



Karen Peace Support Network

World Bank's planned \$250 million Eastern Burma project will fuel conflict

November 25, 2019

We the undersigned, reject the World Bank's planned \$250 million "Peaceful and Prosperous Communities Project" (PPCP) for the alleged development of conflict-affected areas of Eastern Burma.

The Peaceful and Prosperous Communities Project (PPCP)'s stated objective is "to address the significant and historical underinvestment in public infrastructure, services, and support for market-oriented activities in areas of Myanmar that have suffered from long-running conflicts."

At the current time and in its current form, the project could undermine the rights of our Karen communities, threaten our aspirations for more autonomy and the protection of our culture and traditions, and even risk prolonging conflict and delaying a political solution to conflict.

No-one wants economic development more than those of us from conflict zones, but it must be the right kind of development at the right time. When implemented at the wrong time, development projects can do more harm than good.

To resolve the conflict, there must be a new federal power sharing structure, whereby development decisions and programs can be led by those selected by and accountable to local people.

By contrast, this project, which was negotiated between the Naypyidaw central government and the World Bank, will be delivered through the central government's Union Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, as well as the central government's General Administration Department.

The PPCP includes a \$225 million loan repayable to the World Bank. It was initiated within the framework of Naypyidaw's 2018 "Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan," which claims that underdevelopment is one of the key root causes of conflict in Burma. This is a false claim and deliberately misrepresents the situation in ethnic states of Burma. It is worth noting that there

are serious concerns about a similar project, the Rakhine Recovery and Development Support Project, the World Bank is working on in Rakhine State with the central government.

The root cause of the decades-long civil war is not underdevelopment but the lack of equality and power sharing. This fact is being sustained by the ongoing centralised governance, enshrined in the current 2008 constitution. This World Bank project is designed and controlled by only one party to the conflict – Naypyidaw – in order to expand its unitary structures into ethnic-governed areas.

This is not a neutral development assistance project. The World Bank risks being seen by ethnic Karen and other ethnic people as taking the side of central government against them.

Any project of this nature must come after political reform and include meaningful consultation with and participation of local civil society, ethnic armed organizations, and the local government. Indigenous rights must be respected and be integral in the development and implementation of development projects.

Development is not a substitute for political reform. Attempts to force through development projects without local buy-in, through meaningful consultation and political reform that gives more local control, risks entrenching political conflict and fuelling the civil war.

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Organizations signing:

1. Australian Karen Organization (AKO)
2. Backpacks Health Workers Team (BPHWT)
3. Burmese Women Union (BWU)
4. Civil Health and Development Network (Karenni State)
5. Democracy, Peace and Women Organization (DPW)
ဒီမိုကရေစီနှင့် ငြိမ်းချမ်းရေးအမျိုးသမီးအဖွဲ့
6. Ethnic Health Committee (EHC)
7. Eastern Pennsylvania Karen Community (EPKC)
8. Green Network Mergui Archipelago Myeik
9. Htoi Gender and Development Foundation
10. Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM)
မွန်ပြည်လူ့အခွင့်အရေးဖောင်ဒေးရှင်း
11. Humang Rights Defenders and Promoters (Palaw)
12. International Karen Organization (IKO)
13. Kachin Development Network Group (KDNG)
14. Kachin Women’s Union (KWU)
15. Kachin Women’s Association (KWA)
16. Kachin Women Association – Thailand (KWAT)
17. Kachin State Women Network (KSWN)
ကချင်ပြည်နယ်အမျိုးသမီးများကွန်ယက်
18. Karen Community of Philadelphia (KCP) USA
19. Karen Association of Huron, South Dakota (USA)
20. Karen Environmental and Social Action Network (KESAN)
21. Karen Swedish Community (KSC)
22. Karen Women Organization (KWO)
23. Karen Women Union (KWU)
24. Karen Grassroots Women Network (KGWN)
25. Karen Community of Norway (KCN)
26. Karen River Watach(KRW)
27. Karen Organization of America (KOA)
28. Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)
29. Karen Community of Canada (KCC)
30. Karen Student Network Group (KSNG)
31. Land in our Hands
32. Lahu Women Organization (LWO)
33. Min Hla Youth Centre
34. Peace on Peaceful Pluralism (PoPP)
35. Progressive Voice (PV)

36. Southern Youth
37. Southern Youth Development Organization
38. Tanintharyi Friends
39. Tarkapaw Youth Group
40. Tavoyan Women's Union - ထားဝယ်အမျိုးသမီးများသမဂ္ဂ
41. Women League of Burma (WLB)
42. Youth for New Society
43. ထားဝယ်တောင်သူလယ်သမားများသမဂ္ဂ
44. မြိတ်ဒေသသဘာဝပတ်ဝန်းကျင်ထိန်းသိမ်းရေးနှင့်ကျေးလက်ပြည်သူ့ဘဝမြှင့်တင်ရေးအဖွဲ့ (သရမဲ)
45. တော်ဝင်သင်္ဃာတိုက်အမျိုးသမီးများအဖွဲ့
46. သဘာဝတို့မြေကွန်ယက် (ဘုတ်ပြင်းမြို့နယ်)
47. တောင်သူလယ်သမားများ နှင့်မြေယာလုပ်သားများသမဂ္ဂ (မြိတ်ခရိုင်)
48. 74,75,76 နိုင်ငံရေး အင်အားစု
49. ကချင်ပြည်နယ် အမျိုးသမီးများကွန်ယက်
50. ပဗ္ဗာကလူ ကရင်လူမှုဖွံ့ဖြိုးတိုးတက်ရေးအမျိုးသမီးအဖွဲ့