

## **Statement by Shan Community Based Organisations**

September 8, 2014

### **Namkham farmers' protest highlights urgent need for moratorium on resource extraction during peace process**

The anti-mining protest by over 3,000 villagers in Namkham, northern Shan State, on September 5, 2014, highlights the lack of protection against damaging mining, and the urgent need for a moratorium on resource extraction in ethnic areas until there is genuine political reform and peace in Burma.

Since 2012, six companies have been mining silica in the hills south-east of Namkham for export to China. Large amounts of mining waste have been dumped in the Nam Siri Stream, which nine villages rely on for farming as well as domestic use. This has polluted and clogged the stream, causing it to overflow into nearby fields, destroying crops, irrigation channels and weirs. At least 100 acres of fields have been destroyed so far.

10-wheel trucks have been transporting the minerals day and night to China, passing through residential areas, damaging roads, creating dust pollution and causing accidents, killing several villagers.

In August 2013, about 5,900 farmers in Namkham signed a petition to the Naypyidaw government calling for the mining to stop. After this, the Shan State Mining Minister Sai Aik Pao personally came to inspect the damage, and ordered the mining companies to stop operations. However, the mining has continued.

The Namkham Shan Farmers' Group therefore organized the protest on September 5, demanding an immediate stop to all mining in Namkham. They also demanded that the stream and surrounding fields be restored to their original state, and proper compensation paid for the damage to farmers' fields. Members of the Shan Farmers' Network from eleven townships joined the protest to support the Namkham farmers' demands.

Namkham is an active conflict zone, with Burma Army attacks against Kachin, Ta'ang and Shan resistance forces causing further displacement this year. Silica mining is being carried out with the protection of local pro-government militia. Mining companies in this area with links to militia include Myanmar Mya Oo, Ngwe Kabar Kyaw and Ban Thissa, which is connected to the Pansay militia, led by USDP MP U Kyaw Myint. The first company to carry out mining in the area was GSM, linked to former Minister U Aung Thaung.

Shan CBOs are gravely concerned at the lack of transparency around these mining operations, the failure to protect local communities from damaging impacts, and ongoing militarization and conflict linked to security for resource extraction projects in this area, including the Chinese oil and gas pipelines.

Damaging mining operations such as these are taking place throughout Shan State, even though political negotiations have yet to begin over control and management of natural resources under the peace process.

"Naypyidaw is selling off all our valuable resources even before getting to the negotiating table. By the time a settlement is reached, there will be nothing left," said Shan CBO spokesperson Muay Noom Hom.

Shan CBOs urge the authorities to comply with the Namkham farmers' demands. They also call for an immediate moratorium on all resource extraction in ethnic areas until a negotiated peace settlement is reached that leads to political reform and ensures the protection of rights of local communities.

Shan Community Based Organisations include:

Shan Human Rights Foundation  
Shan Sapawa Environmental Organisation  
Shan State Development Foundation  
Shan Students' Union (Thailand)  
Shan Women's Action Network  
Shan Youth Network Group  
Shan Youth Organisation (Taunggyi)  
Shan Youth Power  
Tai Literature and Culture Society  
Tai Youth Network, Workers' Solidarity Association,

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*Attachments: a map of the Namkham mining area, and photos of the mining impacts*