



STOP COAL MINING IN NAM MA



By: Nam Ma Shan Farmers

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Nam Ma mining



Introduction

In 2004, Ngwe Yi Pale Company began coal mining in Nam Ma tract of Hsipaw township. The mining has destroyed farmlands and irrigation sources, and caused water and air pollution, impacting over 3,000 people. The Nam Ma villagers have been calling for a stop to the mining since April 1, 2016, but the company has continued expanding the mining area. In May 2016, the Burma Army carried out an attack in the area to clear out the Shan State Progress Party/Shan State Army, and protect the mining operations. Villagers were killed, arrested and beaten. Now, over a hundred trucks of coal are being transported out of the area each day.

The villagers of Nam Ma are urging the Burmese government to immediately stop the mining operations, which are damaging their farming livelihoods, environment and health.



Coal mining at Na Koon

Background of Nam Ma

1. Population and livelihoods in and near Nam Ma

There are 7 villages in the tract of Nam Ma. The villagers are all ethnic Shan. Their main livelihood is farming. Villagers grow rice, corn, oranges, mustard greens, sesame and tea.

There are about 1,500 people living in Nam Ma tract. The population is as follows:

No.	Village name	No. of households	No. of people
1	(Nam Ma) Wan Long	78	275
2	Pieng Hsai	17	54
3	Pa Teb	24	80
4	Na Nan	28	125
5	Nawng Nwe	74	343
6	Koong Pao	93	411
7	Na Koon	49	201
Total			1,489

There are also about 1,800 people living in seven other villages near Nam Ma tract and along the roads to Hsipaw, who are also being impacted by the coal mining and transport:

No.	Village name	No. of households	No. of people
1	Na Taw	30	120
2	Pang Nga	28	100
3	Mawk Tong	65	est. 260
4	Nar Heep	38	est. 150
5	Nam Bu	50	est. 200
6	Nong Khun	40	est. 160
7	Hang Nar	200	est. 800
Total			est. 1,790



Coal mining at Parnng Nga

2. Political situation

The SSPP/SSA has been based in Nam Ma tract for decades. After the 1989 ceasefire between the SSPP and the Burmese regime, the area was jointly administered by the SSPP and the Burmese military authorities for about 27 years. The Burma Army set up an outpost in Na Koon (next to the Ngwe Yi Pale mines) in 2005, remaining there until 2009.

The SSPP/SSA used to have a base in Nam Ma Wan Long, but in April 2010, when the SSPP/SSA refused to become a Border Guard Force, the Burma Army attacked the SSPP/SSA and forced them south to the Na Taw area. In May 2016, the Burma Army launched a large scale offensive against the SSPP/SSA, drove them completely out of the Nam Ma area, and dismantled their camps. Villagers were killed, arrested and beaten during the attack.

Mining in Nam Ma area

1. Military coal mines in Maw Taan

The first coal mining began in the Maw Taan area, north of Nam Ma tract, in the 1980s. At that time, the mines were operated directly by the Burma Army. A village called Maw Taan was set up for the mining employees and their families.

As the coal mining was in the hills above the Nam Ma tract, and the transport routes did not pass through the tract, the Nam Ma villagers did not notice many impacts from the mining. However, the water from the mining area flowed directly into the Nam Ma stream used by local villagers, causing it to become black, and sometimes usage of water in the mine caused water shortages in villagers downstream.

During the 1990s, large amounts of coal were mined in Maw Taan, and were sold to steel mills and cement factories in other parts of Burma. However, after 2000 the amounts decreased, and no coal has been mined there since 2010.

2. Ngwe Yi Pale coal mines

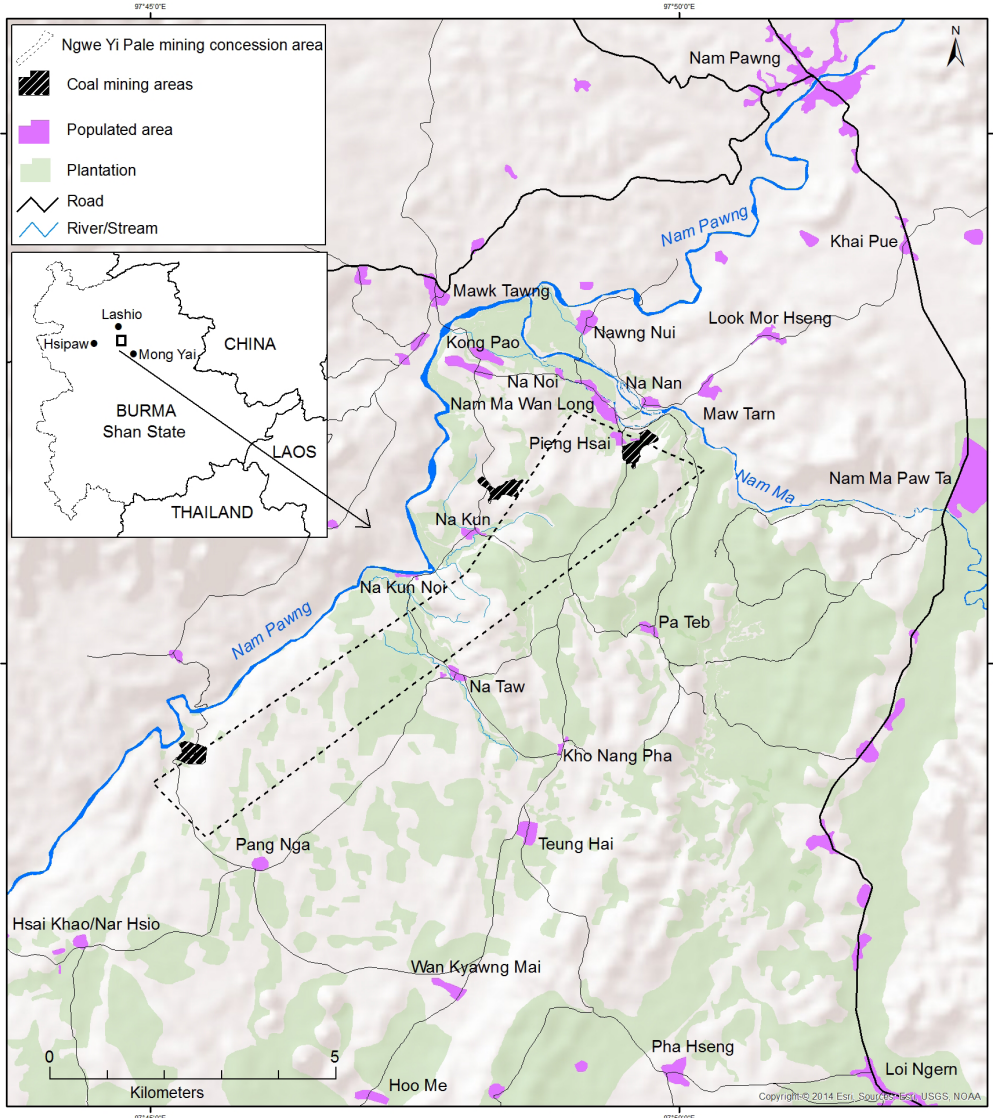
Ngwe Yi Pale is a Mandalay-based company, which produces “Crown” cement and sugar, with factories in Mandalay and Nawng Khio.

Ngwe Yi Pale began mining in the Nam Ma area in 2004. At that time, the Burma Army Northeast Regional Commander had a 1/3 share in the mine.

In August 2010 Ngwe Yi Pale company was given a 10-year permit to dig for coal in the Nam Ma area, in a joint venture with Myanmar’s No. 3 Mining Enterprise. The concession area is called “Kown Baung (Nar Kon)”, and is 11.3 square kilometers in size. The location of the concession, according to a document from the Myanmar Mining Ministry is shown below. Two of the areas where Ngwe Yi Pale is mining (near Na Koon and Pang Nga) appear to be outside the concession area.

In February 2016, Ngwe Yi Pale company was given another one-year permit by the Mining Ministry to explore for coal in three sites in the same “Kown Baung (Nar Kon)” concession area. Site 1 is 55.79 acres, Site 2 is 238 acres, and Site 3 is 235.54 acres. Villagers do not know where these sites are. According to a letter from the Hsipaw township administrator to the Nam Ma village tract administrator dated June 23, 2016, 15 villagers signed approval at the Nam Ma tract administrative office for Ngwe Yi Pale to carry out exploration in these areas. However, the Nam Ma village leaders were never consulted about this, and never signed any such document giving approval.

Map of Ngwe Yi Pale concession area and coal mining sites in Nam Ma



Na Koon coal mines

Mining began near Na Koon village in 2004. Villagers were not consulted before the mining began. For about 10 years, the company carried out open-pit mining, but since 2014, they have been mining in underground tunnels. There are about 50 Burmese workers, and about 20 Chinese engineers at the mine. The Chinese have been at the site since 2014, when the company began doing underground mining, as they have expertise in digging tunnels. The Burmese workers stay at the company houses in Pieng Hsai, and the Chinese stay at Na Koon. There are four bulldozers, eleven large trucks and ten small trucks at the site. The coal is stored near the coal pit, and waste is also dumped near the pit.

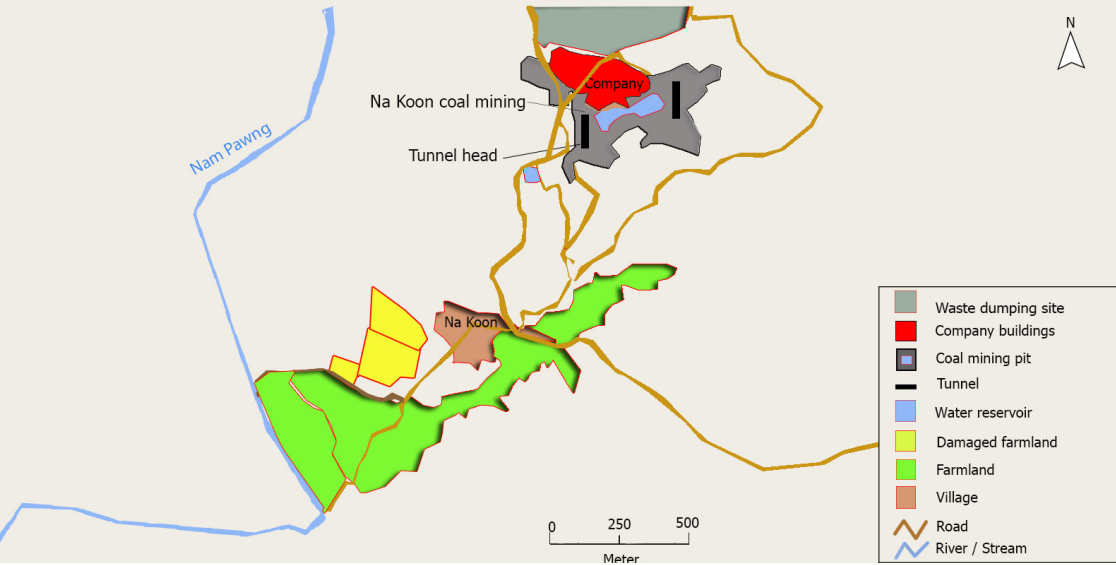
The mining is taking place north of Na Koon village, and has damaged the hill fields of several villagers and blocked irrigation water sources. One farmer said he had lost about 1,000,000 kyat (USD 800) a year due to the blocking of water to his corn fields.

A lot of sand is being used for roads in the mining area, and inside the tunnels. The sand is being mined south of Pieng Hsai. This sand is being mined by Ngwe Yi Pale, and then sold to the Chinese running the Na Koon mine.

The coal from the mines is transported by 22-wheel trucks, which can carry up to 25 tons of coal. The coal is transported every day up to Hsipaw and beyond.

After the May 2016, fighting, mining resumed immediately in Na Koon (and Parng Nga). 100 trucks of coal a day have been seen by villagers coming from these areas.

Impacts of coal mining near Na Koon



A mining truck at Na Koon

Pieng Hsai coal mines

Ngwe Yi Pale began coal mining near Pieng Hsai in 2005. Company housing was built at the mine. Over 30 Burmese workers were employed on the mines. They did not employ any local people at the mine, even though some villagers tried to get work there.

The company carried out open-pit mining. They dug up farmlands east of Pieng Hsai village, and also dumped piles of mining waste on farmlands and grazing areas on either side of the mining area. They paid compensation to the villagers in 2006 whose fields were impacted, but only at a rate of 500,000 kyat to 1,000,000 kyat (approx USD 500-1,000) only time. In fact, each field could provide an annual income of 50,000-100,000 (approx 1,600 -3,000 USD) to villagers, so this compensation was completely inadequate.

In 2009, the company began preparing to dig at Ho Na Pha, the hill area south of Pieng Hsai village. Ho Na Pha is the main watershed area of Nam Ma tract, and has been protected for generations by customary law. No one is allowed to cut trees or farm in that area. Therefore, the villagers informed the company and SSPP authorities that they would not accept any mining in that area.

However, in April 2012, the company secretly began mining, and dug up 25 trucks of coal. When the SSPP/SSA heard about this, they complained to the mining company and fined them 10,000,000 kyat (USD 10,000). After this, the mining company did not dare to continue mining at Ho Na Pha.

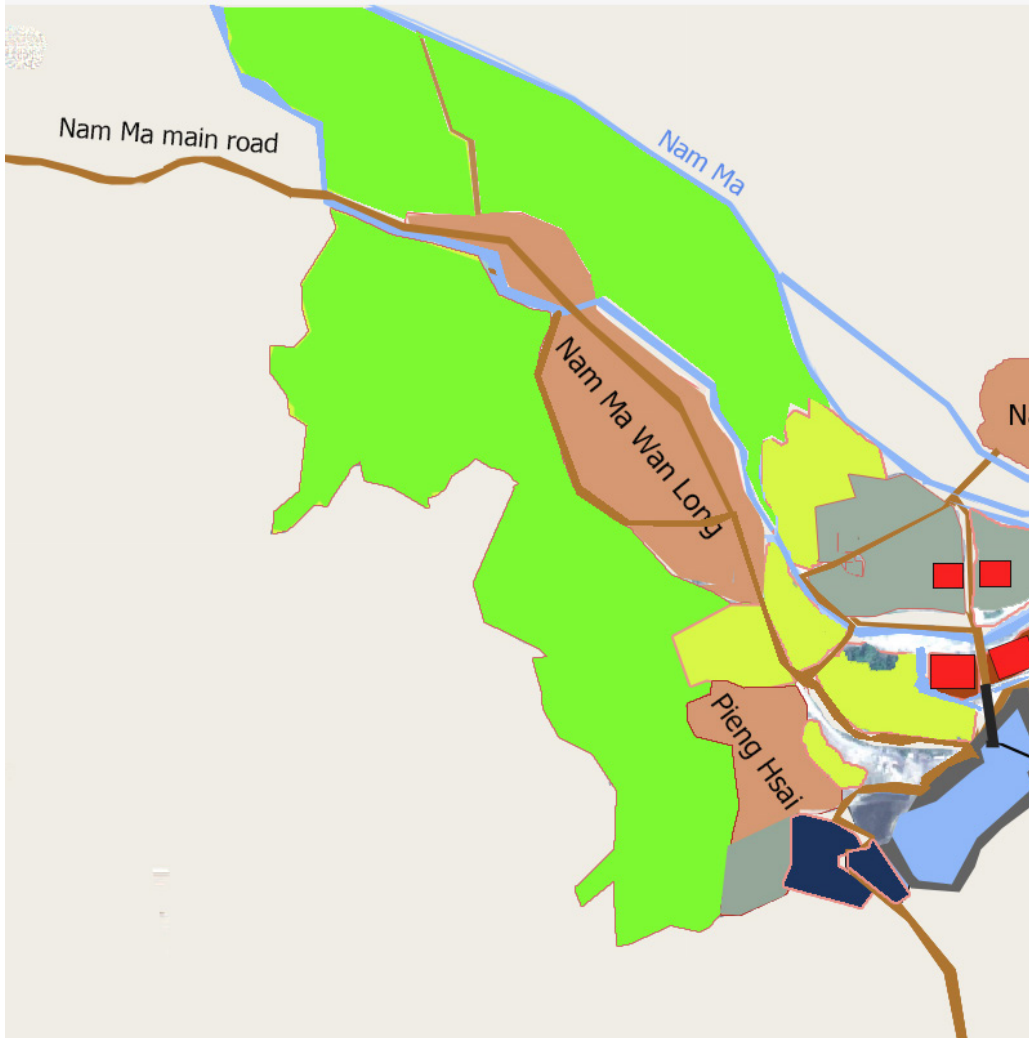
In 2014, the company tried to dig tunnels to carry out underground mining, but as the tunnels kept filling up with water and also collapsed, they stopped in 2015.

In March 2015, the company stopped all digging in the Pieng Hsai area. When they stopped digging, they also stopped pumping water out of the main mining pit, which soon filled up with water, forming a lake. The villagers have many times requested that the company fill in the mining pit, but the company has refused to do so. The villagers do not want the lake, which is eroding nearby lands, and want instead their lands to be restored.

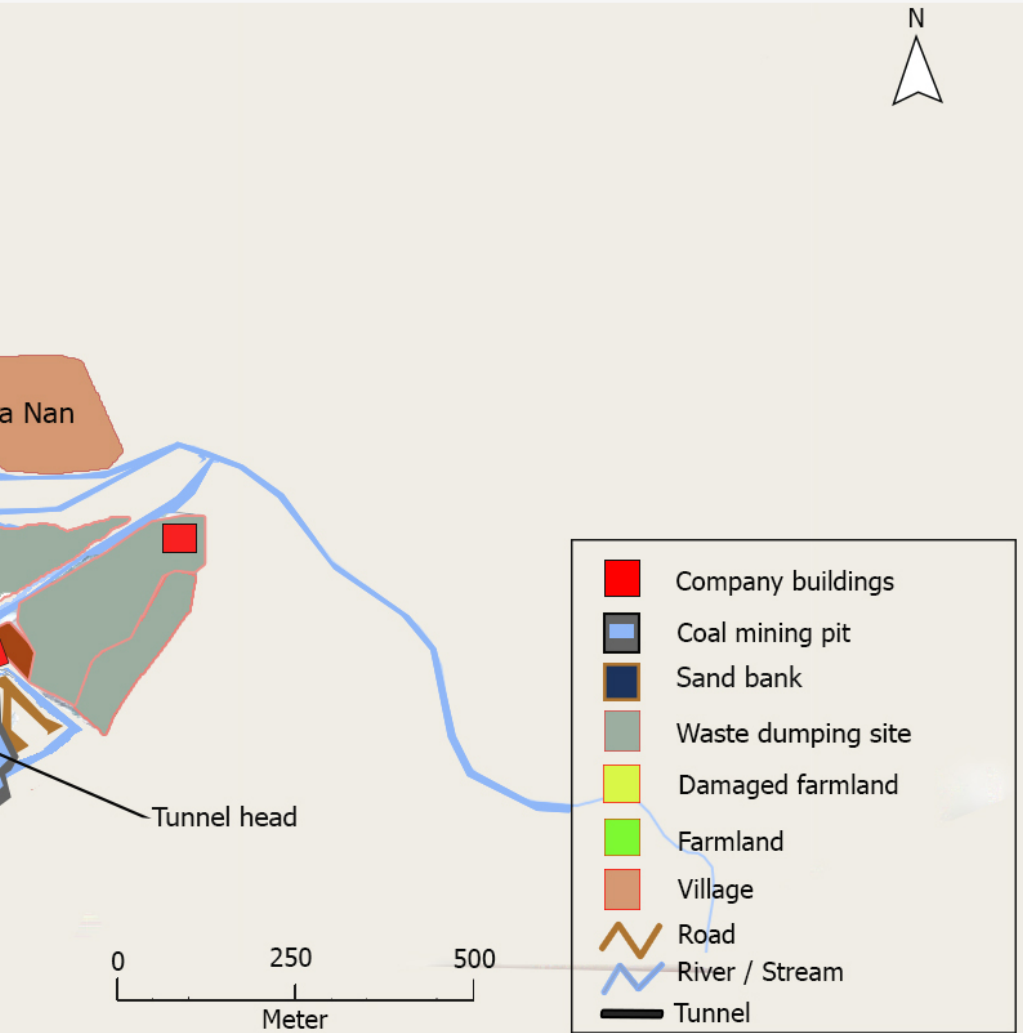
Currently, even though mining has stopped in Pieng Hsai, there has been no removal of the piles of waste, no filling in of the open pit, which has become a lake, and no attempt to restore any waterways or fields that existed before the mining began. The company personnel still stay in housing set up on the villagers' former lands. They travel each day from Pieng Hsai to the mines in nearby Na Koon.

Villagers remain very worried that after the SSPP/SSA has been forced out of the Nam Ma area, the company will start digging in the Ho Nam Fa watershed area, which irrigate most farms in the Nam Ma area. One farmer from Pieng Hsai said: "We don't want them to mine any more. There will be nothing for our children. They will have no future, no livelihoods. If we can't plant in our fields, we will have to move elsewhere."

Impacts of coal mining



ing near Pieng Hsai



Impacts of the mining near Pieng Hsai

Loss of farmlands and grazing lands from mining

Over 30 acres of farmland belonging to villagers in Pieng Hsai has been lost or damaged due to the mining. Five households have lost farmlands where the company has been digging for coal and dumping waste. Another five households have suffered damage to their fields due to blockage of water sources by the mining operations. The company has set up a pump from the lake in the mining pit to provide water to their fields, but it is polluted and smells like engine oil. Due to the dirty water, the crop yield per field has decreased by about one third.

Some Pieng Hsai farmers who grew tea on the hills east of the mine, lost their tea farms when the company dug into the side of the hills.

Farmland at Pieng Hsai dug up by the mining company

No.	Owners of farmland	Acres of land destroyed
1	Sai Yuir	5
2	Loong Aye	1
3	Khing Htun Lu	3
4	Sao Pu Yang	5
5	Loong Yoong	3
Total		17



Farming area at Na Koon

Farmland at Pieng Hsai with reduced yields due to mining blocking irrigation sources

No.	Owners of farmland	Acres of land destroyed
1	Ti Loka	4
2	Sai Saw	2
3	Pu Jale Si Ha	2
4	Hsang Yee	6
5	Na Mark Fa	2
Total		16

List of lands which will be impacted if mining is carried out at Ho Na Pha watershed area

1. Wan Long villagers

No.	Owners of farmland	Acres of land destroyed
1	Sai HsiKhur	7
2	Loong HtunKyaw	3
3	Aloka	6
4	Dhamma	4
5	Kowing	4
6	Nang Tawn	4
7	Nang Kham	6
8	Pu Pan	3
9	Loong Phoi	6
10	Pa Ing	7
11	Loong Aw Aung	4
12	Pu Saw	4
13	Kham Pee	6
14	Kyaw Long	5
15	Pu Na Ling	5
16	Loong Aw Li	5
17	Nai Nang Ou	3
18	Su Hla	4
19	Khun Wee	5
20	Pu Je Pao	9
Total		100

2. Pieng Hsai villagers

No.	Owners of farmland	Acres of land destroyed
1	Pu Mong Aye	6
2	Sai Su	6
3	Sai Jaw	3
4	Loong Hsar	5
5	KhingYoong	6
6	Hsar Lu	6
7	Sai Saw	6
8	Nang Ing Awn	3
9	Sai Su	1
10	Sai HsarngMaung	6
11	KhingPandi	1
Total		49

Villagers from Wan Long and Pieng Hsai have lost grazing lands, due to runoff from the mining waste, where they used to rear cattle and buffalo.

Another problem for Pieng Hsai villagers is that the lake is gradually eroding the banks of the mining pit, eating further into the villagers' lands. In the past year alone, it has eroded about 10 yards of the bank.

Some fields of Pieng Hsai villagers have been impacted by the digging of sand for the Na Koon mine. When rain falls, sand washes onto the fields, making them uncultivable.

Drying up of wells in Pieng Hsai

Since 2010, the villagers in Pieng Hsai have suffered from drying up of wells in the dry season, due to water draining into the mining pit. Before the mining began, they never faced this problem.

Water pollution from mining waste

Due to the large amount of groundwater in the Pieng Hsai mine, hundreds of gallons of water needed to be pumped each day out of the mine, directly into the Nam Ma stream, causing it to become black.

Also, large piles of mining waste from the mine were dumped along the edge of the Nam Ma stream. Run off from this waste poured directly into the stream.

About 1,400 people in Wan Long, Na Na, Nawng New and Koong Pao villages live along the Nam Ma stream, directly below the Pieng Hsai mine, and have suffered from the water pollution. They complained that during the rainy season, they would get itchy skin from bathing in the water in the stream.

They have also noticed that there are fewer amounts of fish and snails in the Nam Ma stream. There are also no leeches any more in the stream.

Pa Nang Moan, head of the Wan Long women's group said, "Before the mining company came, there were lots of fish and snails which we used to catch in the river for food every day. However, after their coal mining operation, our water became black, and it is also difficult for us to find and catch any fish as well as snails. There are not many, like before."



Nam Ma stream

Air pollution from coal storage and transport

After being mined, the coal from Pieng Hsai mine was stored only about a few hundred feet from Pieng Hsai village. In hot weather, smoke would come from the piles of coal, giving off a bad smell and giving people in the nearby village a headache. This caused breathing difficulty and coughing among some villagers, particularly older people.

The trucks transporting coal from Pieng Hsai did not cover their loads unless it was raining. The dust from the coal and the roads therefore impacted villagers living along the roads.

Parng Nga coal mines

Open pit mining began about 2 kilometers northwest of Parng Nga village in 2015, next to the Nam Pawng river. There are about 30 workers at the mine, three bulldozers, and eight 22-wheel trucks.

The mining waste is being piled right next to the river, close to villagers' orange farms. It is feared that the waste will start to cover these orange farms.

When it rains, the waste is washed into the river. Water from the mining pit is also being pumped directly into the river. Communities living downstream are therefore being impacted by the polluted water.

Impacts of mining near Pan Nga



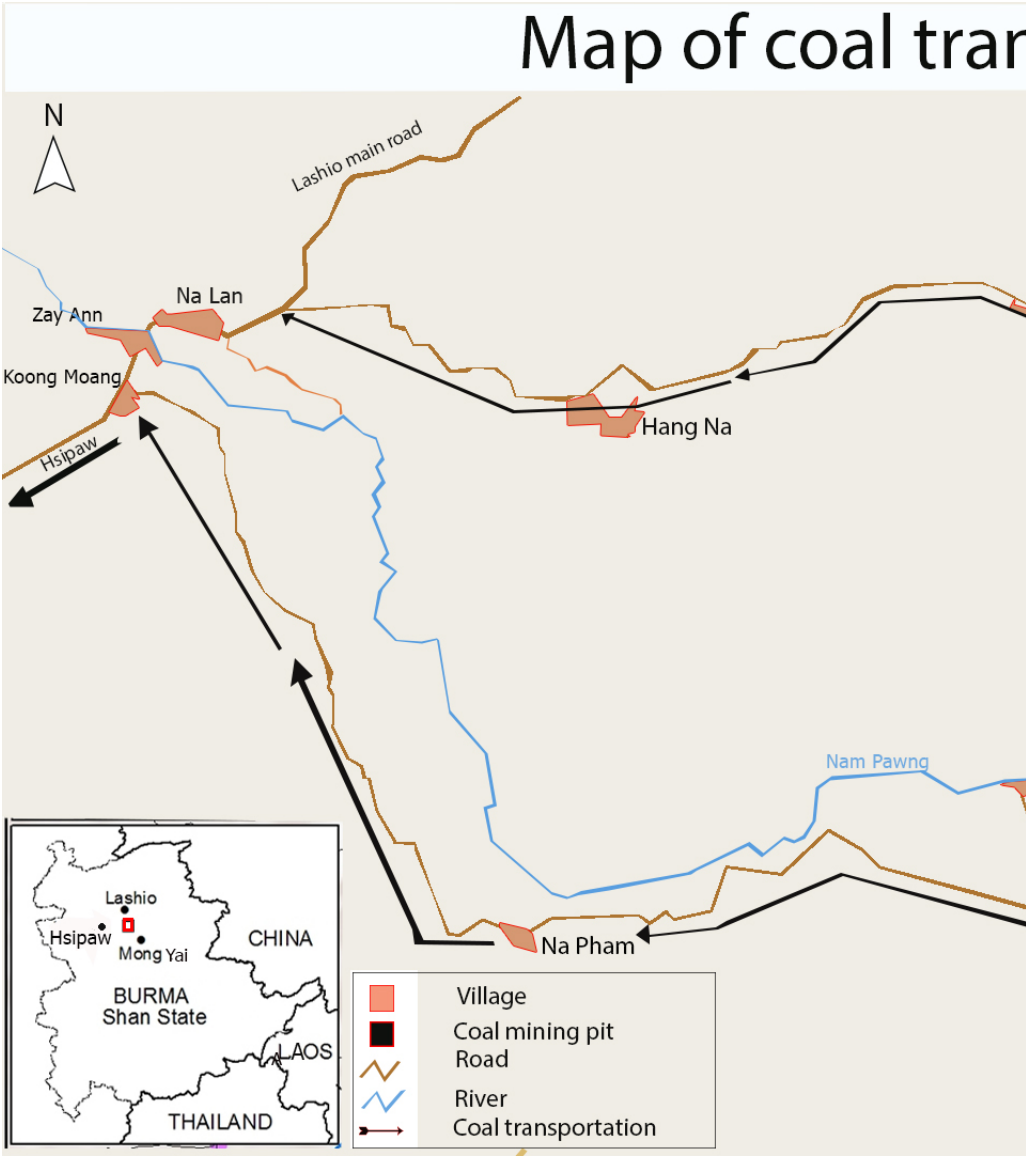
Overall impacts

of mining in Nam Ma

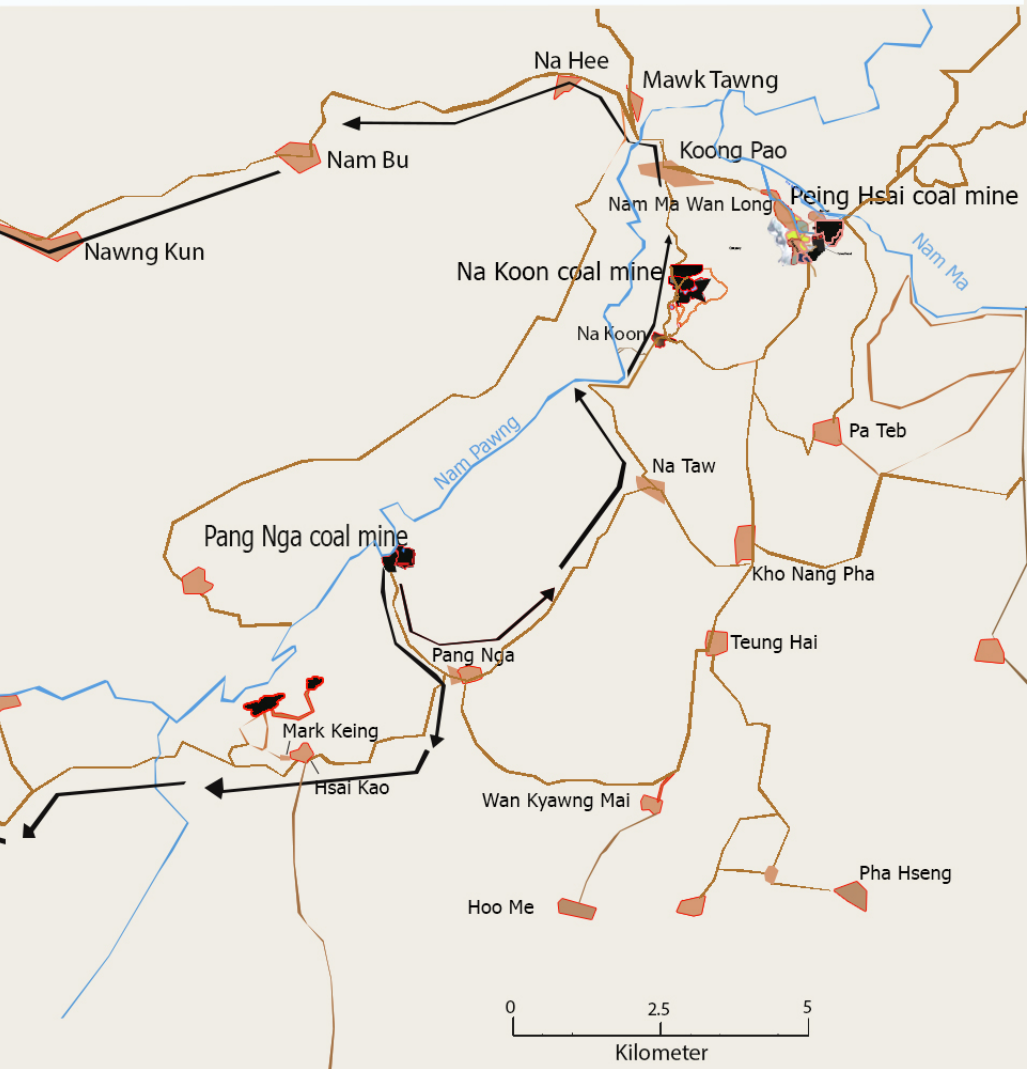


Ongoing air pollution

Currently, over 100 large trucks transport coal each day from the Na Koon and Parng Nga mines, passing through villages housing thousands of residents. Particularly during the dry season, when the coal loads are not covered, villagers suffer due to coal dust from the trucks, as well as the road, blowing into their houses and onto their property.



Transport routes



Danger of road accidents and infrastructure damage from coal trucks

The large number of coal trucks causes increased danger of road accidents. On August 11, 2016, two villagers riding a motorcycle from a market were hit by a coal truck south of Parng Nga. Sai Sarng Sai, a 21-year-old man from Koong Mark Keng, was killed immediately. Nang Harn, a 28-year-old woman from Hsai Khao, was badly injured, and died in Lashio hospital two days later. Both villagers were married. Nang Harn had two children, including a four-month-old baby.

Ngwe Yi Pale company paid for the funeral of the two villagers, and has arranged compensation for their families. They asked the families not to publicize the incident.

On August 14, 2016, a weir on the Nam Ma stream collapsed due to mining trucks driving along the edge of the stream, and collecting rocks for use in the mines. The weir was used to run a hydropower pump for local villagers.



Artificial lake formed in mining pit at Pieng Hsai

Noticeable climate change

The destruction of water sources, farmlands, hillside vegetation and grazing lands, has made the Nam Ma area noticeably hotter and drier. Villagers say that it has become more difficult to farm and rear animals as a result.

Women's group leader, Pa Nang Moan, said: "Before the mining started, we also raised animals like cattle. But, after the coal mining operating in our region, the climate has changed; it has become hotter than before, so our cattle cannot graze, and some have even died."



Artificial lake formed in mining pit at Pieng Hsai

Villagers' attempts to stop the mining, and company responses

Timeline

- **March 26, 2016** - Over 250 villagers met with the Ngwe Yi Pale head manager, U Zaw Win, the mine manager Pi Sai Maung, and another company official in Wan Long temple. The villagers said they didn't want any coal mining, and asked the company to stop coal mining.
- **June 16, 2016** - The Nam Ma village tract administrator and 300 villagers signed a letter demanding an end to the coal mining, and sent this to Nang San San Aye, Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD) MP for Hsipaw, and also the Hsipaw township administrator U Nyunt Hlaing.
- **June 23, 2016** - The Nam Ma village tract administrative chairman met the Hsipaw township administrator in the Hsipaw administrative office to follow up on the letter demanding an end to the mining.
- **June 25, 2016** - The Ngwe Yi Pale head manager U Zaw Win came to meet the Nam Ma village tract administrator and other villagers to discuss their demands to end the mining. Altogether 55 people attended the meeting, held in Nam Ma temple. The company staff did not agree to stop the mining, but just said they would assist with some social projects for Nam Ma villagers, including putting up a fence around the reservoir, and helping with water and electricity supplies.
- **August 9, 2016** - 361 villagers from in and around Nam Ma tract held a meeting at Nam Ma monastery. They held a vote, and all voted for an immediate end to coal mining in their area.



Villagers meeting to oppose coal mining in Nam Ma Temple



Villagers staging protest against coal mining at Nam Ma Temple



Ngwe Yi Pale company signboard



Water draining into mining pit at Pieng Hsai



Truck transporting coal from Pieng Hsai without protective covering



Contaminated water being released into Nam Ma stream on September 18, 2016, from Pieng Hsai



Villager's house in Pieng Hsai



Farming area at Nawng Nwe

Demands

For over ten years, the Nam Ma villagers have suffered serious social and environmental impacts due to the coal mining operations of Ngwe Yi Pale company. They have lost farmlands, their water sources have been blocked and contaminated, and they have suffered air pollution. Their landscape has been scarred by giant waste piles, and their once fertile area is now facing drought.

They were never consulted before the mining began, and have not been consulted about the continued expansion of the mines. This is unacceptable. The Nam Ma villagers will no longer tolerate the destruction of their lands, livelihoods and future.

The Nam Ma villagers therefore demand that Ngwe Yi Pale immediately stops all their mining operations in Nam Ma, and removes all their equipment and personnel from the area without delay.

STOP COAL MINING

IN NAM MA

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