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 Tuesday, 04 October 2016 05:34 | administrator



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TA'ANG STUDENTS AND YOUTH UNION
 Place: Lashio, Tel: 09 4721 4717 Email: <tsyuoffice@gmail.com>

Date: 4 October 2016
 TSYU demand immediate suspension of Shweli 3 Hydropower Project

The Ta'ang Students and Youth Union (TSYU) is releasing a statement to express serious concern about the government's announcement on September 15, 2016 to continue with the Shweli Hydropower Number 3 project in an active conflict zone in Northern Shan State. This would be one of the first hydropower projects approved by the NLD-led government. The implementation of the Shweli 3 project in a conflict area will threaten the lives of local people, prolong war, and jeopardize the peace process.

The Shweli Hydropower Number 3 project, which will produce 1050 MW of electricity, is located in Myinsone Village Tract, Mongmit Township, Northern Shan State. The Department of Electric Power and Planning, the Myanmar Ministry of Electric Power (MOEP) and the French state-owned company Électricité de France SA (EDF) signed the Memorandum of Understanding for the project in December 2015, despite fierce fighting in the project area. Tatmadaw Battalions 223 and 348 in Momyint have taken responsibility for the security of the project.

The Shweli 3 area has historically been under the control of the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and the Shan State Progressive Party (SSPP/SSA). The two Tatmadaw battalions, 223 and 348, providing security at the dam site have often fought within the project area with the TNLA, and committed serious human rights abuses against local civilians.

The heaviest fighting in years occurred in the project area between the TNLA and Tatmadaw forces in January 2015 when workers at the project site were attempting to set up electrical power equipment. During this conflict alone, 200 villagers were displaced and are unable to return home. "It is certain that continued work on the project will only further intensify conflict, human rights violations, and displacement, as well as threaten the peace process," stated Mai Amm Ngeal of TSYU.

The Ta'ang Student and Youth Union believes that opening the door for foreign or national investments in mega development projects such as hydropower, gas and oil pipeline, mining

and other natural resource-related projects during a period of conflict and unstable political situation will contribute to a dangerous lack of local security and undermine the peace process. There should be a moratorium on all mega-development projects in Ta'ang and other ethnic areas until there is a federal democratic system.

Recommendation

1. To stop the Shweli Hydropower Number 3 project
2. To immediately withdraw Tatmadaw troops in Ta'ang areas, including those there for project security
3. To write a new natural resource and environment law which will include community people, CSOs, environmental experts, and politicians throughout the whole policy-making process
4. To place a moratorium on mega hydropower projects in the country until there is a federal democracy
5. To review and change the 2008 constitution to uphold a real federal democratic system

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