

**Press release: Villagers block UNIENERGY staff from promoting dam-building on Nam Ma River in Hsipaw**

October 10, 2019

Today, local residents are blocking the entrance to Nam Ma village to stop UNIENERGY company staff from coming to promote the building of a hydroelectric dam on the Nam Ma River in Hsipaw township, northern Shan State.

An MOU for a feasibility study to build a 25 megawatt dam on the Nam Ma river was signed between the Yangon-based UNIENERGY Co. Ltd and the Shan State government on August 14, 2019, despite local opposition to the dam.

On October 7, the company manager U Myint Zaw met a local villager in Lashio and informed him that the company would come and meet local people on October 10, to discuss dam building on the Nam Ma river. He said they would also meet with a local militia group about the dam.

However, local villagers including the village tract chairman are refusing to meet the company.

“Please do not come to meet us. We do not welcome you. We local villagers do not want to discuss this with you. We don’t want the dam building. We only want peace,” said Sai Pee, Nam Ma village chairman.

The company has several times tried to approach local people since 2017 to promote the building of a dam on the Nam Ma, where it meets the Nam Paung river.

This year in February, the company manager U Myint Zaw tried to plan a meeting with local villagers in Hsai Leng village tract. However, the meeting was opposed by local residents stating that they do not want dam building on their river as they will only have to bear the impacts.

The Nam Ma region of northern Shan State is rich in natural resources such as coal, and is also an active war zone between the Burma Army and ethnic armed groups. In 2016, the Burma Army launched a large-scale military operation in Nam Ma against the Shan State Progress Party/Shan State Army (SSPP/SSA), a ceasefire group, displacing over 1,000 local villagers, some of whom were killed and disappeared.

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