

STATEMENT ON INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ACTION FOR RIVERS AND AGAINST DAMS: MARCH 14, 2015

By: Action for Shan State Rivers

Communities in Shan State call for immediate halt to large dams in Shan state

We, the communities in Shan State, are calling for the Burmese government and foreign dam developers to immediately stop their plans to build over 20 new large dams in Shan State.

Under the government's National Energy Policy, 43 large hydropower dams are being planned in Burma by local and foreign companies, to produce 42,000 megawatts of electricity, mainly for export to China and Thailand. At least half of the dams are planned on rivers in Shan State, including four dams on the Salween river and its Nam Ma tributary.

We already have very negative experiences of dam-building under the current government. Local people are not being informed or consulted about the dam projects. They receive none of the benefits, but suffer all the negative social and environmental impacts. For example, the recently completed Upper Paung Laung Dam, which provides electricity to Naypyidaw, has displaced 8,000 people, and had a drastic impact on their farming livelihoods.

We are also gravely concerned that dams are fuelling the ongoing conflict in Shan State. Many of the planned dams are located in active war zones, necessitating heavy Burma Army presence to provide security, which in turn exacerbates the conflict. This is evident in the case of the Kunlong dam on the Salween river, where fighting is now raging between Kokang resistance forces and the Burma Army, causing up to 100,000 refugees to flee to China in the last month.

The Kunlong was to have been the first of the dams on the Salween, but the site is now abandoned due to the conflict, likely causing large losses for the Chinese investors.

It is therefore shocking that Chinese and Thai dam developers are pushing ahead with another Salween dam, the Mongton/Tasang dam in southern Shan State, even while fighting is continuing at Kunlong. On March 10, China Three Gorges Corporation (CTG), China Southern Power Grid (CSG), Power Construction of China (Sinohydro), Electricity Authority of Thailand International (EGATi), and International Group of Entrepreneurs Co. (ICE), held their first public consultation in Taunggyi for the planned dam.

If built, the Mongton/Tasang dam will be one of the largest dams in Southeast Asia. It will produce 7,000 megawatts of electricity, most of which will be exported to Thailand and China. Yet, like the Kunlong dam, it lies in a heavily militarized conflict area, between territories controlled by Shan and Wa forces, and is a hugely risky investment.

To avoid economic as well as reputational risks, we urge all dam developers to heed our concerns about construction of large dams in Shan State, as follows:

Fueling conflict

- Militarization, using security for the dams as an excuse to occupy wider areas, and increased conflict between government troops and ethnic armed groups because of this militarization.

- Human rights violations, such as rape, forced labor, recruitment of child soldiers, committed by the Burma army, as has occurred in the past
- The government's giving priority to economic development instead of implementing the ceasefire agreements, which can affect trust-building between the two sides in the ceasefire and jeopardize peace
- The fact that the constitution unfairly gives the central government full authority to control, own and distribute the revenue from natural resources in ethnic areas, which will only extend the conflicts

Livelihood and land problems

- Effects on people who rely on riverbank agriculture for their livelihoods.
- The loss of farm lands and housing land because of building road to the dam site
- Land confiscation
- The reduced amount of land available for farming for both local and displaced people because of forced migration, and the social problems this will create

Forced migration, loss of property, effects on communities and other social problems

- Forcible displacement of communities and villages
- The erosion of ethnic groups' culture if they are displaced and no longer able to live in their traditional communities
- Potential danger to lives downstream if water is released suddenly from the dam
- Effects on community living standards (education, health, economic, social)
- The permanent loss of lands that were temporarily abandoned because of conflict, making it impossible for war refugees to return
- No benefits for citizens
- Strong likelihood of corruption during the dam building process
- The fact that implementing the dam projects during the ceasefire and peace negotiation period will only benefit the government and companies.
- The sale of most of the electricity from these projects to foreign investors, China & Thai
- No law that guarantees the wellbeing of the people
- Due to the current investment and land laws the construction of the dam will create serious land problems.
- Natural environment that people depend on will be affected
- The destruction of valuable forest areas, herbal plants, and wildlife species
- Logging and mining before dam construction, and the effects on local people

No transparency

- Necessary information, which should be clearly understood by affected communities, is not being made public, and people are being threatened or restricted from freely seeking this information
- No freedom for civil society to provide the people with necessary information, such as the advantages and disadvantages of the dam
- No information about whether and how revenue earned from development projects will be allocated and used for the wellbeing of the people (for education, health, etc.)
- Dams are proceeding in violation of international dam building standards, which should ensure transparency and respect for rights of affected communities. The dam sites are

strictly guarded, and local people have been given no information about the projects. Downstream communities remain ignorant about impacts on water flows, fisheries and agriculture, as well the dangers of potential dam breaks.

Therefore, we the communities in Shan State, Shan CSOs and CBOs, urge the governments of Burma, China and Thailand, and foreign dam-building companies not to consider proceeding with any large dams in Shan State unless the following conditions are fulfilled:

- There is provision of comprehensive and true information about the dams, including the advantages and disadvantages of these dam projects, to impacted people before they are asked to consent to the project.
- There is legal permission given to civil society, without any restriction, to provide information to people about dam impacts.
- Livelihood Impact Assessments (LIA), Conflict Impact Analyses (CIA), Environment Impact Assessments (EIA), Social Impact Assessments (SIA), are carried out, not only focusing on the project area, but the entire basin of each river, and the results of the LIA, CIA, EIA, and SIA are published so that people can see, analyze, and give their suggestions.
- There is meaningful consultation with local people, affected communities, civil society organizations and community based organizations.
- A process of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) is carried out for each dam project.
- Foreign investors respect and follow their own countries' laws and international standards.
- There is no more civil war and there is a genuine federal system of government.

We also urge political parties in Shan State, including the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party (SNDP) and Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD), and ethnic armed groups, to support our calls for an immediate halt to all large dam plans in Shan State.

Endorsed by:

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