

'There is nothing for me': Vietnam drought dries up income

June 16 2023



An unprecedented drought has left cracked earth where water once teemed with fish.

On the shores of a reservoir that feeds one of Vietnam's biggest hydropower plants, Dang Thi Phuong points at the cracked ground where

the fish that help her earn a living normally swim.

After a series of heatwaves, including a record high in May, and an unprecedented drought, rivers and reservoirs in northern Vietnam are running dry, pulling locals who survive off the water into serious economic difficulty.

Scientists say [global warming](#) is exacerbating [adverse weather](#), and Vietnam is just one of many countries across South and Southeast Asia to have suffered a prolonged heatwave in recent weeks.

At Thac Ba hydropower plant in Yen Bai province, 160 kilometers (100 miles) north of Hanoi, water in the reservoir is at its lowest level in 20 years, according to state media.

At its worst, the water was about 15 to 20 centimeters (6 to 8 inches) below the minimum level needed for the plant to function.

The nearby Chay river is little more than a puddle, with rocks and soil clearly visible.

"Normally, I can earn up to three million dong (\$125) per month from fishing on the lake, but now there is nothing for me," Phuong, 42, said, adding that even her buffaloes were suffering, no longer able to take a proper bath in the [shallow waters](#).



The heatwave has left those who relied on fishing for their living worried about having even enough water for their rice fields and families.



'If things continue like this, I'm afraid we won't have water to use for our daily life,' one resident told AFP.

She worries, too, about water for her rice fields and for her family.

"We use water from a nearby well for our paddy field. This year, it has dried up.

"So if things will continue like this, I'm afraid we won't have water to use for our daily life," she told AFP.

The drought has severely strained power supplies in northern Vietnam, causing rolling blackouts and sudden power cuts.

The crisis is hitting the country's crucial manufacturing sector, with operations at a large number of factories badly impacted, according to business leaders.

On the ground, 60-year-old fisherman Hoang Van Tien said even if there were [fish](#), it was too hot to sit out on the water.

"This kind of drought I have seen in the past, but it wasn't as hot as this time.

"Now it is too hot to go to the lake (for fishing). It is too sunny. I sit on the boat with a hood to cover me, but the heat rises up from the [water](#) and burns my skin."

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Citation: 'There is nothing for me': Vietnam drought dries up income (2023, June 16) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2023-06-vietnam-drought-dries-income.html>

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