

## Shan State Ethnic Youth Federation

**“The World Bank’s \$225 million project in Shan State, Southeast Myanmar, must be put on hold until there is a federal political solution to the conflict”**

**CSOs, Ethnic people Against Joint Statement on World Bank Project**

27 January 2021

We, the representatives of ethnic youth groups in Shan State, are concerned about the \$225 million agreement and action plans to be implemented by the World Bank under its “Peaceful and Prosperous Communities Project” PPCP. We recognize that Shan State is a multi-ethnic state that is very important for peace building in Myanmar.

In the course of planning this project, originally in Karen, Karenni and Mon States, the World Bank has taken a top-down approach, negotiating with the central government under the terms of the 2008 constitution and planning delivery of project resources through the Ministries and Departments of the Union government.

Only after a detailed project plan was agreed with the government, the WB approached ethnic political stakeholders for belated “consultations”, clearly seeking approval rather than input. This contributed to rejection of the centralized project by ethnic stakeholders, including the Karen National Union, and a host of civil society organizations. Instead of listening to ethnic and communities perspectives and shelving the project, the WB is now trying to implement the project in Shan State.

Myanmar is ethnicities come together forming Myanmar. Due to the lack of ethnic equality and self-determination, the country has been plagued by more than 70 years of armed conflict and is currently in the process of trying to achieve peace. As the main problem in Myanmar is a political one, a political solution is first required. If the World Bank implements the project within the centralized framework of the 2008 constitution, it is more likely to lead to conflict and move further away from peace

Throughout history, there have been many lessons learned from repeated armed conflicts due to the lack of political consultations and political guarantees. At a time when there are no political guarantees, projects like “Peaceful and Prosperous Communities” could escalate conflict and potentially create losses on all sides. Therefore, such projects need to be put on hold until a political agreement is reached.

The \$225 million designated for the project is a loan, which must be repaid to the World Bank. If the project is to be implemented, it will be done via the Union Government's General Administration Department as well as the Union Government's Ministry of Agriculture and

Rural Development and the Ministry of Livestock and Irrigation. It is within this centralized framework that the World Bank will address Shan State issues with ethnic groups in Shan State. However, what the ethnic groups in Shan State need is equality and federal system of governance that guarantees the right to self-determination. Myanmar is rich in natural resources, but ethnic peoples do not have the right to own their resources, the right to manage them, or the right to benefit from them. Decades of mismanagement and divisions have slowed the country's development and caused conflicts. Land confiscation and resource exploitation is regularly done in the name of development, with widespread environmental, social and cultural impacts, human rights violations, and displacement. This has led to the current situation in which many ethnic people are suffering for the prosperity of a few.

In order to have development that truly reflects the needs and desires of ethnic people, there must first be a political solution that brings genuine peace and a federal system.

Shan State Ethnic Youth Federation is a cooperative federation for a federal Shan State which includes ethnic nationalities such as Shan, Lahu, Inthar, Wa, Kokant, Taungyoe, Kayan, Kachin, Pa-O, Taang, and Danu that have joined together to raise awareness of ethnic youth issues.

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**Endorsed By:**

(1) Students and youth congress of Burma (SYCB) (10 Organizations members)

(2) National Ethnic Youth Alliance (NEYA) (Ethnics Youth in Myanmar)

(3) Burma Environmental Working Group (BEWG) (22 Organizations members)

(4) Action Group for Resource Accountability in Myanmar (AGRAM)

(5) Arakan Oil Watch (AOW)

- (6) Bridging Rural Integrated Development and Grassroots Empowerment (BRIDGE)
- (7) Chin Farmers Network (CFN)
- (8) Kachin Development Networking Group (KDNG)
- (9) Karen Environmental and Social Action Network (KESAN)
- (10) Karenni Evergreen (KEG)
- (11) Kayah Earthrights Action Network (KEAN)
- (12) Kuki Women's Human Rights Organization (KWHRO)
- (13) Kyauk Phyu Rural Development Association (KRDA)
- (14) Lahu Development Network (LDN)
- (15) Lahu National Development Organization (LNDO)
- (16) Mungchying Rawt Jat (MRJ)
- (17) Network for Environmental and Economic Development (NEED)
- (18) Pa-O Farmers Development Union (PFDU)
- (19) Pa-O Youth Organization (PYO)
- (20) Shan Sapawa Environmental Organization (Sapawa)
- (21) Shan State Farmers Network (SSFN)
- (22) Tarkapaw Youth Group (TKP)
- (23) Tavoyan Women's Union (TWU)
- (24) Shan State Ethnic Youth Federation (SSEYF) (Shan State based ethnic youth
- (25)** Kayan New Generation Youth (KNGY)
- (26) Paung Ku
- (27) KengTung Land Group

- (28) IFI Watch Myanmar
- (29) Metta Development Foundation
- (30) Land in Our Hand
- (31) Kaung rwai social justice and development organization (Kaung Rwai)
- (32) Ta'ang Student and Youth Union (TSYU)
- (33) Democracy for Ethnic Minority Organization (DEMO)

Ongoing endorsing: