

Statement by villagers of Wan Talong:

Myanmar Energy Ministry must stop ignoring warning signs of Upper Yeywa dam instability

September 11, 2018

Villagers of Wan Talong in Hsipaw and Kyaukme townships are urging the Deputy Minister of Electricity and Energy to stop ignoring concerns raised in parliament about the Upper Yeywa dam – particularly the clear warning signs of the potential instability of the dam -- and to immediately cancel the project.

On September 3, 2018, Sai Than Sin, Shan Nationalities League for Democracy MP for Hsipaw, relayed villagers' concerns in the Lower House in Naypyidaw, urging that the Upper Yeywa dam be cancelled because of the damaging social and environmental impacts, including potential dam breakage.

Sai Than Sin provided evidence that construction of the dam was sub-standard. In 2015, the dam's foundations were washed away by heavy flooding. This year, concrete slope reinforcement beside the dam collapsed.

However, the Deputy Energy Minister, Dr. U Htun Naing, ignored these concerns in his response to Sai Than Sin in parliament on September 6. He insisted the dam must go ahead, and claimed that it would help prevent the problems of flooding along the Irrawaddy basin downstream. This led to the parliament approving further budget allocation for the dam on September 11.

It is hugely irresponsible of the Deputy Minister to ignore the possibility of dam breakage, given recent unprecedented flooding throughout Burma, causing the Swar Chaung dam disaster, which displaced over 60,000 people.

The Deputy Minister must also be aware that the German engineering firm, Lahmeyer International, involved in the Upper Yeywa dam, is a subsidiary of the Belgian company Tractebel ENGIE, the consulting engineer for the Xe-Pian Xe-Namnoy dam which collapsed in Laos.

"The warning signs are clear. The Upper Yeywa dam is a disaster in the making and must be cancelled immediately," said Nang Lao Kham from Talong.

The Upper Yeywa dam is being built on the Namtu/Myitnge river in Kyaukme township, northern Shan State. The planned reservoir will stretch for over 60 kilometers, and will entirely submerge the village of Talong, with 653 inhabitants, temples, pagodas, and schools, as well as 637 acres of orchards, 140 acres of rice fields, and countless hill-farms.

Contact details of affected local villagers:

Nang Lao Kham +95 (0)92 653 409 83

Sai Myint +95 (0) 99 718 799 82