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Local communities welcome withdrawal of Swiss company Stucky from Upper Yeywa dam project

Communities living along the Namtu/Myitnge river in northern Shan State welcome the withdrawal of Swiss company Stucky SA from the controversial Upper Yeywa dam project.

Stucky SA revealed its withdrawal on August 26, 2020, in a message to the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre (BHRRC), stating “Stucky SA is no longer involved in the Upper Yeywa project.”

The BHRRC had contacted foreign companies involved in the Upper Yeywa dam following the report by the Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF) on July 9, 2020, “Extrajudicial killing, torture by Burma Army during operation against RCSS/SSA near Upper Yeywa dam,” which had urged foreign companies to pull out from the Upper Yeywa project to avoid complicity in atrocities by the Burma Army troops securing the site.

BHRRC had asked all the foreign companies named by SHRF to respond to the concerns raised in the report, including High Tech Concrete Technology Co. Ltd; IPGRB (RAZEL-BEC’s joint venture in Burma); Stucky SA; Toshiba; Yunnan Machinery Import and Export Co. Ltd.; and Zhejiang Orient Engineering.

Apart from Stucky SA, only Toshiba had replied to BHRRC on August 7, 2020, saying their Chinese subsidiary was working with China’s Zhejiang Orient Engineering on the Upper Yeywa project, and they were looking into the situation. They wrote that “After confirming the situation and if we find it necessary we will request Zhejiang Orient Engineering to ask Myanmar Electric Power Enterprise to take appropriate measures.”

Stucky SA is the second company to pull out from the Upper Yeywa dam. On January 21, 2019, French company Engie wrote to Burma Campaign UK (BCUK), stating that their subsidiary, the German company Lahmeyer, was no longer involved in the Upper Yeywa dam project, and asking to be removed from the BCUK’s “Dirty List” of companies linked to human rights violations in Burma.

Burma Campaign UK wrote to Stucky SA asking for clarification on its withdrawal from the Upper Yeywa dam project, and received a reply on October 12 from Gruner/Stucky’s Head of Business Area Energy, Stefan Muetzenberg, that his company was no longer involved in the Upper Yeywa project, but that “Any further information is confidential and cannot be disclosed.”

Impacted villagers sent an open letter to State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi today, with 2,000 signatures, urging her to stop the construction of all dams on the Namtu/Myitnge River, and to heed and respect the voices of local people.

The Burma Army launched a new offensive near the Upper Yeywa dam site in southern Kyaukme earlier this month, involving indiscriminate shelling, torture and looting, which displaced over 4,500 villagers.

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