



# Fish Consumption in the Context of Community Change in the Tributaries of the Mun River

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## Abstract

This research examines the consumption of fish by communities living along the tributaries of the Mun River. The objective of this research is to analyse why and how fish consumption has changed in the area. For this research, *Ban Dum Yai* in *Lam Se Bok* Tributary and *Ban Bung* in *Huay Khayung* were selected as study areas. The study found that communities that experienced changes as a result of various development schemes had to adapt aspects of their food production that worked within a capitalist society. These aspects are, for example, the development of new water resources, agricultural production for markets and other activities beyond agricultural domains. Nevertheless, fish consumption continues to be an important part of the livelihood strategies of these communities and continues to make up half of their protein consumption. More than 70% of the fish consumed are found in the natural water resources near these communities. This helps save a significant amount of money spent on food for local households. Moreover, fish remain an important source of income. Fishing also plays a significant role in shaping kinship relations between people in the tributaries.

## Methods

This research is primarily qualitative. It uses various qualitative tools like in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and participation observation. Twelve local volunteers were selected as local researchers and divided into two groups. Each group consisted of six people. They helped record the information on food consumption of families in the area over the course of one year. They had begun recording in August 2015 and ended in July 2016. Livelihood strategies concept was used to analyze field data.



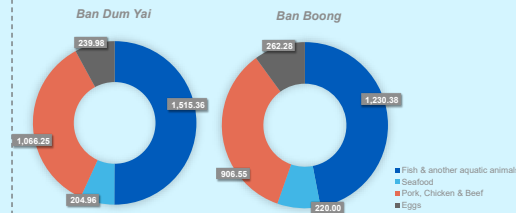
## Results

### 1. The communities of the Mun River Tributaries experienced two main significant changes;

- Being affected by development, especially several dams were constructed that blocked the routes of fish migration including *Pak Mun Dam*, *Huana Dam* and *Lam Se Bok Dam*: This has resulted in the disappearance of a number of fish species. However, it has found that various fish population have been largely found because a small-size dam – known as dikes which is called *Kuk Rit Dike* in *Ban Dum Yai* has made the area more suitable for fish to live and spawn. Thus, villagers are able to catch more fish compared with other areas.
- Changes of key socio-economic aspects: Family sizes in the tributaries of the Mun River communities have become smaller. Local people have employed more advanced technologies to facilitate the food production process. Diversified livelihoods have significantly existed both on-farm and off-farm works. Villagers mostly cultivate for market. Dry season crops are grown in irrigated areas. Grown crops are generally for the sale. Furthermore, most young people have migrated to work in urban areas.

### 2. Fish consumption remains important for communities living along the tributaries of the Mun River for a number of reasons.

#### • Source of protein



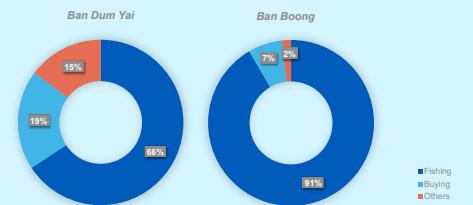
\*Fish Consumption and Other Protein sources (Kilograms per year)

#### • Cost saving source of food

Types	Ban Dum Yai	Ban Boong	Total
Natural Freshwater Fish	62,041.00	64,570.00	126,611.00
Another Aquatic Animals	64,907.50	29,455.50	94,363.00
Aquaculture	18,216.00	17,400.00	35,616.00
Pork, Chicken & Beef	107,044.00	86,558.00	193,602.00
Seafood	20,496.30	22,000.15	42,496.45
Eggs	11,999.00	13,113.75	25,112.75
Total	284,703.80	233,097.40	517,801.20

\* Budget spent on fish consumption and other protein sources (32 THB = 1 USD)

#### • Self-reliance on food



\*Fish and aquatic resources acquisition



- Kinship relations have remained crucial in the communities.



Local people usually help one another catch fish and often share what they catch. In addition, fish consumption plays an important role in local festivals, such as *Boon Pha Khao Yai* in *Ban Dum Yai* and *Bun Nao Songkran* in *Ban Bung*.

## Conclusion

- Fish consumption in the tributaries of the Mun River reveals a significant continuation of a subsistence economy, one that co-exists with a capitalist society.
- Fish consumption is part of the livelihood strategy of the people living on tributaries of the Mun River. Fishing is a strategy to maintain food security. In addition, fishing is often a secondary source of income for local people while they take part in other agricultural activities for the markets. Also, some find jobs beyond agricultural domains.
- Tributaries of the major river are very important. Fish consumption by the people along the tributaries helps enrich our understanding of why ecological systems where fish and aquatic creatures live are important. It underscores that development schemes can cause major risks to local livelihoods if they do not carefully consider the impact they might have on the habitats of fish and aquatic creatures. These risks could negatively affect riverine people and hinder their ability to be food secure.

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