

28 September 2009

THE HISTORY OF FLOOD DISASTER OF THE IRRAWADDY RIVER AND  
THE OPINION OF THE LOCAL RESIDENTS TO BE DISPLACED BY THE  
HYDRO-POWER PROJECT TO BE CONSTRUCTED AT THE CONFLUENCE

To  
Chairperson  
Kachin State Peace and Development Council  
Myitkyina

Subject: A report on the food disaster to be faced by there would be displaced residents and their opinion upon the hydropower project to be constructed at MayKha and Malikha Confluence

1. Concerning the above mentioned subject we, hereby, submit this report to the State authorities through you for consideration about the probable destruction of the local people's cultural heritage, property and lives as well as the natural calamity caused by the construction of hydro-power project dam at the Irrawaddy confluence.
2. The Source of the river : The source of the Irrawaddy river is the confluence where Maykha and Malikha rivers meet, MayKha and Malikha flow down from ice mountain. Through Thick forest and there are full of thousands of streamlets. Because of heavy rain and landslides, countless trees and bamboo plants are uprooted to float down along the rivers so about 80% of the water body in these rivers consists of rain water. In rainy seasons, it usually rains a lot in the northern areas of The Confluence, causing occasionally alarming flood disaster.
3. A fact worth a special consideration is the historical incidents at the Maykha and Malikha confluence area. This confluence is an ancient heritage from the beginning of the planet earth as important historical locations like Mount Popa, Mount Zwegabin. And Mount Kyaik-Htee-Yoe. According to the Kachin legend, the confluence was where the father dragon as well as his sons Hkrai nawng and Hkrai Gam were born. The Wunpawng kachin tradition says that there will be a natural disaster caused by the dragons if they are disturbed and forced to flee by means of breaking the waterway.
4. Whatever development project is to be conducted, survey should be done first on the natural landscape and historical evidences of local situation which might affect the long-term benefit of the project. If there is the possibility of destructive impact, the development project should not be materialized.
5. The Historical Evidences of Irrawaddy Confluence  
(The testimonies of the eye-witnesses still living about the disasters occurred from 1945 to 2009)
  - a) In 1950, there was an unusual heavy rain fall and explosion on the snow mountains of Putao and Sumprabum in northern part of the kachin State. Within a day and a night, there come a big flood and

caused the surrounding areas of Tangpre confluence and along the Irrawaddy river in Myitkyina. Roman Catholic Mission began at Tangpre village next to the confluence in 1945. A Roman Catholic Mission school, a mission dormitory a Roman Catholic Church and an abbey existed on the spot where the 5,000 residing anniversary pagodas are standing today.

- b) At the time of the flood Fr. John Howe resided there as the abbot. All the building submerged under water during the flood in 1950. The Abbot John Howe narrowly escaped death by climbing up the nearly ban-yam tree.
- c) The flooded monastery, the Church and other building were demolished and the present church was built on the higher ground in 1955. The cement foundation of the flooded church and the tree which the Abbot are still there as the historical evidence. The 5,000 residing pagoda was built as ko-dawng-pye pagoda. By Nyaung-yan family in 1972. They called the location as Thiha-Yazar hill.
  - The flood in 1950 was so terrible that a large number of big fish weighing 70-80 vises floated down the river.
  - The flood occurred again in 1960.
  - Another flood came in 1979. The outskirts of Tangpre village, the bridge across Tangpre stream the middle part of the viallge were flooded. The 5,000 residing pagoda platforms were 5 feet under water. Almost all of Myitkyina city was under the flooded.
  - Again in 1980, the mud flow in another food brought countless big and small dead fish.
  - Another flood in 1997 was as destructive as that of 1979.
  - The flood in 2004 flooded the 5,000 residing pagoda platform, and some local communities in and around Myitkyina such as Shatapru, Industrial zone, kachin-zu, Kyun-pin-ta, ale-gone, Khad-Cho and many other nearly villages, witnessed by the local people and State authorities themselves.
  - On the night of May 30, 2006 the flood started from the hydropower plant at Chying-hkrang dam in Tangpre village. The torrential caused the Chying-Hkang stream overflow and destroyed the hydro-power plant as well as the bridge and the highway. Many villagers lost their lives and their property. Aids from the donors made it possible to reconstruct the houses of the flood victims. The local residents can never forget and jgnore the danger of the terrible flood.
  - Due to this historical evidence, there have always been occasional disastrous flood, and the dam will be short-lived if the Irrawaddy River is blocked and a dam built there for hydropower project. The construction of the big dams is really threatening the security of the local people. We are convinced that big dams of the world are not safe. Every one of us knows that thousands of people have lost their lives because of the floods from these dams. Our

country is on the major earthquake zones which are threatening the people. The huge dams may bring natural disasters at any moment. Can these Chinese companies guarantee the security of the people's lives?

7) The dam to be constructed will be destroyed and will destroy the lives and property of the people such as farmland, cattle, and historical sites which cannot be purchased with money along the downstream Irrawaddy river in Myitkyina, Waimaw, Bhamo, Katha, and other villages big and small alike the future of the local residences there is uncertain and under constant threat depending on the life span of the dam.

8) The confluence of the Irrawaddy is the historical benefactor contributing benefits to the people of Burma. We strongly believe that all the citizens should preserve this historical heritage. No matter how difficult be the situation of the country, it is the mediatory responsibility of every citizen to maintain the historical cultural heritage and the environment.

9) It is our wish that these Chinese hydro power companies realized the danger and disastrous effects upon the people to be caused by the construction of the dam. The present situation is that the local residents do not want to leave their homeland which they inherit from their ancestors' senior members of the villagers are weeping.

10) If the project is inevitable under the government authorities concerned, we humbly appeal that the displaced villagers be relocated and settled on a high ground than their present villages as we submitted the following facts and figured to be devoted special consideration and negotiations.

11) Present Situation of the village

1. a two-storey joint-High school building
2. Two teachers' dormitories
3. A primary school building and a staff residence
4. A Clinic and medical staff residences
5. Post office building
6. Village Library building
7. A village cooperative store building
8. Religious mansions
9. Village hydro-power plant and building
10. Drinking Water pipelines and water tanks
11. Village Council office building
12. Village Sentry building (night guard)
13. Village Fire brigade building
14. A Kachin traditional cultural long – house

13) The general opinion of the would be displaced villagers

1. To be granted land spots for relocation

2. To be compensated fully for their loss
3. To be provided food, education and health care for the relocated villagers within 5 years after their resettlement
4. To be relocated only after the required buildings and facilities not inferior to their present situation have been constructed
5. To be informed of the relocation 1-2 years prior to the actual resettlement.
6. The present value of their property except non-transferable land and housing plots to be paid fully.
7. Drinking water be provided free of charge in the new location
8. Good roads and communication be provided.
9. The compensation agreement signed by the Chinese hydropower companies concerning the property of the villagers be returned to the local community.
10. The local residents will move to the new resettlement only after they are compensated satisfactorily for their contribution and loss for the sake of the benefit of these foreign business companies.

We, the under signed leaders of the community strongly appeal to the authorities concerned to devoted special consideration upon the about mentioned issues.

Respectfully,

On behalf of the resettlement community

22 villager's signature

Copy to:

- 1) Chairperson, District State Peace and Development council, Myitkyina
- 2) Chairperson, Township State Peace and Development Council, Myitkyina
- 3) Chairperson, Township State Peace and Development Council, Waimaw
- 4) Chairperson, Township State Peace and Development Council, Njang Yang
- 5) Office File