



Burma Rivers Network and Save the Salween Network oppose IFC's latest attempts to promote controversial dams in war zones

The Burma Rivers Network (BRN) and Save the Salween Network (SSN) strongly opposes the International Finance Corporation (IFC)'s planned promotional workshops in Yangon, Myitkyina and Loikaw, beginning on January 27, 2017. The IFC's upcoming workshops are simply the latest move by international investors to initiate large scale hydropower projects on Burma's rivers against the long-expressed wishes of local communities engulfed in civil war.

The IFC, a branch of the World Bank financing the private sector, is co-sponsoring a series of "multi-stakeholder baseline assessment workshops" for a planned Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Hydropower Sector in Burma.

BRN and SSN oppose any attempts to push ahead with large dams while conflict continues along Burma's major rivers, where Burma Army offensives and systematic abuses have displaced hundreds of thousands, and where ethnic peoples continue to be constitutionally denied their right to decide over natural resources in their homelands.

BRN and SSN are also opposed to a process dictated by international financial institutions and corporate interests to promote export of energy while the majority of people, especially in ethnic areas, are without electricity. Burma's current Energy Master Plan calls for increasing export of energy to Thailand and China, with revenues going to the central government, rather than promoting a "Burma First" energy policy.

Communities across the country have long voiced opposition to dams on the Irrawaddy and Salween rivers. Multiple reports by local ethnic organizations have detailed the environmental, social and political impacts of damming these rivers.

The cumulative impacts of the proposed Irrawaddy and Salween dams will come at an immeasurable cost to the people and the natural environment of these two great river basins. The fate of Burma's rivers should be in the hands of the people who rely on them.

"Pushing ahead with projects in conflict zones reinforces root causes of conflict, and contradicts the NLD government's claims to be promoting democratic federalism," said Mi Ah Chai.

BRN and SSN are calling for a moratorium on all large dams on Burma's rivers until there is an end to the conflict and devolution of power under a federal democracy.

The ongoing conflict and absence of a genuine and durable "Union Peace Accord" renders the IFC's current Strategic Environmental Assessments for the hydropower sector not only illegitimate but highly controversial, particularly as the areas of the country most heavily targeted by hydropower developers are also the areas most heavily targeted by Burma Army military operations.

BRN and SSN represent a coalition of Kachin, Karenni, Shan, Mon, Kuki, Arakan, Pa'O, Ta'ang, Lahu, Ahka, civil society organizations, and other youth group from Burma's ethnic states that are committed to protecting and promoting the health of rivers and the communities relying on them.

SSN and BRN demands:

1. The establishment of a genuine and durable “Union Peace Accord” protected within a federal constitution must precede Strategic Environmental Assessments for the hydropower sector.
2. The BRN and SSN are not opposed to Strategic Environmental Assessments, however, we are calling for a suspension of the current Strategic Environmental Assessment process that has been centralized under the Ministry of Energy and Electricity, further marginalizing the concerns and rights of CSOs, CBOs, local communities, and other relevant stakeholders.
3. Any future Strategic Environmental Assessments must be designed, planned, and implemented in co-ownership with CSOs, CBOs, local communities, and other relevant stakeholders.

Contact person;

Phone: +95 9255 7849 05 (Mi Ah Chai – BRN)/ +95 92643 62973 (Sai Khurng Seang)

Phone: +95 94450 55659 / +95 9782 397 14 (Saw Tha Phoe - SSN)

Phone: + 95 9785 9367 17 (Ma Kai Lawt – KDNG)

Phone: + 95 92588 42593/ 95 9470 20048 (Myitsone community - Daw Jar Khun)

Save the Salween Network (SSN) member organisations:

1. Shan Sapawa Environmental Organisation (SHAN Sapawa)
2. LahuAkha National Development Organization (LNDO)
3. Mong Pan Youth Association (MYPYA)
4. Union for Karenni State Youth (UKSY)
5. Karen Rivers Watch (KRW)
6. Karen Social and Environmental Network (KESAN)
7. Mon Youth Progressive Organization (MYPO)

Burma Rivers Network (BRN) member organisations:

1. Kachin Development Networking Group (KDNG)
2. Pa’O Youth Organization (PYO)
3. Kayan New Generation Youth (KNGY)
4. Mon Youth Progressive Organization (MYPO)
5. Karenni Civil Society Network (KCSN)
6. Future Thanlwin (FT)
7. Kuki Women’s Human Rights Organization (KWHRO)
8. Karen Rivers Watch (KRW)
9. Ta’ang Students and Youth Union (TSYU)
10. Arakan Rivers Watch (ARN)
11. Shan Sapawa Environmental Organization (SHAN Sapawa)