p>The Funan Techo Canal could act as a trigger for urban growth and rejuvenation, sparking investment and development in nearby regions. The canal, being a significant infrastructure initiative, will not just enhance transportation and linkages but also generate possibilities for business and housing growth alongside its path. The existence of the canal is expected to draw attention from both local and foreign investors, resulting in the creation of new businesses, business areas, and housing</p>

	<p>projects nearby. Moreover, the canal initiative could rejuvenate current urban areas, motivating rejuvenation endeavors and improving the overall appeal of the region for residents, employees, and investors. The canal project boosts economic growth, creates jobs, and enhances residents' quality of life, leading Cambodia's cities toward sustainable and inclusive development in the future (<a href="#">Fresh News, 2024b</a>; <a href="#">Office of the Council of Ministers, 2024</a>).</p>
<p>8. Cultural preservation</p>	<p>The Funan Techo Canal project has the potential to make important contributions to cultural preservation and heritage conservation by revitalizing historical waterways and showcasing Cambodia's cultural heritage. The building of the canal on ancient water paths celebrates Cambodia's cultural heritage and reminds us of its past civilizations and trading customs. By implementing thoughtful planning and design, the project can integrate traditional Khmer architecture and art, forming a cultural passage that honors Cambodia's rich heritage. In addition, the canal's location near historical sites and cultural landmarks provides chances for interpretation and education, enabling visitors to discover Cambodia's history and value its cultural importance. The canal project helps preserve cultural treasures for future generations and promotes global cultural exchange by fostering a sense of pride and connection to the country's heritage (<a href="#">Office of the Council of Ministers, 2024</a>; <a href="#">Tan, 2024</a>).</p>
<p>9. Environmental benefits</p>	<p>The Funan Techo Canal project shows great potential in boosting environmental sustainability by implementing initiatives to restore natural habitats, increase biodiversity, and enhance ecosystem health. By carefully planning and carrying out tasks, the project can revive damaged areas along the canal, restoring them to their natural state and providing habitats for different plants and</p>



	<p>animals. The project for the canal protects biodiversity by conserving and improving natural habitats like wetlands and riparian areas, which help a variety of plant and animal species. Furthermore, by focusing on water management and quality control, the project contributes to the preservation of ecosystem health by minimizing pollution and guaranteeing the availability of clean water sources. In general, the Funan Techo Canal project shows a dedication to sustainable development practices that focus on the environment, benefiting both individuals and the Earth (<a href="#">Office of the Council of Ministers, 2024</a>; <a href="#">Tan, 2024</a>).</p>
10. Job creation	<p>The building and functioning of the Funan Techo Canal offer the potential to generate jobs in multiple industries, thus significantly contributing to poverty alleviation and socio-economic growth in Cambodia. Throughout the building process, a variety of job openings will become available, such as skilled labor, engineering, and project management positions, offering jobs for both residents and skilled employees. Moreover, after the canal is operational, the region will see a continued boost in job creation and economic stability due to ongoing maintenance, logistics, and tourism-related jobs. The canal project not only helps people and families escape poverty by offering steady jobs but also promotes the growth of skills and capabilities among the local workforce. In the end, the canal's contribution to creating jobs highlights its importance as a driving force for socio-economic progress, promoting prosperity and enhancing the quality of life for those living along its path (<a href="#">Fresh News, 2024a</a>; <a href="#">Office of the Council of Ministers, 2024</a>).</p>
11. Infrastructure enhancement	<p>The development of the Funan Techo Canal project will stimulate infrastructure improvements, introducing a new period of accessibility and connectivity in the area. In addition to building the canal, the project will also involve constructing necessary</p>

	<p>supporting infrastructure like ports, terminals, and other facilities. These enhancements will not just make the canal run smoothly but also improve regional connectivity by establishing crucial entry points for transportation and commerce. Building modern ports and terminals will improve supply chain efficiency and lower transportation expenses for businesses in the area. Additionally, the improved infrastructure will improve the overall ease of access in the area, enabling communities to reach essential services and connect with nearby regions more easily. In general, the canal project's emphasis on improving infrastructure highlights its significant effect on the region's connectivity and economic growth (<a href="#">Tan, 2024</a>).</p>
<p>12. Diversification of transportation</p>	<p>The Funan Techo Canal project is a major development in the region's transportation offerings, providing a new way to transport goods and people that is both affordable and eco-friendly. The canal provides a feasible option for transporting bulk cargo and long-distance travel, serving as an alternative to conventional road and rail transportation methods. Unlike road transport with its high costs and frequent traffic congestion, or rail transport which requires extensive infrastructure and maintenance, the canal provides a more efficient and environmentally friendly option. Water transportation not only reduces operating costs but also emits less carbon, making it an eco-conscious choice for both cargo and passenger trips. The canal project reduces reliance on fossil fuels and boosts the region's transportation system's resilience and sustainability through a range of transportation choices (<a href="#">Fresh News, 2024a, 2024b</a>).</p>
<p>13. Waterfront development</p>	<p>The Funan Techo Canal project provides many opportunities for developing the waterfront, allowing for the creation of lively public areas, gardens, and leisure amenities along its edges. The project enhances the quality of life for residents and visitors by</p>

	<p>including green spaces and recreational amenities in the canal's design. These waterfront developments serve as focal points for community gatherings, sports, and cultural festivities, fostering a sense of camaraderie and solidarity among locals. Additionally, building public spaces along the canal's edges offers locals chances for outdoor activities and stress relief, enhancing both physical and mental health. Furthermore, the creation of waterfront parks and leisure amenities draws in visitors, bolstering the economic health of the local tourism industry. In general, the focus of the canal project on developing the waterfront improves the cityscape, boosts the quality of life in nearby neighborhoods, and forms pleasant areas for relaxation and pleasure (<a href="#">Fresh News, 2024a</a>; <a href="#">Office of the Council of Ministers, 2024</a>).</p>
<p>14. Disaster resilience</p>	<p>The Funan Techo Canal project is vital for improving disaster resilience in the area as a water management infrastructure endeavor. The canal functions as a barrier to flooding and reduces the effects of natural disasters like heavy rain and storm surges, which helps lower the potential for severe harm to nearby communities and infrastructure. In times of increased water levels, the canal efficiently controls water flow, redirecting extra water from populated and agricultural regions, and decreasing the risk of flood disasters. Additionally, by managing water levels and utilizing a controlled drainage system, the canal helps decrease flood dangers and enhance the region's ability to withstand the impacts of climate change. Overall, the canal project boosts the area's capacity to adjust and encourages sustainability by addressing environmental challenges with water management and disaster preparedness (<a href="#">Fresh News, 2024b</a>; <a href="#">Ministry of Tourism, 2024</a>).</p>

**Table 2. Disadvantages of the Funan Techo Canal project**

Disadvantages	Descriptions
1. Environmental impact	<p>The construction work on the Funan Techo Canal has the possibility of disturbing natural environments and changing ecosystems in its path, underscoring the need to apply meticulous environmental management methods to minimize negative impacts. Activities like digging, removing sediment, and clearing land can disrupt habitats, interfere with ecological processes, and divide natural landscapes. To reduce these effects, thorough environmental evaluations and actions to lessen them must be included in both the planning and implementation stages of the project. This may include tasks such as repairing habitats, relocating wildlife, and managing erosion to diminish habitat loss and protect vulnerable species. Further actions need to be taken to reduce sedimentation and water pollution during construction to protect water quality and aquatic ecosystems. By giving importance to safeguarding the environment and preserving biodiversity, the canal project can guarantee that its lasting advantages are realized without negatively impacting the health and intactness of the nearby natural surroundings (<a href="#">RFA Khmer, 2024</a>).</p>
2. Social displacement	<p>The building of the Funan Techo Canal may lead to communities nearby being forced to move, highlighting the need to address social issues and ensure fair outcomes for those impacted. Forced movement can cause social upheaval in neighborhoods, resulting in job loss, cultural disconnection, and mental strain on impacted people and families. Prioritizing community engagement, consultation, and participation is essential to minimize these impacts during the project's planning and implementation stages. Communities that are impacted should have a role in making decisions, be given sufficient information, and have chances to provide valuable input and receive</p>

feedback. Furthermore, it is important to establish thorough resettlement and compensation measures to assist impacted families in adjusting to new living situations and sources of income. By giving importance to social inclusion and fairness, the canal project can build strong connections with local communities and make sure that its advantages are distributed fairly among all parties involved (Vietnam Briefing, 2024).



Figure 1. This is a modified version of a map provided in the MRC notification document (Eyler et al., 2024).

## Conclusion

Finally, the Funan Techo Canal initiative offers a wide range of benefits that have the potential to greatly impact Cambodia in terms of its economy, environment, and society (Seum, 2024). Its economic potential is highlighted through increased trade, tourism, and urban development, while its environmental importance is shown through its ability

to reduce floods and enhance water quality ( Niem, 2024 ). Additionally, the project can promote unity within society and enhance the community's overall health by improving recreational areas and increasing accessibility to water resources ( Habor Property, 2024 ).

However, despite the advantages outweighing the disadvantages, stakeholders should pay close attention to addressing minor issues such as potential environmental impacts and social disruptions. By prioritizing proactive approaches to minimize adverse effects and improve favorable results, individuals involved can effectively oversee the redevelopment of the Techo Funan Canal, resulting in lasting advantages for Cambodia and its citizens ( VN Express, 2024 ).

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