

Open letter to SMEC by Karli-KunHing People

September 9, 2015

To the Australian company, Snowy Mountains Engineering Corporation (SMEC):

We believe you know well about the situation on the ground in ethnic states, where current ceasefire agreements are fragile. There has been continued fighting and increased militarization by the Burma Army, particularly in Shan State and Kachin State, after re-signing of ceasefire agreements, which is endangering innocent civilians' lives. Fighting broke out recently in our township Kunhing in late August 2015, and the Burma Army arrested innocent villagers who live on the Pang River. Currently there is no political dialogue, and no political guarantees for the indigenous ethnic nationalities, who have been struggling for equality and justice for decades.

Deadly fighting is taking place on the ground in territories controlled by armed groups, which are rich in natural resources, and where international investors and the government of Burma/Myanmar are pushing ahead with development projects on the ground without paying any attention to local people's concerns. The Burmese troops are using this opportunity to reinforce their troops into the area of hydropower projects, saying they will take security for the companies which are carrying out the projects. This will lead to more fighting between the armed groups and government troops while there is no guarantee of a political settlement.

Nang Wah Nu, a local Shan MP, said that the dam building has not got the consent of local people, and every step of the dam building process should be stopped.

She said, "Our people do not agree to the building of the dam. Our Shan Community Based Organizations do not agree, and our Shan political parties do not agree with the dam either. Therefore, all the dam building process must be stopped".

If the Upper Salween dam (Mong Ton dam) is built, this will have huge negative impacts on our society and environment, which local people have been relying on for generations, including sacred historic sites which would be devastated by the project. The project would force tens of thousands of local people to relocate, and no responsibility will be taken by any groups, including the government.

Therefore, local Karli-Kunhing people, including the Tai Youth Organization and local respected MP, Nang Wah Nu, of the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party, are requesting you to stop any activities to promote the Mong Ton dam on the Salween River. We cannot accept any sort of EIA/SIA process to be conducted by you, the government, Ministries, investing companies, organizations, or individuals, and we do not accept any public consultation, meeting, voting, or paying money directly or indirectly as part of this process.

We are strongly against the Mong Ton hydropower project, and cannot accept any promotion of the dam. We hope you will consider our concerns and completely halt the process of the EIA/SIA and any promotion of the dam

Sincerely

Karli-KunHing People

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