



**Kachin Development Networking Group**

*Community action for sustainable development, equality and justice*

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## **New report: pristine valley on Kachin-China border under threat from Naypyidaw's export-oriented dam plans**

A new report launched today exposes how the stunningly beautiful, biodiverse Ngo Chang Hka valley -- ancestral home to over 4,500 indigenous people on the eastern Kachin State-China border -- is under threat from a cascade of four dams, which are among 50 large hydropower projects planned by the Burmese government, mainly for export.

"Saving the Ngo Chang Hka Valley" by the Kachin Development Networking Group (KDNG), details secretive plans by China's YEIG International Energy Cooperation and Development Corporation to dam the Ngo Chang Hka -- a tributary of the N'Mai, one of the headwaters of the Irrawaddy - to produce 1,200 megawatts of electricity. This is part of Burma's Ministry of Electricity and Energy target to increase national hydropower capacity from about 3,000 to 45,000 megawatts by 2030.

The Ngo Chang Hka communities, who have lived sustainably in this area for over 1,000 years, mainly cultivating rice and walnuts along the steep-sided valley floor, are strongly opposed to them. They have blocked company surveys, written an open letter to the President to stop the projects, and held large public protests.

"We refuse to let our ancestral homelands and natural resources be destroyed," says Zawng Lum, a local man from Ngo Chang Hka. "We are calling for these dams to be cancelled and we will not move!"

Local Kachin have bitter recent experience of hydropower from the nearby Chipwi Nge dam, completed in 2013 by China Power Investment. Valuable farmlands were destroyed without proper compensation, and villagers downstream now suffer from unpredictable releases of polluted water from the dam, which destroy riverside crops, kill fish, and make bathing dangerous. Promised free electricity from the dam, local villagers now pay three times more for electricity than residents of Mandalay or Yangon. Only one third of the dam's potential capacity of 99 megawatts is currently being used due to a lack of transmission infrastructure.

KDNG supports the Ngo Chang Hka peoples' struggle to save their valley and calls for an immediate cancellation of all planned large hydropower dams in Kachin State. KDNG also demands that Burma's centralized energy strategy, which prioritizes export of electricity, is abandoned, and replaced by a federal decentralized model that prioritizes the power needs in each state.

"Before building new dams, existing energy projects should be reviewed to ensure they are benefitting local people first," said KDNG researcher Zau Mai.

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