

## **Press release by Save the Salween Network**

August 12, 2015

### **Mon and Karen State residents fear increased flood risk from Salween dams**

The Save the Salween Network is holding a press conference today in Moulmein, the Mon State capital, to raise concerns about downstream impacts of the planned Salween dams, including the increased risk of flooding.

Like other parts of Burma, Mon and Karen States have suffered from the recent flood disaster, with about 6,300 Hpa-an residents forced to evacuate their homes when the Salween River burst its banks, flooding 1,200 houses in the town between July 18 and August 5.

There are five large dams planned on the Salween River in Burma by Chinese, Thai and Burmese companies, for the export of power to neighbouring countries. Downstream water levels will fluctuate hugely depending on releases of water by the dams, and in times of heavy rainfall, large volumes of water released will greatly increase flooding risks along the river.

“Thousands of people in Hpa-an are currently suffering from the floods. We fear much greater flooding if the Salween dams are built,” said Hpa-an resident Saw Tha Phoe, a spokesperson for the Save the Salween Network.

“People mistakenly believe that dams help prevent flooding, but they don’t. Look at Thailand. The large dams on the Chaophraya River could not stop the massive 2011 flood disaster,” said Sai Khur Hseng, a Shan spokesperson of the Save the Salween Network.

Downstream communities are also fearful that earthquakes could cause dam breakage, unleashing massive quantities of water. The planned Kunlong dam on the Salween river in northern Shan State is situated in a high earthquake risk area.

The Australian company, Snowy Mountains Engineering Corporation (SMEC), which is carrying out the EIA/SIA for the largest planned Salween dam, the 241 meter tall Mong Ton dam in southern Shan State, visited Moulmein on July 13, and held a closed door meeting at the General Administrative Department office, denying entry to media and local civil society groups.

The SMEC staff reportedly spoke only of the benefits of the dam, and made no mention of increased flooding risk, or of the danger of salt water intrusion impacting agriculture and fisheries at the Salween delta.

“The dam builders are holding local people in contempt,” said Mon National Party MP Dr. Aung Naing Oo, a resident of Bilugyun island in the Salween delta. “The fate of millions along the Salween river must not be decided behind closed doors.”

The Save the Salween Network is calling for the immediate cancellation of all planned dams on the Salween River.

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