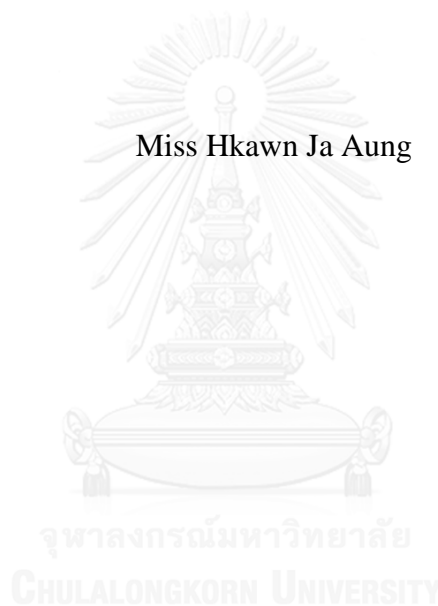


**Social Movement on Myitsone Hydropower Dam Project in Kachin State,
Burma/Myanmar.**

Miss Hkawn Ja Aung



บทคัดย่อและแฟ้มข้อมูลฉบับเต็มของวิทยานิพนธ์ตั้งแต่ปีการศึกษา 2554 ที่ให้บริการในคลังปัญญาจุฬาฯ (CUIR)
เป็นแฟ้มข้อมูลของนิสิตเจ้าของวิทยานิพนธ์ ที่ส่งผ่านทางบัณฑิตวิทยาลัย

The abstract and full text of theses from the academic year 2011 in Chulalongkorn University Intellectual Repository (CUIR)
are the thesis authors' files submitted through the University Graduate School.

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts Program in International Development Studies
Faculty of Political Science
Chulalongkorn University
Academic Year 2014
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ขบวนการเคลื่อนไหวทางสังคมต่อโครงการเขื่อนพลังงานน้ำมิตซอนในรัฐกะฉิ่น เมียนมาร์



วิทยานิพนธ์นี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต

สาขาวิชาการพัฒนาระหว่างประเทศ

คณะรัฐศาสตร์ จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

ปีการศึกษา 2557

ลิขสิทธิ์ของจุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

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คอน จา อ่อง : ขบวนการเคลื่อนไหวทางสังคมต่อโครงการเขื่อนพลังงานน้ำมิตซอนในรัฐคะฉิ่น เมียนมาร์ (Social Movement on Myitsone Hydropower Dam Project in Kachin State, Burma/Myanmar.) อ.ที่ปรึกษาวิทยานิพนธ์หลัก: คาร์ล มิดเคิลตัน, 88 หน้า.

เขื่อนมิตซอน (Myitsone) ถูกเสนอให้มีการสร้างขึ้น โดยรัฐบาลพม่าและ บริษัทจากประเทศจีน ที่จุดบรรจบของแม่น้ำ Mali Hka และแม่น้ำ Nmai Hka ในรัฐคะฉิ่นในปี 2006 ในขณะที่ 90% ของไฟฟ้าที่ผลิตได้จากเขื่อนจะถูกส่งไปยังประเทศจีนแต่ผู้คนหลายล้านคนที่ยังพึ่งพาแม่น้ำอิระวดีในประเทศพม่าจะได้รับผลกระทบทางด้านสิ่งแวดล้อมและสังคม การก่อสร้างในเบื้องต้นเริ่มในปี 2009 ซึ่งได้ส่งผลกระทบต่อผู้คน ผลกระทบดังกล่าวเช่น การบังคับตั้งถิ่นฐานใหม่, การสูญเสียวิถีชีวิต, ทรัพย์สินและที่ดิน, การสูญเสียของสายพันธุ์ปลา และการตัดไม้ทำลายป่า ดังนั้นผู้คนที่ได้รับผลกระทบในพื้นที่ และการเคลื่อนไหวทางสังคม รวมถึงการใช้สื่อ, ตัวแสดงที่ไม่ใช่รัฐ และพรรคการเมือง ก็ได้พัฒนาขึ้นเพื่อต่อต้านโครงการ จนเมื่อวันที่ 30 กันยายน 2011, นาย เต็ง เส่ง ประธานาธิบดี สาธารณรัฐแห่งสหภาพเมียนมาร์ ได้ประกาศระงับการก่อสร้างของเขื่อนมิตซอน อย่างเป็นทางการ ในระหว่างที่เขาดำรงตำแหน่งประธานาธิบดีจนถึงปี 2015

วัตถุประสงค์ของวิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับนี้ คือการศึกษาการเกิดขึ้นของขบวนการเคลื่อนไหวทางสังคมต่อโครงการเขื่อนไฟฟ้าพลังน้ำ มิตซอน โดยการศึกษาการใช้ทฤษฎีแนวคิดผสมผสานระหว่าง ทฤษฎีการระดมทรัพยากรและทฤษฎีโอกาสทางการเมือง วิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับนี้มุ่งเน้นไปที่ทักษะการจัดตั้งกลุ่มของชุมชนท้องถิ่น และวิธีการที่พวกเขาได้รับการสนับสนุนจากภายนอก และโอกาสทางการเมืองที่เกิดขึ้น การวิจัยฉบับนี้ใช้วิธีวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพในการเก็บข้อมูล ครอบคลุมถึง การวิเคราะห์รายงานและเอกสาร, การสนทนาแบบกลุ่ม และการสัมภาษณ์ในเชิงลึกกับผู้ให้ข้อมูลหลักในภาคสนาม โดยข้อมูลได้ถูกรวบรวมมาจากชุมชนในท้องถิ่น จากหมู่บ้านสองแห่งที่ถูกบังคับให้ตั้งถิ่นฐานใหม่, ภาคประชาสังคม, นักการเมือง และนักเคลื่อนไหวทางสังคม ซึ่งส่วนใหญ่ข้อมูลถูกรวบรวมในรัฐคะฉิ่นและเมืองย่างกุ้ง การศึกษาครั้งนี้ยังได้สำรวจว่าการตัดสินใจยกเลิกโครงการเขื่อนมิตซอน มีนัยยะอย่างไรต่อการกำกับดูแลโครงการขนาดใหญ่อื่น ๆ ในพม่าโดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งโครงการไฟฟ้าพลังน้ำ

ข้อค้นพบสำคัญของงานวิจัยนี้ชี้ให้เห็นว่าชุมชนพยายามที่จะกระจายผลกระทบของโครงการไปในหลายๆภูมิภาคของประเทศ ในขณะที่เดียวกันชุมชนที่ประสบภาวะยากลำบากในการถูกไล่ที่และการสูญเสียวิถีการดำรงชีวิต การสนับสนุนทางการเงิน การติดต่อประสานงาน การประชาสัมพันธ์ในสื่อและการให้การสนับสนุนในแง่กฎหมายมีส่วนช่วยสนับสนุนการดำเนินงานให้รับรู้สู่ภายนอกมากขึ้น งานวิจัยยังชี้ให้เห็นว่าโครงการมิตซอนทำให้บทบาททางการเมืองของกองกำลังท้องถิ่นคิดอาวุธในรัฐคะฉิ่นแตกต่างไปอย่างชัดเจน วิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับนี้สรุปว่าการขยับยั้งการดำเนินงานของโครงการมิตซอนเป็นหนึ่งในปัจจัยที่ชี้ให้เห็นถึงการเปลี่ยนผ่านทางประชาธิปไตยที่นำโดยประธานาธิบดีและรัฐบาลใหม่ และโครงการมิตซอนเป็นปัจจัยสำคัญที่ทำให้เกิดการเคลื่อนไหวทางสังคมอื่นๆในช่วงการเปลี่ยนผ่านทางประชาธิปไตย

5681202724 : MAJOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

KEYWORDS: SOCIAL MOVEMENT / MYITSONE HYDROPOWER DAM PROJECT / BURMA/MYANMAR

HKAWN JA AUNG: Social Movement on Myitsone Hydropower Dam Project in Kachin State, Burma/Myanmar..

ADVISOR: CARL MIDDLETON, Ph.D., 88 pp.

In 2006, the Myitsone Dam was proposed to be built at the confluence of Mali Hka and Nmai Hka Rivers in Kachin State by the Burmese government and a Chinese company. Whilst 90% of electricity would go to China, millions of people who depend on the Ayeyarwady River in Burma would be affected due to environmental and social impacts. The initial construction, which started in 2009, produced immediate impacts such as forced resettlement, loss of livelihoods, properties, and lands, loss of fish species, and deforestation. Hence, local affected people opposed the project and a social movement grew that eventually included media, non-state actors and political parties. On 30th September 2011, President Thein Sein officially suspended the construction of Myitsone Dam in his presidential term until 2015.

The purpose of this thesis is to study the emergence of this social movement at the Myitsone Hydropower Dam project. Applying the hybrid conceptual framework of Resource Mobilization and political opportunity, the thesis focuses on the organizing skills of local communities, and how they gained support from the outside and the political opportunities that arose. This research uses qualitative methodologies in data collection – reports and document analysis, focus group discussion and in-depth interviews with key respondents in field work. Data information is gathered from local communities including two relocated villages, civil societies, politicians and activists mainly in Kachin State and Yangon. The study also explores how the decision for suspension of this project has had further implications for other large scale project governance in Burma, particularly hydropower projects.

The main research finding is that the local communities were trying to reach out the effects of this project to many regions while they were struggling for their survivals due to forced relocation and loss of livelihoods. The involvement of various factors such as funding, coordinating, media coverage and legal supports have supported this movement into public affairs. It also finds that that the Myitsone project vividly differentiated the different political roles of local ethnic armed groups in Kachin State. The thesis concludes that the suspension of Myitsone project has been one of the evidences of democratic transition for the President and the new government, and that the Myitsone social movement stood as a symbol for other social movements since political transition.

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CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

Field of Study: International Development Studies

Academic Year: 2014

Student's Signature

Advisor's Signature

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank God for giving this privilege to study. His blessing is with me throughout my entire life. With God, I can accomplish this study.

I would like to express my gratitude to my advisor Ajarn Carl Middleton,Phd. for his advice, patience and time for thesis process. His understanding on my academic skills and my background has encouraged me during the program and to step forward. Also, I would like to thank my Thesis committee, Ajarn Jakkrit,Ph.D. and Ajarn Chayanis,Ph.D. for their insightful advice and their concerns on this issue.

My appreciation goes to all Ajarns for their teaching and guidance in studies. I really want to thank all staff in MAIDS program for their kind assistance.

I would like to express my special thankfulness to Heinrich Boell Stiftung Southeast Asia Scholarship Program for providing a scholarship to study at MAIDS program and caring me for the whole process. I also thank Ms.Ashley for English proof-reading.

I also would like to show my gratitude to my host organization, Kachin Baptist Convention – Community Development Department, for its guidance.

My deepest appreciation goes to all the interviewees from Aung Min Thar and Maliyang relocation villages and NGOs, CBOs, politicians and other civil societies in Kachin State and Yangon.

Most of all, I am really blessed to have my family for their endless love and supports. I am really grateful for Mr.Lagwi Ying Kyang for his assistance during my studies and field research. I can finish this program with the encouragement and supports from family and friends.

Lastly, my acknowledgment goes to many people who are not mentioned by names but I appreciate all of their kindness and supports.

CONTENTS

	Page
THAI ABSTRACT	iv
ENGLISH ABSTRACT.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
CONTENTS.....	vii
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	xii
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Research Background	1
1.2 Research questions.....	4
1.3 Research objectives	4
1.4 Conceptual Framework.....	4
1.4.1 Resource Mobilization	6
1.4.2 Political Opportunity	7
1.4.3 Critique of Resource Mobilization and Political opportunity theory: Toward movement relevant theory.....	8
1.4.4 Application of theories in the context of Myitsone Hydropower Dam movement	9
1.5 Research Methodology	9
1.5.1 Research site/location.....	13
1.5.2 Data analysis.....	13
1.5.3 Research Limitation	14
1.5.4 Ethical considerations.....	14
1.6 Significant of research	15
CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW	17
2.1 Context of large scale development project in Burma.....	17
2.1.1 Contemporary Development Context in Burma.....	17
2.1.2 Hydropower Governance and International Development Regimes in South East Asia Region	19

	Page
2.1.3 Environmental Impact Assessments.....	20
2.1.4 Social Impacts Assessment	22
2.2 Social movements and democratic transition in Burma	23
2.2.1 Overview theories of social movements in Environmental Politics.....	23
2.2.2 Social Movements in Burma	24
2.2.3 Democratic Transition and political economy in Burma	25
2.2.4 Democratic transition in the context of Kachin State.....	26
2.3 Timeline of Myitsone Dam.....	27
2.4 Research gaps	28
CHAPTER III BACKGROUND OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES	30
3.1 Introduction of local people from Myitsone’s surrounding areas	30
3.2 Culture and History of Local People from Myitsone’s surrounding areas	31
3.3 Lives of Local communities before and after project implementation.....	32
3.3.1 Before Myitsone Hydropower Project	32
Agriculture.....	32
Fishery	34
Tourism	35
Forest products	36
Small scale gold mining	37
Migration	37
Access to social services	38
3.3.2 Brief overview of the resettlement process	39
3.3.3 After Myitsone Project Implementation.....	41
Agriculture.....	41
Fishery	43
Tourism	43
Forest products	44
Small scale gold mining	44
Migration	45

	Page
Access to social services	46
3.4 Summary	48
CHAPTER IV THE EMERGENCE OF SOCIAL MOVEMENT ON IRRAWADY MYITSONE HYDROPOWER DAM	49
4.1 Introduction.....	49
4.2 Local community organizing	50
4.2.1 The skills of local leaders	50
4.2.2 The skills of communities	53
4.2.3 Organizing strategies	55
4.2.4 Abilities to reach out to outside resources.....	59
4.3 Outside Resources	60
4.3.1 Supporters.....	60
4.3.2 Legal consultancy.....	69
4.3.3 Media.....	70
4.3.4 Scientific knowledge	71
4.4 Political Opportunities	72
4.4.1 Importance of Regional Politics	72
4.4.2 Specific political opportunities in the context of general opportunities... 74	74
4.5 Implications of Myitsone Hydropower dam for large scale hydropower projects in Burma	76
4.6 Chapter Summary	79
CHAPTER V CONCLUSION.....	82
5.1 Conclusion	82
5.2 Recommendation for Future Research Areas	84
REFERENCES	85
VITA	88

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Data collection baseline table 11



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Ayeyarwady Myitsone Project in Kachin State, Burma.....	3
Figure 2 Concept of emergence of social movement in Myitsone Hydropower Project.....	5
Figure 3 Original Villages	13
Figure 4 Relocated Villages.....	13
Figure 5 Appeal letter from project-affected villagers to the Burmese Government: Copied to SPDC in Myitkyina, Waimaw and Njang Yang Townships	58



LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BGF	Boarder Guard Force
BANCA	Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Association
CBO	Community Based Organization
CPI	China Power Investment Company
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FIL	Foreign Investment Law
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KBC	Kachin Baptist Convention
KIA	Kachin Independence Army
KIO	Kachin Independence Organization
KDNG	Kachin Development Networking Group
KURM	Kachin Urban Rural Mission
MBC	Burma Baptist Convention
MCC	Myitkyina Christian Council
MKBA	Myitkyina Baptist Association
MIC	Myanmar Investment Commission
MOEP	Ministry of Electric Power
MOEP-1	Ministry of Electric Power-1
MOECAF	Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry
NCEA	National Commission for Environmental Affairs
NDAK	New Democratic Army of Kachin
NECL	National Environmental Conservation Law
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NLD	National League for Democracy
NSDS	National Sustainable Development Strategy
SLORC	State Law and Order Restoration Council
SPDC	State Peace and Development Council

UCF	University Christian Fellowship
UN	United Nations
USDP	Union Solidarity and Development Party
WB	World Bank
WBA	World Baptist Alliance
YMEC	Yunnan Machinery Export & Import Company



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

In a rare concession to public outcry in Burma/Myanmar¹, President Thein Sein announced the suspension of a controversial Myitsone hydroelectric project in his presidential term on 30th September 2011, since the project has adverse ecological consequences, displacement of thousands of people, loss of people livelihoods and hydrological threats (Fuller, 2011). Three weeks before the announcement, a series of meetings and workshops were conducted in Nay Pyi Daw. On 11st September 2011, some cabinet ministers particularly Ministries of Information and Culture, of Electric Power (1) and of Industrial Development proclaimed for restarting the construction and critiqued to opponents of the project as they blocked the growth of country's economy. On 17th September 2011, Chairman of China Power Investment Company presented the "Ayeyarwady Hydropower Projects are Strategic for Burma Electrical Power Industry" and Chairman of BANCA presented the "Effects on Natural Environment and Society" at workshop. Surprisingly, the ministers called for project's review after joining the workshop.

Myitsone Hydroelectric project has a significantly long process in which the public concerned and several actors involved until the result of project suspension. As to look back the contextual circumstances of Myitsone dam project, the role of the political situation played importantly. As Burma was sanctioned by the international community due to military government from 1962 until 2010, Burma's economic growth largely depended on its neighbouring countries - China, Thailand and India. China is a key investor to extract resources, for instance, logging forests in Shan State and Kachin State, mining for gold, copper, jade and sapphires as well as the construction of two pipelines for transporting natural oil and gas in Rakhine State (Din, 2011). Those Chinese investments have created negative environmental and social problems in Burma including power shortage in Burma, less consideration of sustainable development and of job opportunities due to China 'concerns on extractive investments(Yun, 2013).

¹ Burma was renamed as Myanmar by the Military Juntas in 1988. This thesis uses Burma.

Moreover, Burma had experienced many civil conflicts with most of the armed ethnic groups and reached some cease fire agreements with several groups in the 1990s (Charney, 2009). In Kachin State, a Kachin Independent Organization (KIO), representing Kachin people, has rebelled against the government since 1961 due to the failures of the Panglong Agreement (Charney, 2009). But both groups reached a cease fire agreement with KIO in 1994 (Kramer & Aronson, 2009). Kachin State is very rich in natural resources such as jade, gold, iron, forests and the original source of the Ayeyarwady River² (Haacke, 2011). Since then, natural resources in Kachin land have been profited by the military government, Chinese companies, regional military leaders and crony businessmen.

In Kachin State, a China Power Investment (CPI) and Asia World Company are planning to construct seven cascade dams including Myitsone Dam along Mali Hka and Nmai Hka Rivers and at the confluence (Tao, 2012). The Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Ministry of Electric Power-1 of Burma and CPI on December 28th 2006. Particularly, the Myitsone dam will become the fifteenth largest hydropower station in the world. It is situated in one of the eight richest biodiversity hotspots in the world and the lifeblood river of Burma (International Rivers, 2011b). The dam's productive capacity will be 6000 Mega Watt with costs of USD 3.6 billion dollars (International Rivers, 2011b). 90 % of electricity power will go to China (Tao, 2012). In December 2009, project construction and relocation of the villages began (International Rivers, 2011b).

There was also lack of consultation with local residents- mostly Kachin- and the public about the pros and cons of the project (KDNG, 2007). Hence, local people initially opposed the project not only for environmental threats to their cultural sites and socially displacement but also for their safeguards since the dam location lies on the Seismic earthquake zone (4) which is less than 100 km from the Sagaing fault line (International Rivers, 2011b). The resulting forceful movement of villagers has alerted concerns and participation from the media, non-state actors and political parties. Artists and writers from across the country have organized tours and art exhibitions to highlight the importance of the Ayeyarwady . Although the military

² Ayeyarwady River is also known as Ayeyarwady River.

government had ignored the peoples' voices, President Thein Sein has officially announced his decision to suspend Myitsone Dam until 2015 on 30th September 2011 in response to the concerns of the people and protests (Harvet, 2011).

The purpose of this thesis is to explain the emergence of the social movement particularly looking at the case of the Myitsone Hydropower Dam project in Kachin State. It is important to realize the initial mobilization of local communities in how they have been not only resisting the impacts of the project but also actively organizing their collective actions in order to be heard in public. It is also good to understand the factors that support the communities from the involvement of various outside resources in terms of local, regional and national level by cooperating in the process. This research will critically discuss whether the political democratic transition of the country is effective and helped provide an opportunity for this particular movement. Finally, this study will see how the decision for the suspension of this project will affect and influence the implications of large scale projects in Burma particularly looking at hydropower projects.

Figure 1 Ayeyarwady Myitsone Project in Kachin State, Burma.



Source: Damming the Ayeyarwady (2007)

1.2 Research questions

The overall research question is “How did a social movement emerge in Kachin State that suspended the Myitsone Dam project during the democratic transitional period in Burma?”

The following sub-questions are asked;

- a. How have the local communities organized in opposition to the Myitsone Dam project within the communities?
- b. What have the outside resources supported to progress the process of social movement?
- c. How have the political opportunities been facilitated in the decision making of the project?
- d. What are the implications of the social movement of Myitsone for large scale projects in Burma during the democratic transition?

1.3 Research objectives

The overall objective of this study is to understand the factors that lead to the emergence of a social movement in Kachin State that suspended the Myitsone Hydropower project during the democratic transitional period in Burma.

The sub-objectives are as followed;

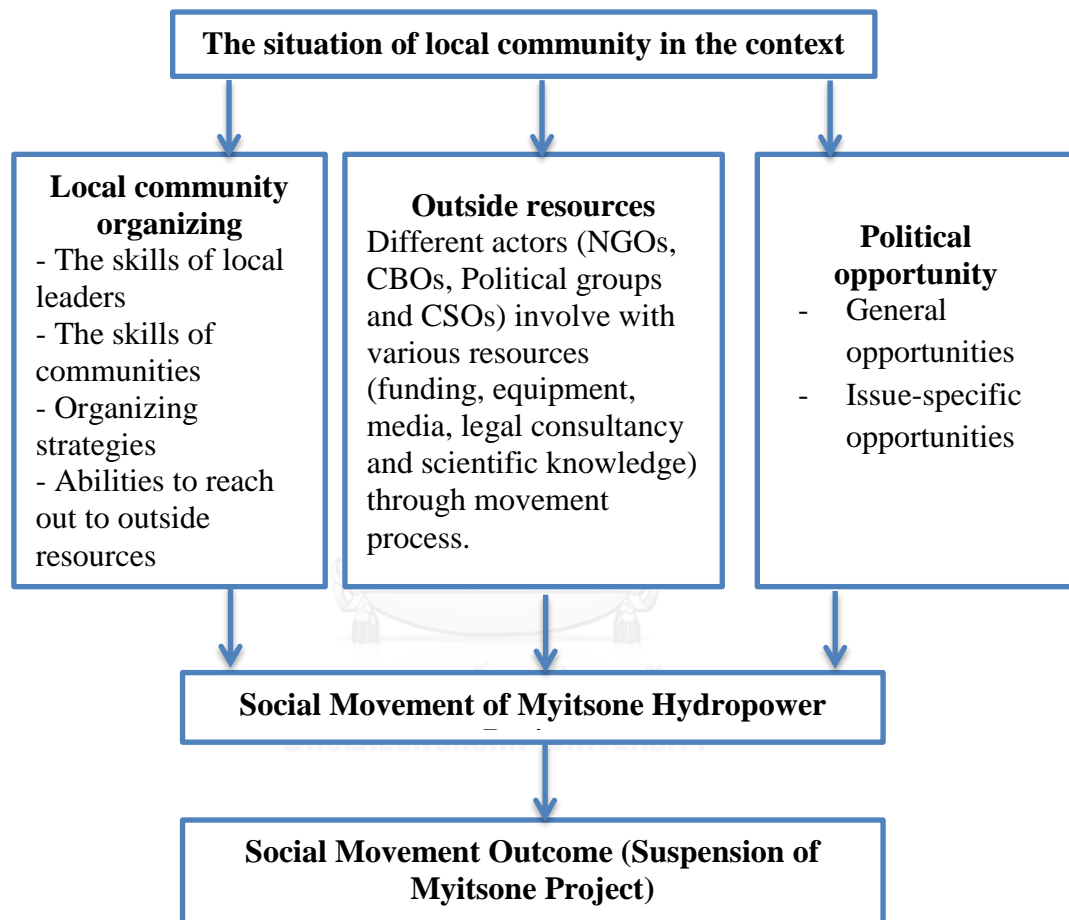
- a. To analyse the mobilization of local residents in order to stop hydropower construction on the Ayeyarwady River.
- b. To evaluate the support of the outside resources in the progress of movement.
- c. To determine facilitation of emerging political opportunities in the decision making of the project.
- d. To study the implications of large scale hydropower projects in Burma as a consequence of this social movement.

1.4 Conceptual Framework

This thesis is based on a hybrid conceptual theory of: resource mobilization and political opportunity (figure 1). Section 1.4.1 mentions resource mobilization. Section

1.4.2 describes political opportunity. Section 1.4.3 mentions critique of resource mobilization and political opportunity theory: toward movement relevant theory. Finally, section 1.4.4 explains the implications of this theory in the case of Myitsone social movement in Burma.

Figure 2 Concept of emergence of social movement in Myitsone Hydropower Project



1.4.1 Resource Mobilization

Resource mobilization theory is an approach that seeks to explain the emergence of social movements. It emphasizes the importance of resources in social movement development and success (McCarthy & Zald, 1987). Social movements can occur in terms of particular political or social issues. In this theory, local community organizing emphasizes the organizing skills of local communities and communities' leaders amongst their communities and how their strategies reach to outside resources for their mobilization. Among different members of local communities, some members build strong relationships among themselves while the communities are struggling. Some have the ability to facilitate when the communities need change (Alinsky, 2010). Indeed, community organizing is localized in which people build their networks, identify their common ideals and mobilize their concerned issues. It normally occurs as a localized social movement. People define their community problems; address the problems with their own solutions and use their own methods to accomplish their goals.

Outside resources mainly include funding, equipment, legal consultancy and media attention and supporters including individuals and civil societies. Resource mobilization approach emphasizes both the supports and constraints of society. Social movements must use some resources to pursue their goals. The variety of resources can include funding, media attention, networking with effective bodies and supporters (McCarthy & Zald, 2001). Only mobilization of communities cannot generate social change effectively since resources are necessary for engagement in social problems. The recognition of individuals and organizations and their tactics require confronting the authorities (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). The successes and failures of SMOs are relatively determined by external factors. Some movements lack the normal resources especially financial resources or strong institutional groups to lead the movement. Organizing groups often struggle to find resources from government officials since their activities seek to contest government policies and implementations (McCarthy & Zald, 1977).

1.4.2 Political Opportunity

Political Opportunity has been proposed as an important factor not accounted for by resource mobilization theory. Political opportunity labels the opportunities of politics and institutions and limits that can hinder or facilitate the collective action (Chesters & Welsh, 2011). It clarifies the diverse characteristics of social movement such as emergence, the progress of social movement throughout their mobilization, strategy, structures of organizations and outcomes of social movement. It also refers to the possibilities of challenging groups have been affected in their mobilization in terms of political system (Chesters & Welsh, 2011). This is a key feature which provides useful insights into how social movements interact within the political system. Moreover, the political system examines the results regarding to the set of political factors. It goes further to focus on the interactions between collective action, social networks and group identity. It is said that social movements are largely dependent on the existence or lack of a specific political opportunity such as democratization (Buechler, 1995). Political opportunity explains that political opportunities are fundamentally effective for the success or failure of social movement in many ways (P.Kitschelt, 2011).

Political opportunities explore the variable effects of issue-specific opportunity factors from general factors regarding to outcomes of mobilization. Political opportunities are specified in two models; structure model and signal models (Meyer & Minkoff, 2004). Structure model mainly concerns on changes of rules and policies in order to have political access. Signal model focuses on the changes of political environment, chances to develop mobilization and advocacy for policy reforms. Both models generally concern on general opportunity and issue-specific opportunity factors. In both models, general opportunity variables include holding election and democratic president while specific opportunity variables comprise of the extent of media coverage in protest and number of court decision for movement.

1.4.3 Critique of Resource Mobilization and Political opportunity theory:

Toward movement relevant theory

Resource mobilization and political opportunity theory has been a dominant theory about social movements in terms of research and scholars. The theory has been critiqued by some scholars including its major proponents (Giugni, 2011). One of the major critiques is that this theory is not being used in the recent movements since the activists don't discover the theory is useful for them although they have learnt movement theories. It is critiqued that its possibility for overextension of its key concepts since the factors that help mobilization of movement can become its concept. Besides, its concepts are accounted for every factors of social movement such as political culture, institutions and alliances. It has also bias in its structure since its structures are discussed in different variables, multiple functions and definitions. In fact, it has been characterized from the strength of government institutions and political parties to media and public discourses. Another criticism about political opportunity is that this theory of social movement has offered limited explanations of social movements in the real field.

In recent years, this contemporary social movement theories including political opportunity became inappropriate to the real social movements. The participants of social movements have found less useful of those theories on their encountering movements. Also, the activists are generating movement theories rather than theoretical circles in which they explore a movement-relevant theory or movement relevant social movement theory (Bevington & Dixon, 2005). Movement relevant theory basically searches for the connection between social movements themselves and movement theories – the practical knowledge for social changes. Movement participants create new situations or theories of movements in which they translate the applicable information from a diversity of circumstances. The theory is different from other theories that privilege variables of movements and doesn't do overextension of concepts. Movement relevant theory is emerged from mutual engagements with movement themselves.

1.4.4 Application of theories in the context of Myitsone Hydropower Dam movement

In the case of the Myitsone Hydropower Dam project, both resource and political opportunity are possibly suitable to explain the emergence of a social movement. It is started by local communities coming together from a common feeling of suffering from their miseries. Even though they are less recognized, they have made their movement become acknowledged by external resources. The involvement of outside resources has strengthened this movement. Both of those factors have been trying since the country was under a military government. These social movements have advocated their work to international communities in order to pressure the authoritarian government. Since Burma is undergoing a slow transition to democracy, the government has offered some political opportunities such as releasing some political prisoners and releasing media freedoms relatively. The role of changing political landscape towards democratization further supports social movements as an effective tool for protestors. The country has opened some opportunities that had never previously been given to citizens. Finally, the collaboration of those components provided a partly successful outcome.

1.5 Research Methodology

The primary research method being used in this thesis is a qualitative research method with field work data collection. The data and information were divided into two categories: primary and secondary. The primary data was collected from interviews and questionnaires of the target groups who had been involved the social movements for the opposition to the damming of the Ayeyarwady River. As this was a qualitative research, the description was based on case studies of local villagers and activists. Secondary data was collected from various resources such as official documents and publications, research papers, and article from books, journals, newspapers and reliable websites.

Data collection of this research is mainly based on factors of a mixed conceptual theory of resource mobilization and political opportunity since this social movement and the reasons that they opposed cannot be fully explained with one

theory. To answer the research questions, the researcher conducted interviews, conversations and observations in the research field. In terms of language, the researcher has used the local language which is Kachin with local communities since the interviewees are Kachin. Both Burmese and Kachin languages have been used when meeting with civil society groups and politicians. In the field, the researcher had a colleague to take notes while interviewing. Fieldwork data collection was conducted from mid-June until the end of July in 2014. The first week of fieldwork included interviews with the religious leaders from the villages; the second and third weeks with the communities; the fourth week with civil societies in Kachin State; and the last two weeks with civil societies, activists and politicians in Yangon.

Focus group discussions were used to learn from local communities from two relocated villages. In combination with participant observation, it was used for learning about groups and their patterns of interaction. Participant observation was used for the existing situations of interviewees by looking, talking informally and writing the detailed notes in field work. They were conducted to quickly gathering information by talking with several people at once. Focus group discussions were conducted with two groups from each relocated village. Besides, in-depth interviews were used to collect information from those who were actively participating in the social movement. It was also used to elicit information in order to achieve a holistic understanding of the interviewees' points of view or situation of this movement. In-depth interviews were conducted with various respondents from different stakeholders linked to these research issues.

Data needed to answer the research questions, the interviewees and interview tools are listed in the data collection baseline table in Table (1.1). Research site/location in section 1.5.1, data analysis in section 1.5.2, research limitations in section 1.5.3 and ethical considerations in section 1.5.4 are followed.

Table 1 Data collection baseline table

Research Questions	Data needed	Interviewees	Research Tools
<u>Sub-Question 1</u> How have the local communities organized in opposition to the Myitsone Dam project within the communities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The skills of local leaders - The skills of communities - Organizing strategies - Abilities to reach out to outside resources - Number of communities' participation - Degree of communities' involvement - Local knowledge about the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Church Leaders and Pastors from Roman Catholic Church and Baptist Church - A village leader from Aung Min Thar relocation village - Villagers from Aung Min Thar relocation village - Villagers from Mali Yang relocation village 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In-depth Interviews - Focus Group Discussions - Participant observation
<u>Sub-Question 2</u> What have the outside resources supported to progress the process?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Funding - Equipment - Media - Legal consultancy - Supporters - Scientific Knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kachin Development Networking Group (KDNG). - Community Resource Center - Kachin Urban Rual Mission (KURM) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In-depth interviews
<u>Sub-Question 3</u> How have the political opportunities been facilitated in decision making of the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Democracy - Media Freedom - Regional politics - National politics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spectrum (former staff) - University Christian Fellowship (UCF) 	

project?	(General & Specific opportunities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Myitkyina Christian Council (MCC) 	
<p><u>Sub-Question 4</u></p> <p>What are the implications of the social movement at Myitsone project for mega project governance in Burma during the democratic transition?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Further implications about large scale hydropower projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mungchying Rawt Jat (MRJ) - Aung Pin Le Magazine - A Botanist - Artists - Village head - Church leaders - Villagers - A member of 88 Generation. - National League for Democracy - Local politician from Kachin State 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In-depth interviews - Official documents or reports from the government - Publications & Reliable News - Academic papers - Report or documents of Civil society organizations

1.5.1 Research site/location

Relocated villages are originally from Mazup, Tanghpre, Lahpye, Awng Ja Yang, Dawng Ban and Maliyang (Dingga zup) villages as figure 2 depicts. This research was mainly conducted at two relocated villages as figure 3 indicates - Aung Min Thar and Mali Yang relocation villages. As some villagers from one village were staying at their old village, the researcher interviewed some of these villagers at their old village. However, other villagers were interviewed at relocated villages since they were not allowed to stay at their villages by the authorities.



Figure 3 Original Villages



Figure 4 Relocated Villages

1.5.2 Data analysis

The interviewed languages were mainly Kachin and Burmese. The researcher used Kachin language while interviewing with local communities and Burmese with NGOs, CBOs and politicians. First, the data collected in non-English languages was transferred into English. Then, all data was analysed and categorized based on the

conceptual framework. The collected data and documents originally in English were used directly.

1.5.3 Research Limitation

This research used the hybrid framework of resource mobilization and political opportunity of social movement. As this project is a sensitive issue in Burma, the interviewees may not want to talk and discuss the movement. Hence, the study covers the concept of local community organization from the representatives from two relocated villages. The concepts of outside resources and political opportunities are based on civil societies, local NGOs, activists and politicians mainly in Kachin State and in Yangon. As it is difficult to access the politicians who were directly involved in the movement such as Daw Aung San Su Kyi, the members of political parties such as the National League for Democracy and local politicians are considered for the political opportunity factor. Secondary literature is also used for those factors.

This research does not include interviews with the government or companies who are implementers of this project. As the researcher is a Kachin ethnic from Kachin State, the issue is quite sensitive as the Kachin Independent Organization is still negotiating the peace process with the government while both groups are fighting each other in Kachin State. For this part, secondary data is used from reliable newspapers, reports and documents. Further implications about other large scale hydropower projects are included in this research. For these reasons, the findings of this research don't represent findings of the national or international level for this movement.

1.5.4 Ethical considerations

This research has been conducted under ethical considerations for an academic purpose. This research is not intended to harm the reputation of the people who have been involved. Given the current political situation in Burma, the researcher has taken into account ethical obligations when conducting interviews, case studies, focus groups and other observations. As this project is a sensitive case in Burma, the researcher did not put interviewees and related subjects in a compromising position where there is a potential for danger throughout the whole research process.

For confidentiality and anonymity, the researcher uses information from informants prior to interviews when the permission is received voluntarily. The researcher didn't use any recording device while collecting data. Importantly, the study has anonymous interviews in many situations in order to minimize the tension between the interviewees and interviewers. The researcher neither identifies the interviewees nor mentions their names in this thesis apart from those who gave their consent. The researcher only uses all research findings collected from conversations that the informants expressed their consent. For personal security, the researcher had received permission from the related organizations, village leaders and the official authorities for data collection.

In the research field, the researcher has got the permission from the relevant authorities and the recommendations from the related organizations. Likewise, the researcher has taken into account the subject matter without interfering or harming others as this project is a sensitive case in Burma. The researcher didn't put her subjects in a compromising position by not mentioning their names or identities and throughout the data collection process have been careful about the interviewee's safety.

1.6 Significant of research

The political transition of Burma has opened the emergence of various social movements. This research analyses the nature of the social mobilization network of the people during transition period of the political situation of Burma. Despite the fact that this movement had been started by marginalized people from the project's affected areas, it attracted nationwide attention. This movement pooled together resources, expertise and networks in order to strengthen the movement. It became the first successful public's participation movement in Burma. Additionally, this research studies the further implications of the social movement in opposition of the Myitsone Hydropower Project in large scale projects in the transition of democracy in Burma. Future social movements about large scale hydropower projects can emulate this effective movement as a model for future social movements. Consequently, this thesis studies a social movement that demands greater accountabilities of the government

and poses pressure on the government to internally reform to channel more resources to the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry.



CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review focuses on four sections. Section 2.1 analyses literature based on the essential requirements of the large scale development projects. Section 2.2 provides an overview of theories of social movement and summarizing literature on social movements and economic situations due to political conditions in order to provide an understanding on social movements in Burma. Section 2.3 mentions the project timeline. Finally, section 2.4 identifies resource mobilization and its current situation in Burma.

2.1 Context of large scale development project in Burma

The implementation process of large scale projects always requires minimizing possible negative impacts and biases among societies. Since Burma has been planning large-scale investment projects for some time, the government's implementation of the projects attract public attention due to their substantial impacts on environment and communities including land grabbing, resettlement and inadequate compensation. Thus, this section identifies some requirements for the construction of large-scale projects according to international standards. Section 2.1.1 describes contemporary development context in Burma; Section 2.1.2 refers to Hydropower Governance and International Development Regimes in South East Asia Region; Section 2.1.3 examines Environmental Impact Assessments and Section 2.1.4 reviews Social Impact Assessments.

2.1.1 Contemporary Development Context in Burma

Since March 2011, Burma's new government has adopted a macro-economic management as the ways of its East Asian neighbouring countries by asking help to International Monetary Fund for the human capacity building and institutional capacity building (Rieffel, 2012). Since the country has remained under a development situation for many decades, the need for aid is severe and the humanitarian situation is dismal for Burma. However, although large sums of aid and

investment are allowed into Burma, the capacity of the local people in handling these funds is questioned as well. As most of Burmese society suffers from a lack of capacity, aid and investments are primarily benefitting foreigners who work in the country. Besides, as Burma currency is one of the most overvalued official exchange rates, the new government was cooperating with IMF experts for a new exchange rate system in 2011. Hence, Burma has a market based exchange rate so that fiscal policy is more improved than monetary policy in Burma (Rieffel, 2012). The government has taken the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative and the concrete steps in order to show whether resource extraction benefits to social and financial transforms.

Burma lacks a single highway or railroad connection with its neighbouring countries even though major corridors to Burma have been studied for Asian connectivity of regional preoccupation for many years (Rieffel, 2012). The military government had invested in dispersed infrastructure projects such as roads, bridges and dams politically rather than economically apart from the capital of Naypyitaw and highway to the new capital from the old capital, Yangon. After reforms, the long term plans for infrastructure development in transportation are planned to cooperate as a public-private partnership framework (Fianny, 2013). Airports have been expanded in terms of hosting the Southeast Asian games and the ASEAN/East Asia Summits in 2013 and 2014. Moreover, the new government has initiated to develop the Thilawa Port and Special Economic Zone in Yangon with the help of Japan. Yet, other economic zones such as Dawei which was started by the former government are complicated and face public opposition. Hence, the new government has urgently initiated to meet the demand for domestic electric consumption (Dapice, 2012). It can be anticipated that major infrastructure improvements will be within the electric power sector (ADB, 2012).

The new government has committed to free trade in 2015 with the ASEAN Economic Community and the government is planning the process to provide good incentives for the international investors (Bissinger, 2012). The Burmese government has realized that foreign investment is vital assistance for the country's development since the economic reform needs foreign capital, advanced technology and skills. As its efforts to get foreign capital, the government has a mission to reform legislature in order to develop the legal requirements and setting of Burma. In September 2012, the

new parliament passed the draft law of foreign investment. Yet, President Thein Sein didn't sign the draft law because it had many of constraints for international investors which harms the further interests of Burma. At the same time, the draft law has been discussed in many different ways in order to make sure that the law has a balance between domestic economies and foreign investment since local people have a lack of efficient skills, capital and proficient technology. Deferral of approving the draft law has caused uncertainties for foreign investors who consider doing long-term projects which need large amounts of investment. The President noticed this ambiguity and the new FIL was passed in the Parliament on 2nd November 2012. The approval of the FIL is a major breakthrough in the on-going regulatory reform of Burma.

2.1.2 Hydropower Governance and International Development Regimes in South East Asia Region

As countries along the Mekong River have experienced economic growth, electricity demand is rapidly higher in countries particularly Thailand, Vietnam and China. In order to develop the countries' economic growth, although the Mekong countries' government plans of hydropower development for electricity, civil societies are facing challenges due to environmental risks and livelihood which relies on the river. Many organizations including the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, UN, private hydropower companies and joint donors have pushed the hydropower agenda which is towards financial benefits. However, the economic situation and relations of countries have changed hydropower plans in which Thailand, Vietnam, China, Malaysia, Japan and Russia have held Western-abandoned hydropower plans even though social and environmental issues are less considered in previous dam projects while the Asian financial crisis was happening (Middleton, Garcia, & Foran, 2009).

The Mekong region's rapid economic growth leads to a large demand of electricity. Meanwhile, there have been disputes between the governments' ministries and civil societies for rapid industrialization (Middleton et al., 2009). For instance, the electric demands of Thailand require twice that of the current use in 2021 although the country has developed local potential hydropower. On the one hand, civil society groups oppose the upcoming plans of the government to import electricity from

neighboring countries such as Burma, Laos and China. Likewise, Vietnam demands the electricity in 2030 twice or more the electric that it currently uses so that it is planning to develop much of possible internal hydropower as well as to import from China, Cambodia and Laos. Moreover, it is predicted that for countries such as Cambodia, Laos and Burma electricity productivity will be further developed in order to get economic growth and to consume within countries.

International regimes such as the World Bank and Asian Development Bank have shaped hydropower sector of the regions for many years by holding a meeting to support technical, financial and legal innovations in hydropower (Middleton et al., 2009). Both banks have financed various sizes and scales of large hydro dams around the world. However, their collaboration is different among Mekong countries, for instance, supporting development aids to Thailand while terminating loans to Burma before democratic transition. The World Bank re-started giving loans to Burma for health and electricity in 2013 (BBC, 2013b).

The safeguard policies of the World Bank and Asian Development Bank reiterate environment and social concerns as well as stakeholders' participation when the development projects and programs are made (Kasimbazi, 2009). However, the banks have been weak in monitoring and supervising their policies during the planning stages of development projects. Private financial institutions including China, European and India banks have also supported in recent years in dam projects in which dam building companies and governments get loans from private banks. However, their roles on building dams have been irresponsible to large hydro projects. They have funded controversial hydropower dams without considering environmental and social risks especially in developing countries. Mostly, they fail to take into consideration the social and environmental risks and transparency of their investments and implementation as policies outlined by the World Commission on Dams (International Rivers, 2014).

2.1.3 Environmental Impact Assessments

In Burma, environmental policy and legislative framework under the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) or Military government was very weak for many decades. Although the National Commission for Environmental Affairs

(NCEA) was established on 14th February 1990, the National Environmental Policy in 1994, the Burma Agenda (21) in 1997 and the National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) in 2009, there were no up-to-date law and no regulations for environmental or social impact assessments to examine the harmful effects of development projects. However, on 30th March 2012 Burma passed the National Environmental Conservation Law to establish an integrated environmental monitoring system to develop standards for environmental quality as well as to encourage green initiatives. According to the law, the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry (MOECAF) formed the law mainly to conduct its activities. As evidenced, the Ministry's duties and powers are to implement and plan environmental policies at the regional and national level particularly in conservation and control the environment. The MOECAF is responsible to check both the environmental impact assessments (EIA) and social impact assessments (SIA). Both EIA and SIA are supposed to be conducted by the project implementers without bias of project investors. These assessments have been legalized by law for the first time in Burma.

Environmental impact assessments (EIA) are used to understand the effects of a development project on the environment before deciding whether the proposed project should go ahead or not (IAIA, 1999). An EIA provides a reasonable decision of alternative plans to the planned project development (IAIA, 1999). An EIA raises many important new questions about the decision making of the proposed project. It also investigates the project issues and scope that impacts the existing conditions in which surrounding communities have the relevant knowledge of the baseline conditions. As well, the project implementers have obligations to provide information and consult anyone who is a stakeholder in the project. The consultation bodies must carry out any assessment which has no bias towards any one of the stakeholders. Importantly, the assessment report must be published in a space where the public can access the report before the projects starts (IAIA, 1999).

Myitsone dam project was initially surveyed by Kansai Electric Power Company of Japan in 2002 (KDNG, 2007). Even though CPI and the Ministry of Electric Power-1 signed a Memorandum of Understanding agreement on 20th December 2006, the preparation for the environmental impact study only began in December 2007 by Changjiang Survey, Planning, Design, and Research Ltd (GIGA,

2012). Later on, Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Association (BANCA) of Yangon cooperated in negotiating Terms of Reference for the impact study with the governments and investors between March – June 2008. Government officials forced the affected households to sign an agreement to leave their homes and to resettle to new villages in September 2009 during the investigating period of the EIA (International Rivers, 2011b). It can definitely be said that there was a lack of consultation and participation of the affected people.

The first version of the EIA was completed in October 2009 after the relocation of the villagers, (GIGA, 2012). This report was only published in July 2011 on the “Burma River Network” website in Thailand which was difficult to get access from Burma due to slow internet connections and lack of internet access in many regions after the construction of the project in December 2009 (GIGA, 2012). Officially, the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry announced a review of the previous EIA report on the Myitsone dam on 18 September 2011 (GIGA, 2012). In addition, the International Rivers Network conducted an Independent Experts Review of the EIA report on Myitsone. It has recommended the EIA should be conducted at the standards of the World Bank (International Rivers, 2011a). It also found that the EIA report of BANCA and the Chinese experts did not have enough time to properly analyse the large scale project and it was funded by CPI, which created a conflict of interest and is not in accordance with international standards.

2.1.4 Social Impacts Assessment

Social Impacts Assessment (SIA) is generally defined as analysed, monitored and managed reports on both the positive and negative social consequences of a development project. It analyses the process of the project and its impact to people (Burdge, 2003b). It also includes monitoring and managing those impacts with good strategies (Vanclay, 2003). Social impact assessment is a method that various actors can apply either in a formal or informal framework (Burdge, 2003a). Public involvement should be included in this assessment. Local knowledge, participation of stakeholders and past experiences are essential concerns (Vanclay, 2003). People’s way of lives, culture, community, health and well-being, political system, natural

environment, human rights, fears and aspirations need to be considered in the SIA (Vanclay, 2003). The benefits of an SIA are maximizing public participation, reducing uncertainty, increasing accuracy and mitigating the harmful impacts of a proposed development project (Burdge & Vanclay, 1996). In Burma, the Ministry of Environmental Conservation has the responsibility to check whether a social impact assessment is conducted or not in the projects due to the Environmental Conservation Law of 2012.

In the case of the Myitsone dam project, although an EIA was conducted unpublished, there is a lack of any officially conducted SIA for such large scale energy project. A social impact assessment for the project was not conducted. The decision makers lacked consideration of the positive and negative aspects of the project before the construction. The experts who conducted the EIA recommended doing an SIA study with social scientists in order to properly collect and substantiate as well as present a composite balance of views of all stakeholders involved. The dam and resettlement plan didn't consult with the public as the military government didn't consider participation of people and the equality in sharing benefits needs among the stakeholders.

2.2 Social movements and democratic transition in Burma

2.2.1 Overview theories of social movements in Environmental Politics

Social movements can define collective actions in order to give positive benefit to societies (Killian, 1964). That collective action is comprised of individuals' involvements and their efforts to change or resist sociocultural order (Killian, 1964). A social movement consists of a specific ideology, solidarity of participants, a number of people and their actions (Perry, Perry, & Musslewhite, 2003). According to Perry & Perry (2003), there are four types of social movements including reformist and revolutionary. The reformist movement is particularly one of the most influence types on governments and societies as it tries to transform a specific part of society and is mostly observed in democratic societies. For instance, civil rights movements and feminist movements are considered this type of social movement. The revolutionary movement can be said as the most extreme form of social movement as it attempts to

change the current society totally. This revolution occurs due to the outcomes of the interaction between social and political structural conditions (Perry et al., 2003; Rootes, 1990).

2.2.2 Social Movements in Burma

In the history of Burma, various social movements have occurred in changing the country's political situation and betterment for the people. The "8888" uprising refers to a series of protests that took place in Burma during 1988 that culminated on the date 8/8/1988, giving this uprising its name. These protests were initially incited largely by students to express their opposition to the military government's economic, political, and monetary policies (Myoe, 2007). The government at that time was headed by General Ne Win, who ruled Burma from 1962-1988 as an oppressive and violent ruler (Charney, 2009). The protests intensified as students collected in mass demonstration (Fogarty, 2008). During this time, it is estimated that around 3,000 people were killed as the police and military massacred peaceful protestors (Fogarty, 2008). As a consequence, Ne Win and his party resigned from their position and the State Law and Order Restoration Council seized power (Charney, 2009). The National League for Democracy, Burma's leading opposition party, was established in 1988 as well. The role of the '88 movement and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has created the opportunity to hold a democratic election two years later. In 1990, the national election was conducted and the NLD won but the SLORC government ignored the results and maintained power (Charney, 2009).

In 2007, Buddhist monks protested against the anti-democratic measures of the Burmese military regime in a demonstration known as the "Saffron Revolution" due to the saffron colour of the Buddhist monk robes. (Charney, 2009). Protests by the public began when the State Peace and Development Council removed all fuel subsidies in the country without any warning on August 15, 2007. At first, protests were led primarily by students and democratic activists, but beginning on September 18, 2007, thousands of Buddhist monks peacefully took to the streets to protest (Selth, 2008). Nonetheless, beginning on the 26th of September, the Burmese military junta violently cracked down on the protesters (Rogers, 2008). Monasteries around the country were raided, and many monks were taken captive by the Burmese military

forces. Many political activists were arrested during this time. The international system strongly condemned the actions of the Burmese government and called for tolerance in accepting the peaceful demonstrations for democracy. There has been no real conclusion from the Saffron Revolution as the military government has not accepted changes and continued to repress the public (Selth, 2008).

2.2.3 Democratic Transition and political economy in Burma

Since the 2010 election, Burma has transitioned towards a democratic country from a prolonged authoritarian government and witnessed economic liberalization from a previously sanctioned economy. Evidently due to this transition, the National League for Democracy (NLD) was allowed to partake in country by-elections and won seats in Parliament in the 2012 by-elections (Jones, 2013). The peace negotiation process with the ethnic armed groups has begun and is an on-going process. In addition, political prisoners have been released, and internet censorship and media freedom are eased and have expanded. Trade unions, civil societies and peaceful assemblies are legalized. Consequently, the prolonged sanctions from the international community have been lifted and the influx of foreign investment is welcomed. One of the changes for the economy is that a foreign investment law³ in March 2012 has been developed and updated from a previous 1988 foreign investment law.

If these sweeping changes to the economy are done well, many across the country will stand to benefit, and those who profited most from the old regime's restrictions and privileges will lose access to windfall profits and guaranteed monopolies (Jones, 2013). The economy has shifted from the cronies towards small and medium enterprises by the government institutionally and politically (Rieffel, 2012). However, it is hard to imagine a successful political transition unless the government can ensure macroeconomic stability and a sustained improvement in the lives of ordinary people, just as it is hard to imagine successful economic reform

³ FDI 2012 law is reflected the public voice than FDI 1988 law: For citizens, the investors must hire at least 25 per cent of local professionals and experts for enterprises only for the special capability during the initial first two years, maximize into 50 % for the duration of the following two years and 75 % in the next two years. Other low-skill labours must also be appointed. For investors, it provides greater revenue incentives for international company investments.

without political stability and a continued shift away from the country's authoritarian past (Della-Giacoma, 2012).

2.2.4 Democratic transition in the context of Kachin State

Burma was under military rule from 1962 to 2010. As a roadmap to democracy, the military government or State Peace and Development Council held a constitutional referendum in 2008 a week of Cyclone Nargis happened in which 25 per cent of seats in the Parliament are reserved for military (PILPG, 2008). As an announcement of the government, 92.4 per cent of voters approved the Constitution. In November 2010, Burma officially transformed to civilian democracy by holding the election in which the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) won. One week after the election, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, a pro-democracy leader, was released from house arrest. In May 2011, the new civilian government freed political prisoners and thousands of prisoners under an amnesty. Again in October 2011, under a general amnesty, the government freed over 200 political prisoners. Consequently, Burma was nominated to hold the Chair of ASEAN by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Moreover, the US government offered Burma for continuous reforms by an official visit from President Obama, meeting with the President and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on 19th November 2012 in Burma (Beech, 2012). In these reforms, peaceful demonstrations, media freedom, national wide ceasefire agreement with ethnic armed groups, openness of foreign investments and by-elections for parliament were included.

On the one hand, the government has been trying to acquire cease fire agreements with ethnic rebel groups and reached agreements with most of the ethnic armed groups. In Kachin State, there has been a long history of civil conflict between the Burmese government and Kachin Independence Organization (KIO). The KIO signed a ceasefire deal with the military government in 1994. However, fighting between the Burmese military and Kachin Independence Army (KIA) resumed on 9 June 2011 while the government was aiming to step up efforts to sign a nation-wide ceasefire with various ethnic armed groups. The conflict occurred for many reasons including attempting to control the KIO controlled areas by the government and to

secure profitable areas around energy projects in Kachin and Shan State (Eleven, 2014). Particularly, Myitsone was one of the important causes to re-start the fighting since the KIO received no response from the government for the request of KIO not to build the dam at the confluence many times. The fighting is happening throughout Kachin State and North-Western part of Shan State. Despite an order of the President Thein Sein to the army to cease from Kachin State in December 2011, the military has continuously reinforced its arms and the battle has been continuing in Kachin State to date. Until 2014, the conflict has produced over 100,000 of internally displaced persons within Kachin State and border areas (ECHO, 2014). Simultaneously, both sides have been negotiating for peace since the fighting commenced. But to date a peace agreement has not yet been reached.

2.3 Timeline of Myitsone Dam

The Ayeyarwady Myitsone Dam project is a China-Burma government cooperation project. An agreement between China's National Energy Administration and Ministry of Electric Power (1) of Burma was reached in March, 2009 (International Rivers, 2011b). From the China side, the main actor is the Chinese state-owned Enterprise - China Power Investment Corporation (CPI) and sub actors are the China Southern Power Grid, Yunnan Machinery Export & Import Company (YMEC), Kunming Hydropower Institute of Design and Changjiang Design Institute. The Ministry of Electric Power (1), Asia World Company, and Suntac Technologies are partners in the Myitsone project from the Burma side (KDNG, 2007). As the Ministry of Electric Power and Agriculture and Irrigation Ministry initially prepared the "Ayeyarwady Myitsone Dam Multipurpose Water Utilizing Project," a small weather station was first built in Tang Hpre village by a Japanese company-Kansai Electric Power Company (KDNG, 2007). In November 2005, the China Power Investment Company and Asia World Company also established a joint venture to construct seven hydropower dam projects along Mali Hka and Nmai Hka Rivers (International Rivers, 2011b). On December 28th 2006, The Ministry of Electric Power-1 of Burma and CPI signed an MoU for Myitsone Dam at the confluence (International Rivers, 2011b). Before this event, a project implementation camp near

the dam site was built by the Asia World Company and the Chinese inspectors surveyed the project sites for five months (KDNG, 2007).

During May 2007, the construction of the seven cascade dams was agreed upon by the Ministry of Electric Power-1 and CPI on the two rivers and at the confluence. An opening ceremony was held at the “Maykha and Malikha Valley and Confluence Region Hydropower Projects and Chibwe Creek Hydropower Project” office in Myitkkyina (KDNG, 2007). Later on, Changjiang Ltd. in China and Biodiversity and Natural Conservation Association (BANCA) in Yangon reached an agreement to conduct an EIA special investigation on 24th December 2008 (International Rivers, 2011b). Between January and July 2009, a special investigation on the upper Ayeyarwady was conducted by this team (International Rivers, 2011b). In December 2009, the villagers were resettled involuntarily once the construction started.

The Changjiang Institute of Survey, Planning, Design and Research finalized the EIA report in March, 2010 (GIGA, 2012). In April, there were unexpected bomb explosions at the dam site which killed three people and injured many Chinese workers. But the relocation of the villages continued despite objections to the project intensifying among the communities. In 2010, the political landscape of Burma transformed to a democratic government. But the construction of the project continued even though Daw Aung San Suu Kyi published a letter which appealed to save the Ayeyarwady River in July, 2011. After that, workshops to discuss the project were held in Naypyidaw on 17th September, 2011. Although the Myitsone Hydropower Project was intended to finish in 2018, President Thein Sein announced the suspension of the Myitsone Dam during his presidential term on 30th September, 2011 (GIGA, 2012).

2.4 Research gaps

Burma has experienced large scale development projects both before and after its transition to democratization. In the perspective of the government, development projects stand for the country’s economic growth and well-being of the people. However, the affected communities have been facing the negative impacts of these large scale projects. With little exception for analysis on social movements for the

political changes, there is little research about the social movements of these large scale development projects. By review of the literatures on the Myitsone project, the existing research has mostly highlighted the environmental aspects, social aspects and livelihoods of resettlement villagers. Hence, this research will emphasize the gap between the existing research and the real situation by the perspective of the social movement in which the movement has partly succeeded until the suspension of the project. Particularly, this research will focus on the study for the emergence of social movement which hasn't been studied in Burma.



CHAPTER III

BACKGROUND OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

This chapter aims to explain the context of local communities from Myitsone project surrounded areas in order to understand the reasons why local communities didn't want to build the dam at their places and their roles in the movement. Section 3.1 introduces local people from Myitsone's surrounding areas. Section 3.2 mentions the culture and history of local people related to Myitsone's surrounding areas. Section 3.3 explains the lives of local communities before and after project implementation as well as their resettlement process. Section 3.4 provides the summary of the chapter.

3.1 Introduction of local people from Myitsone's surrounding areas

Project-affected villages are more or less 30 miles away from Myitkyina, the capital of Kachin State. There were six villages around Myitsone dam construction sites before the project started. They were Mazup, Tanghphe, and Lahpye villages in Myitkyina township and Dawngban, Aung Ja Yang and Maliyang (Dingga zup) in Waimaw township as Figure (3) in Chapter I depicts. Both townships are located at the opposite sites of the Ayeyarwady River. After construction began in 2009, the three villages in Myitkyina Township were evicted and relocated to Aung Min Thar relocation village and the three villages from Waimaw Township were moved to Maliyang relocation village. Up until 2013, there are 317 households in Aung Min Thar relocation village and 120 households in Maliyang relocation Village. Most native villagers from these six villages are Kachin ethnic. Their religion is primarily Christian including Baptist, Roman Catholic and Anglican. They make their living by producing agricultural and forest products depending on their location and proximity to the two rivers and at the confluence. Before the project construction, the villages were not easily accessed since the roads were not developed under the military government as well as communication. Most villagers do not have formal education since there is limited access to higher education which is a university or college level.

3.2 Culture and History of Local People from Myitsone's surrounding areas

According to history, the Kachin came originally from either the mountains which is the basic source of the Ayeyarwady River or Tibet (KDNG, 2007). They moved down along the Mali and Nmai rivers from the mountains. Hence, Kachin's history and historical events are very much related to these two rivers and the confluence named as "Mali-Nmai zup" in Kachin or "Myitsone" in Burmese. They believe that the triangle area where the two rivers converge is their heartland and their birth place (KDNG, 2007). They value the confluence as it is the origin of the Ayeyarwady River which supports millions of people throughout the country.

In Kachin legend, the great spirit of the world poured water with each hand from gold cups. The two flows of water became the two rivers - Mali Hka and Nmai Hka Rivers. Mali Hka flowing on the right side is the male river and Nmai Hka River is the female one, the sister of Mali Hka (Din, 2011). The male river is shallow, wide and swift-flowing. However, the female river is mysterious, silent and dangerous, hiding the depths with high cliffs and jungles. Since their origins were from the water flow of the gold cups, both rivers have plentiful riches in gold, abundant fish, wildlife and natural forest products remarked as a natural bank for local people (Din, 2011).

The triangle area is also known as the birthplace of the two legends - Hkrai Naw and Hkrai gam (KDNG, 2007). The father Dragon and the two sons were not only born but also settled at the confluence. The younger son, Hkrai Naw, is known as the hero of Kachin people. When people were in danger of the evil eagle that stole babies from the villagers, he shot down the eagle with a bow and arrow. He is still honoured for saving the lives of Kachin people. Kachin people believe that the dragons are still protecting their homeland. Hence, the dragons are bothered if the water flow is broken. This can cause unexpected natural disasters to happen to them.

The Ayeyarwady River was born at the confluence of the Mali River and Nmai River in Kachin State, Northern Burma. Local people have been depending on these two rivers and at the confluence for their livelihoods. Traditionally, their ways of livelihoods are farming, gardening, fishing, mining and gathering vegetables from the forests around the river. In addition, they also earn income from tourism by transferring people to more remote upstream areas by boat. Furthermore, there are many cultural sites around the confluence including historical churches and temples.

In Tang Hpre village which is located at the crossroads of the confluence, sits the Roman Catholic Church of Kachin State. Therefore, the historical churches and cultural sites will be submerged due to dam construction. Also, a sacred Banyan tree will be inundated. Importantly, local people, Kachin, will lose their identity and history as well as a loss of a celebrated place for future generations (KDNG, 2007).

According to interviews with local villagers from two relocated villages, all villagers owned their garden and farm and protected their properties. They usually separated farming and gardening from animal raising such as cows. The pasture for the animals is essential for the villagers. They generally raised cows for marriage culture since cows have to be given from the man's side to the woman's side of the family before they marry. Hence, a family who has sons usually raise the cows since the sons were born. Also, they usually make a poem regarding the two rivers and the confluence at the wedding ceremony and special occasions. They use a flower called "Hka law pan" at the wedding as a present. The flower only grows near the river.

3.3 Lives of Local communities before and after project implementation

3.3.1 Before Myitsone Hydropower Project

Before the Myitsone project was started, the villagers around the project sites had several livelihoods for their livings. In old villages, the villagers didn't have to worry about their food security. They made their income-earning opportunities based on their land and areas around the project sites. They were able to support themselves by doing their traditional livelihoods for many decades including agriculture, fishery, tourism, forest products and small scale gold mining. The situation of migration and access to social services were followed.

Agriculture

Villagers from both relocated villages said that most of them owned hillside fields and farms. They made a living by growing rice in rainy season. They sold rice to the local markets after they stored enough rice for their consumption. In addition to rice farming, they gardened on the fertile river banks and small islands of the rivers. Corn, tomatoes, bean, and watermelon were main products of their gardening. The villagers sold their products at the local market and Myitkyina town market so that

they were able to buy essential needs for their families such as schooling for their children and food for kitchens.

Most families grew kitchen gardens at their home since their compounds were big enough to do kitchen gardening. They grew vegetables seasonally for family consumption. Although they don't have money, they don't need to spend money. When the vegetables produced more than enough for personal consumption, they would sell them to the local market and earn income.

Along with farming and gardening, the villagers also said that they raised animals such as cows and pigs. They raised the animals for their family needs for special occasions. They usually sold pigs to local markets two times per year and used cows for farming. The cows were raised at the pasture freely and the villagers used them when they did farming. They also said they used the animal waste as organic fertilizer for their agriculture. They never use chemical fertilizers and pesticides in agriculture. Traditionally, they deliver their methods to the next generation.

Villagers from both relocation villages said bamboo plantations are one of the main income opportunities for them. Bamboo plantations do not need to give tax to the government like timber. Hence, most of them invested their efforts in bamboo instead of timber. Even though bamboo is cut annually, it grows naturally so that they depend on their income by the annual selling of bamboo. They sell bamboo in Myitkyina.

A villager from Maliyang relocation village said that

“My main livelihood is bamboo planting. Instead of saving money, I bought a bamboo garden for my children because there always has a market for bamboo. Our family has enough income from selling bamboo.”(Maliyang relocation village, focus group, June 14, 2014)

Photograph 1 Gardening in fertile river bank in old village



Source: Damming the Ayeyarwady (2007)

Fishery

Local fisheries are also important for villagers. They did fishing for family consumption. Sometimes, they sold fish to local markets especially when they needed money for school fees for their children. However, they usually did fishing in the dry season.

A woman from Tanghpre village said that

“My husband was a fisher man. He did fishing everyday apart from Sunday. I grew the vegetables in our house. Both of us had our own jobs.” (Local Listening Team, 2013)

One Aung Min Thar relocation villager said that

“The children do fishing in weekends and after the schools to support their parents or to be fun. Fishing with their friends can build their strong friendship.” (Aung Min Thar relocation village, focus group, June 12, 2014)

Photograph (2) Local fishery in old village



Source: Damming the Ayeyarwady (2007)

Tourism

The triangle area is naturally one of the most beautiful places in Burma as well as an important place for Kachin people. Hence, people including domestic and foreign tourists visit the area for many reasons. Based on tourism, local villagers earned income from tourists and visitors. Women relied on income from restaurants which mainly offer local food and traditional crafts. Men made a living with sightseeing tours by boat along the two rivers and at the confluence.

One Aung Min Thar relocation villager said that,

“Our relatives from Myitkyina or everywhere, they love to see Myitsone. Around 1990s, the water was so clean and the environment was so natural compared to the 2000s. Tourism became one of the main livelihoods from us.” (Aung Min Thar relocation village, focus group, June 17, 2014)

“Some of our neighbours opened a restaurant near the confluence. They provided food from around our areas, for instance, fish from the river and vegetables from the villagers.” (Aung Min Thar relocation village, focus group, June 17, 2014)

Photograph (3) Tourism by boat transportation at Myitsone



Source: Damming the Ayeyarwady (2007)

Forest products

Particularly, local women made a living by harvesting non-timber forest products. The forest provides various vegetables, fruits and mushrooms from the forests for their basic needs. Women sold those products in order to buy the kitchen needs.

Both relocation villagers said that the forests are the natural bank for them. They said that

“When we ran out of money and nothing to eat at house, we just went to the forest. We got many kinds of food to eat from the forest. Everyone in the village used to do that especially women.” (Maliyang relocation village, focus group, June 14, 2014 & Aung Min Thar relocation village, focus group, June 17, 2014)

Some villagers produce traditional herbal medicine. The natural herbs were collected from thick forests. They have been doing these businesses for several decades. Besides, some collected herbs and sold them to other herbal medicine manufactories in Myitkyina. The villagers usually collect the herbs between January to April. The villagers believed that it is their traditional beliefs to collect herbs during that season. The spirits of the forest bless the plants in that season so that the herbs can heal effectively.

One Aung Min Thar relocation villager said that,

“We love the forest. It has supported us for decades. We never hurt the forest for long-term. When we collected the herbs, we only took the branches.” (Aung Min Thar relocation village, focus group, June 12, 2014)

Small scale gold mining

Small scale gold mining is one of the main livelihoods for the villagers. Villagers occasionally do gold mining especially when they need money urgently. Small scale gold mining is not only for adults but also for school children. Children do this in dry season over summer holidays to save the money for their schooling. In their old village, children can find the money for their school fee. Parents don't want their children to worry about paying their own school fees.

Photograph (4) Small scale gold mining near the Ayeyarwady River



Source: Damming the Ayeyarwady (2007)

Migration

In old villages, the surrounding villagers rarely migrated to other regions since they had enough money for their livings. Migration of villagers used to be less common in their old villages. Occasionally, girls and women were attracted by brokers to work in other locations. These brokers told them that they will get more

money if they work in China. On the one hand, they became victims of trafficking. Furthermore, some women and men migrated for gold mining to other places such as Tanaing Region. Men migrated for gold mining and women followed to sell products at mining places.

Apart from villagers' migration, there were Burmese migrants who came and settled in the villages around Myitsone. They came there for building a pagoda at the confluence due to government plans. However, they didn't return to their original village after they finished building the pagoda and remained in Kachin state. Some came for gold mining at the upstream of the two rivers and as cooks for gold miners. Among the native villagers and Burmese migrants, who totalled about 5% of the total population, there was no big tension before the Myitsone project. Although the villagers didn't want pagoda at the confluence, they didn't mind the migrants as they were just workers.

Access to social services

In old villages, access to social services was poor. Transportation, health and education were less supported from the government. First, the villages were not easy to reach as the roads were rough. Especially, it was very difficult to be reached in rainy seasons since the roads were full of mud. The villagers had access to buses to Myitkyina almost every day.

Second, they didn't have a public hospital but had only a clinic. Villagers didn't often go the clinic as they relied on natural herbs from the forest and herbal medicine that they made. The rate of sickness among children was high in old villages. Contrarily, older people rarely got sick as they exercised by working in their kitchen gardens or gardening.

Third, the villagers only had access to education until primary school. The quantity of teachers was not equivalent to the number of children. Since middle school level, the parent had to send their children to town. But they could afford these schooling fees due to gold mining and bamboo plantation. Children did not drop out of school because of any difficulty in paying school fees.

3.3.2 Brief overview of the resettlement process

Before Myitsone was constructed, the project surrounding villages were resettled to new relocation villages. There were six villages that were relocated into two relocated villages. The relocation was a forced- relocation. The compensation process was unfair, inadequate and lacked transparency. Both relocation and compensation processes were coordinated by Burmese authorities, China Power Investment and Asia World companies.

Project effected villages were treated differently for relocation. In September 2009, Government officials went to effected villages along with village heads. Apart from Tanghpre village, other villages were evicted by the arrangement of the officials during May and June 2010. They were moved in rainy season while their new houses were not yet ready to be moved into in new village.

Mali yang villagers said that

“We were forced to sign on the consent of relocation form. We didn’t know what was in the form. Most of us couldn’t read Burmese. Mostly, we didn’t realize that we could defend the government and how. After relocation, we were just given awareness trainings such as human rights and indigenous land rights. We should have known about that before.” (Maliyang relocation village, focus group, June 14, 2014)

“As a result, 80% of villagers agreed to resettle to a new village. There was no evidence of photos or records in their relocation process. Hence, the government could show the consent of the villagers officially.” (Maliyang relocation village, focus group, June 14, 2014)

Unlike the other villages, Tanghpre villagers were gathered in Tanghpre village and met with the Northern Military Commander, a chairman of SPDC in Kachin State, the Minister of Electric Power and representatives from CPI and Asia World on 20th September and 9th October in 2009. The villagers were told that they had to be moved to new villages. In contrast, the villager requested they didn’t want to leave their ancestor land and their stable lives in their village. The authorities

responded to this by saying that they had to be moved since the old village is the reservation area but they let the villagers work on their land for their livelihoods until the flooding of the old village took place.

However, the villagers were facing several challenges to move the new village because they were resisting relocation. During interviews about relocation to Aung Min Thar villagers originally from Tanghpre village,

“Drugs were spreading in our village (Tang Hpre village) that we hadn’t experienced before. We thought that the authorities used the way for relocation since our villagers were resisting relocation until submerging. Many of youth started using drugs because it was easy to get in the village. My family moved for that reason since I have two boys.” (Aung Min Thar relocation village, focus group, June 17, 2014)

“There was increasing gold mining among the village from the companies and NDAK Group. The village was not like a village.” (Aung Min Thar relocation village, focus group, June 12, 2014)

“Some of us mostly moved because of schools. We moved in May 2011 because the school opened in May every year. The government shut the school in old village.” (Aung Min Thar relocation village, focus group, June 28, 2014)

Photograph (5) Houses in Relocation Villages



Source: Hkawn Ja Aung (2014)

All households moving new villages were given one compound per each household, one hundred thousand kyats (equivalent to 100 USD), a television and rice for one year consumption (Local Listening Team, 2013). The officials told them that they will get the compensation for their loss of garden, farm and long-term plants. However, there was no transparency and clarity for compensation. The villagers didn't know that how the government calculated the price of their farm, garden and long-term plants and gave them for how many years. The villagers could only receive what the authorities gave them. Some of villagers were given hilly land for farming. This land had to be turned into a farm by the villagers themselves. Some of the compensated land was not useful for farming since the land was hard. Although some villagers received compensation, some didn't get any of compensation for their loss of properties. Although Burmese migrants who didn't own a house in old village now owned a house in the relocated village, yet, two households from Tanghpri village who owned their houses didn't received their own houses in the relocation village until June 2014.

3.3.3 After Myitsone Project Implementation

After the villagers were forcibly driven out from their villages, they lost their livelihoods and income-earning opportunities that they survived for generations. Previously, they had been able to afford their consumption for the whole year before moving to relocation sites. Since their main livings had so much depended on their land, they couldn't support themselves in new places and compensated land.

Agriculture

Some Villagers from Aung Min Thar village still do their gardening in their old hillside fields. However, the fields are far away from new village so that they have to spend money to get to their fields.

One Aung Min Thar relocation villagers said that,

“We spend transportation fee about 2,000 Kyats every day. The companies don't allow us staying at our fields. Although we have money from harvesting, we don't have any benefit from hillside

gardening.”(Aung Min Thar relocation village, focus group, June 28, 2014)

“When we dug a hole for planting the trees, the companies asked us to fill the hole. But they destroyed our farm and gardens. We were said that our farms are owned by the companies even the project is suspended.” (Aung Min Thar relocation village, focus group, June 17, 2014)

Some villagers have received the compensated land for their farms. However, the land is not suitable for agriculture since the land is full of rocks. In their former villages, they didn't cut the bamboo when they had seasonal crops to sell. Some villagers lost some of their bamboo plantations and some lost all. Bamboo has been one of the major livelihoods for the villagers.

A Maliyang relocation villagers said that,

“I had 9 acres of land. I grew long term plants such as lemons and Danyein (local plants) and bamboos in the surrounding. I gave taxes for them. But now all are lost.”(Local Listening Team, 2013)

“I owned 12 bamboo plantations. But I lost 6 because the companies cut down and built the house for new village. I still don't receive compensation for my bamboo plants.”(Local Listening Team, 2013)

Villagers from Maliyang relocation village are not allowed to raising their animals in the old pastures. They don't have access to these pastures now; and face difficulty in raising their cows so they sold their animals. Then, they don't have cows for farming and cannot farm anymore. As a consequence, the villagers' agriculture practices have been affected. They cannot use animals for their special occasions such as wedding ceremony and other culture practices. Besides, villagers cannot have kitchen gardens for their family consumption at either of the new villages. The compounds are not big enough to grow seasonal vegetables. Vegetables cannot be grown on the land and the relocation land is not as fertile as their old village land.

Fishery

Since they were in new villages, the villagers couldn't do fishing in their old places any more. They were not allowed to return to their land within the project sites. They could hardly do fishing in the surrounding places of their new villages since the places were owned by the private companies. Hence, the villagers faced difficulties for their own consumption.

A Maliyang relocation villagers said that

“We don't have the places for fishing. Sometimes, when we went to do fishing in our old places, we were asked by the guards from companies. It is hard to find the wood for kitchen in new place.”
(Maliyang relocation village, focus group, June 14, 2014)

If the dam is constructed completely, it will definitely block fish migration routes to reach upstream spawning areas. The diversities of fish species will decline or disappear in the downstream area and reservoir. Fisheries on the downstream areas will be impacted (KDNG, 2007).

Tourism

Tourism businesses have almost disappeared at the Myitsone area. While the project was being constructed, people who visited to the confluence area had to seek permission from the companies. The companies announced that the place was a restricted area by posting red board. However, some villagers still opened restaurants near the confluence by the permission of the companies and authorities. The tourism businesses are not running as previous and there is less income from tourism. The villagers were not allowed to do boat transportation since the construction sites were not allowed to see visitors. Near Aung Min Thar village, there is local transportation from Aung Min Thar village to Maliyang village by crossing the Ayeyarwady River.

Photograph (6) Local boat transportation and food restaurant near Aung Min Thar



village

Source: Hkawn Ja Aung (2014)

Forest products

Since the villagers moved to the new relocation places, they have lost their livelihoods that depend on accessing the forest. Women especially are facing difficulties without the forest since they have been relying on the forest their whole life. Everything they need in the kitchen now has to be bought with money.

One Aung Min Thar relocation villagers said that,

“In old village, even we had nothing to eat at home; we just went to forest and collect the products. We didn’t have to buy everything by money. Now, we need money every day and we don’t have jobs as our previous ones.” (Aung Min Thar relocation village, focus group, June 12, 2014)

Moreover, people who depend on forest herbs have to find other livelihoods. They are not allowed to go the forest and to find these herbs anymore. Sometimes, they get the permission to go the forest; but they hardly find the herbs since the forest was demolished by the companies for construction and for gold mining.

Small scale gold mining

Small scale gold mining is not a livelihood for the villagers any more. In their old villages, the villagers’ knew where they could go to find gold and they were experts at their resource map of the old villages. In the new villages, they are lacking knowledge on the land and don’t know where they can do mining. Besides, they are not permitted to do gold mining by local authorities. Without the income from gold

mining, parents cannot find the money so that paying for school fees of their children becomes difficult. They cannot send their children away to boarding in Myitkyina for further education.

Migration

As local villagers have difficulties for the replacement of their livelihoods and challenges for their food security in the new relocation villages, both relocated villagers are migrating increasingly to other places since they lack income opportunities. After they lost their ways of livelihoods, some male villagers have migrated to other regions in Kachin State. Mostly, they currently stay in the place where they can mine for gold with their old livelihoods. Some villagers became temporary labours at the private companies near their villages such as rubber plantation and timber plantation. Only a few families opened small groceries stores at their homes for a living. Women between ages 20 and 40 have had to find jobs in other parts of Kachin State and to China.

Photograph (7) a grocery store in Aung Min Thar Relocation Village



Source: Hkawn Ja Aung (2014)

Maliyang relocation villagers said that

“We are struggling for our livings. We can see at the results of weekly worship service’s donation. The money is much less than one old village even all three villages gather now.”(Maliyang relocation villagers, Focus group, June 14, 2014)

Access to social services

In new villages, access to social services has been basically improved compared to the old villages. First, the road transportation has been constructed since the companies had to transport the construction materials to project sites. They built modern villages to show the public. Two new villages were constructed to be more modernized than old villages. The infrastructures are developed in schools, hospitals and offices. Both of the new villages have better access of the electricity than the old villages.

Photograph (8) Village Administration office in Maliyang Relocation village

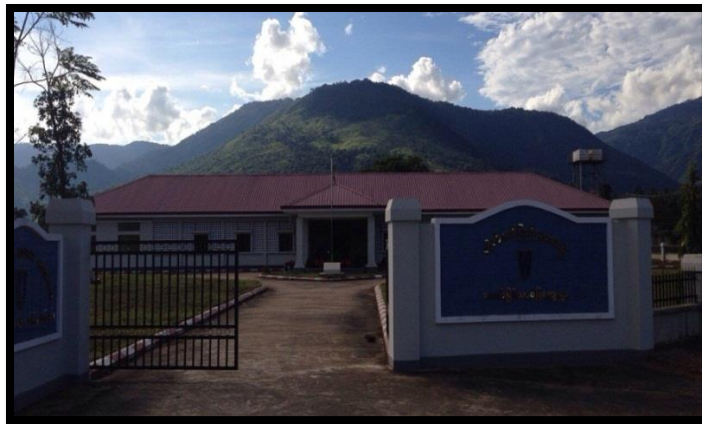


Source: Hkawn Ja Aung (2014)

Second, the health situation has both advantages and disadvantages. The public hospital was built in Aung Min Thar village. But there were no skilful doctors and nurses in the hospital. But for Maliyang village, there are no fulltime medical staff and medicines even there has a clinic (Local Listening Team, 2013). In both relocated villages, children sicknesses are decreased significantly. But older people are now suffering from hypertension and paralysis in new villages. They don't have to work in their compound and don't exercise by gardening. Since they were in new villages, almost all family members have to work for their living standards and don't have time to take care of older people. Older people are depressed about their current situation that they cannot help the families. The villagers don't have access to use the

herbs from the forest that they used to have. Some have financial debt because clinic fees cost so much.

Photograph (9) Public Hospital in Aung Min Thar relocation village



Source: Hkawn Ja Aung (2014)

Third, the villagers have access to education up to high school now in Aung Min Thar village. The attendance rate has increasing in the high school from other villages which are not relocated villages. But both relocated village children have increasingly dropped out of school since their parents cannot afford the school fees. Although opportunity for education is higher than the old villages, it cannot be accessed for the relocated villagers.

Photograph (10) Basic Education school in Aung Min Thar relocation village



Source: Hkawn Ja Aung (2014)

3.4 Summary

Interviews with two relocated villagers indicated that there are so many differences between old villages and new relocation villages. There were not many difficulties for people livelihoods in original villages until relocation as mentioned in section 3.3.1. They afforded to support their own families by doing farming, gardening, tourism and small scale livelihoods regarding to the river and surrounding areas of the villages. They didn't have the challenges to fulfil basic needs and schooling despite less access to transportation, education and health services. Resettlement was not consulted with local villagers. The villagers were not compensated for their lost properties for land, farms and gardens. Throughout the compensation and resettlement process there is a large lack of transparency. The villagers were not told how they would be compensated for the loss of their lands.

After relocation, there are great challenges for daily survival and income opportunities as in section 3.3.3. They have lost their access to their land, forest products, and pastures for animal raising and places for fishing and gold mining. Their new houses are not good enough and big enough for their kitchen garden and livestock breeding. Apart from loss of livelihoods, the villagers have access to education until high school with infrastructures. The rate of children sickness decreases in new villages. However, the children are attending less school in terms of difficulties of family income. In conclusion, the lives of local villagers have been impacted by the implementation of Myitsone project regarding the loss of land and livelihoods.

CHAPTER IV

THE EMERGENCE OF SOCIAL MOVEMENT ON IRRAWADY MYITSONE HYDROPOWER DAM

4.1 Introduction

This section uses resource mobilization and political opportunity theory to understand the emergence of social movement on Myitsone Hydroelectric dam. As discussed in Chapter 2, Burma has entered a democratic transition in 2010 from the authoritarian government to the civilian government (see section 2.2.3) along with economic reform. As in transition, the government faced a challenge of public demonstration about the Myitsone dam project. In that case, local communities had resisted the construction of the Myitsone dam project almost a decade under the military government. In addition to the participation of non-governmental organizations, community based organizations, political bodies and church societies, the opposition of people didn't reach to the ears of the government. Finally, the political landscape of the country was changed towards democratization. The military government was replaced by the new military-backed civilian government. All of these components were essential for a movement of challenging the Myitsone project in Burma.

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the emergence of the social movement that suspended the Myitsone project during democratic transition by using a hybrid conceptual framework of resource mobilization and political opportunity. Section 4.2 accesses local community organizing among the communities and their efforts to assess outside resources. Section 4.3 analyses the role of outside resources in strengthening the movement. Section 4.4 provides the key political opportunities that the suspension of the project in order to prove the reforms of the country. Section 4.5 analyses implications of Myitsone movement in large scale hydropower projects. Finally, section 4.6 briefly offers some conclusion of the chapter.

4.2 Local community organizing

Local community organizing is explained with four sub topics (section 1.4.1 and figure 1). The skills of local leaders in section 4.2.1, the skills of communities in section 4.2.2, organizing strategies in section 4.2.3 and the abilities of reach outside resources in section 4.2.4 are described.

4.2.1 The skills of local leaders

Generally, it is found that two types of leaders have the important roles in order to start a movement – village heads and church leaders. Both types of leaders had different roles in movements either supporting or opposing projects. As most of the villagers are Christians, churches were important to include in the opposition as the projects could threaten their stable settlement in those villages in many ways such as villagers' livelihoods, their infrastructures and relationships among the communities for many decades.

Before the villagers started opposing the Myitsone dam project, church organizers especially church pastors initiated lobbying the negative impacts of the projects among their church members as well as other related associations. They spread the information through dialog to other churches to reach a larger society as several local churches are principally associated with associations. They have various levels in organizing their churches among societies. For instance, a Baptist church in the village is one of many churches in the Myitkyina Baptist Association (MBA) as well as MBA to Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC), KBC to Myanmar Baptist Convention (MBC) and MBC to World Baptist Alliance (WBA).

A church leader from Aung Min Thar relocation village said that,

“We believed we could get the interests from others. We conducted mass prayer ceremonies at the confluence for religious reasons. So, people attended even though they didn't want to involve in myitsone issue. At least, they knew our current situation and what we will face. Otherwise, if not religious reasons, mass gathering could be so much

investigated and required permission from the government.” (Church leader, In-depth interview, June 16, 2014).

Apart from some restrictions of the government, churches normally gathered every week for worship. Hence, the position of church pastors allowed them to organize easily and to combine forces of other denominations. Interestingly in 2006, some church leaders mobilized around Myitkyina and to Kachin Communities in China for a signature campaign. However, one of the main organizers had to flee to China for personal security since the authorities consequently investigated.

A church leader from Aung Min Thar relocation village said that,

“Even we tried in 2006, we failed. But we did in 2009 with the university students. We collected the signatures from Kachin in China as well. May be, people became more aware of the project and its impacts”. (Church leader, In-depth interview, June 16, 2014).

A coordinator of community based organization said that

“One of the Roman Catholic pastors didn’t touch the new village until he died in 2013. Since the beginning, he was so active in Myitsone issue. He was the one who organized mass gatherings and signature campaign. He was the one arrested by the authorities for resisting relocation.”(Community based organization, In-depth interview, June 13, 2014)

Village heads were mostly supporting the project although they didn’t want to support the project. While the military government was in power, village heads were directly appointed from the officials. Normally, the village heads had limited power to do what they needed to work for their villages. Their normal responsibilities were to implement what the officials instructed. They usually attended meetings in town and organized meetings for villagers. While the villagers were trying to stop the project, the village heads could not be involved with the villagers since they were forbidden by the government’s orders. In the implementation process of Myitsone dam, village

heads were ordered by the officials to have signatures from the villagers to move to new villages and approve their compensation in 2009.

Among project-affected villages, all village heads generally followed the government's instruction apart from one village, Tang Hpre village. Tang Hpre village heads coordinated between the government and the villagers. When they received the objection, request, and appeal letters from their villagers, they corresponded with the villagers and submitted the documents to the government officials on behalf of the whole village. In the relocation case, Tang Hpre village heads did not submit the consent of relocation forms as the government required. Instead, they proposed an opposition letter with villagers' signatures. Consequently, the government met the villagers and offered them compensation for crops, long term plants and access to electricity and water as well as better housing than previous. The officials told them they had to move since their villages was effected areas. The villagers didn't accept. Between both sides, the village heads negotiated with the officials for better compensation on behalf of villagers.

The villagers from former Tang hpre village said that,

“Our village heads realized that they would have disadvantage in their position due to our opposition. But, they had been working hard for us and our land. They encouraged us when we were depressed about our situation. They promised that they would negotiate with the government to have a better result for us.” (Focus group discussions, Aung Min Thar village, June 28, 2014)

One Mali yang villager said that,

“Tanghpre village heads stood with their villagers. We didn't mean that our village heads were not. They also didn't want this project. But they just didn't know how to deal with the government.” (Focus group discussion, Mali yang village, June 14, 2014)

4.2.2 The skills of communities

Since a water station to measure the water level was built at Tang Hpre village in 2002, some of the church pastors understood that the government was going to do a plan within their village. Then, KANSAI Company surveyed around the triangle areas. The villagers first thought the survey team was a group of tourists. None of the villagers had the ability to guess what the government was planning for their land.

The church leaders said that

“We got the documents about the dam at the restaurants. They left it. We thought it was intentionally left. May be they forgot. We discussed among village elders and church committee at church. We told the villagers about the information but to keep as confidential. At the beginning, we had no idea about what to do about that document.”(Aung Min Thar village, In-depth interviews, June 16 & July 7, 2014)

“Our villagers couldn’t understand about the project especially older people. But they realized that if the dam is planned, they have to move. We cannot believe just because of the documents. But there is a water station in Tanghpre village.”(Aung Min Thar village, In-depth interviews, June 16 & July 7, 2014)

Starting from the church leaders, they delivered the news to a larger community which was local churches and its related associations in Myitkyina. Church leaders said that they showed the papers to them and talked about the possible plans mapped for their land and the heart of their culture. They especially shared their opinions to other local churches from the confluence’s surrounded villages. Maliyang relocation villagers said that

“We were not aware and knowledgeable as Tanghpre villagers. Even we heard that, we didn’t know what to do.” (Maliyang relocation villagers, Focus group, June 14, 2014)

*“We hadn’t heard about lack of environmental impact assessment and social impact assessment. We didn’t understand the meaning of those.”
(Maliyang relocation villagers, Focus group, June 14, 2014)*

On 1st February 2004, the project affected villagers led by Tang hpre villagers sent an appeal letter to the Northern regional commander Kyaw Win asking him to halt the dam projects in Myitsone while the project was still planning. Sending an official letter, there was no one who could write in Burmese so they hired a translator into Burmese from Kachin.

Aung Min Thar villagers said that

“When we first tried to write a letter, we wrote as we knew. To send the government office, there is a procedure in writing. None of us can’t write as an official way. We asked to someone who worked at the government office. But we didn’t mention the name.”(Aung Min Thar village, focus group, June 17, 2014)

Throughout the movement process, the local villagers involved in the opposition, on the other hand, they were struggling for their lives due to relocation. They suffered the chasing of the military authorities in dislocation and unfair compensation. But they resisted as much as they could. In October 2009, a women’s group from Tang Hpre village strongly assured that they didn’t want Myitsone while the government and project partners were holding a meeting with the villagers.

A former chairman of a church based organization said that,

“I personally appreciated the struggle of the villagers especially Tanghpre villagers and their pastors. Even we rejected to be involved in their opposition, they still opposed for their land. They organized the other effected villagers to involve by resisting dislocation.”(Chairman of a church based organization, In-depth interview, July 1, 2014)

4.2.3 Organizing strategies

The marginalized communities, mostly Kachin people in project areas, basically opposed building the dams at the confluence area. Generally, their organizing strategies were a mass gathering for prayer services for stopping the dam, sending appeal letters to the authorities, sending open letters to organizations, signature campaign against the project, and encouraging the villagers for resisting dislocation.

When Tang Hpre villagers unpredictably heard the information about the project, they realized that their lives could be changed due to the progress of project implementation. They thought that the more the project plan was being confirmed, the more unsafe their stable situation was. They correspondingly assumed that they didn't have the abilities to break the government plan. Likewise, they could be threatened as just minority ethnics and village dwellers under the military regimes. Until 2003, the project plan was not confirmed. However, the villagers were all in fear of the unforeseeable plans of the Burmese government. Also, the negative impacts of the project to people lives and related problems to the environment made local residents oppose the project.

Between 2003 and 2004, leaders of village churches from Tang hpre village informed cultural organizations, religious groups, and local ethnic armed groups in Kachin State about the projects since those groups were responsible to protect the cultural sites and historical places of the local people. They described about what was going to happen possibly and how they could protect their villages and the historical places.

A church leader said that

“The response of those organizations was not quite encouraging to us. They thought that we were going to get benefit from the projects. We would get the compensation and the transportation will be good. Our worries were not important to them. We realized that this opposition had to do ourselves even though we had no skills and impossible”.
(Church leader, In-depth interview, July 7, 2014)

Being ignored from their believed societies, the effected communities committed to withstand for their places. On 1st February 2004, they officially sent a letter to the Northern Regional Commander for halting the dam project before it was officially signed on the contract. Meanwhile, Tang hpre villagers also sent an official letter to the Kachin Consultative Body⁴ and local armed groups which had agreed to a ceasefire with the Military government. Reasons in the appeal letter to halt the project were the future submerging of their cultural places and historical memories as well as possibilities of losing their livelihoods and relocation.

The villagers said that,

“We got a response from Kachin Independence Organization, but not with action. Apart from KIO, there was no clue from National Democratic Arms of Kachin (NDAK) and La Sang Awng Wa group. The Burmese government became more developed their implementation in 2005.” (Villagers, Focus group, June 16, 2014)

However, local protesters still dispersed the information of project’s impacts to local churches, religious leaders and community based organizations.

The villagers from Aung Min Thar village said that,

“Mostly, we mobilized the people thorough churches because our society is very instituted in churches. Under the military, churches are the most suitable places to organize the people.” (Villagers, Focus group interviews, June 2014)

Meanwhile, Tang Hpre church leaders informed to the church leaders of surrounding villages so they could consequently deliver a similar message to their church members at their gatherings. However, villages from Waimaw township were not active in raising their voices at once since they were difficult to communicate outside their village. But their church leaders were involved in the mobilization with other church leaders and followed what they did.

⁴ Kachin Consultative Body is known as Wunpawng Mungbawng Rapdaw in Kachin Language.

Villagers from Maliyang village said that,

“Our church pastors told us about the project and the movement of Tanghpre villagers. Firstly, we didn’t get involve. But, our lives were affected as the project was implementing. We often involved signature campaigns and mass gatherings.”(Maliyang villager, focus group, June 14, 2014)

When the villagers were asked about participation of men and women among villagers, they said that

“Older people and children didn’t involve in our activities. The participation of men was more than women because women were struggling for their daily work. But women in TangHpre village raised their voices.”(Two relocated villages, focus groups, June 12-28, 2014)

On 28th September 2009, representatives from project affected villages sent an open letter to the State Peace and Development Council of Kachin State as Figure (4) depicts. The letter was mainly stating their unwillingness for the project and the natural disaster of the Ayeyarwady River.

According to the villagers,

“Our petition was not a concerned issue of ethnic armed groups. But we kept sending the letter to the Burmese government and those who can help. What we could do most was only sending the letter.” (Aung Min Thar village, Focus group discussion, June 28, 2014)

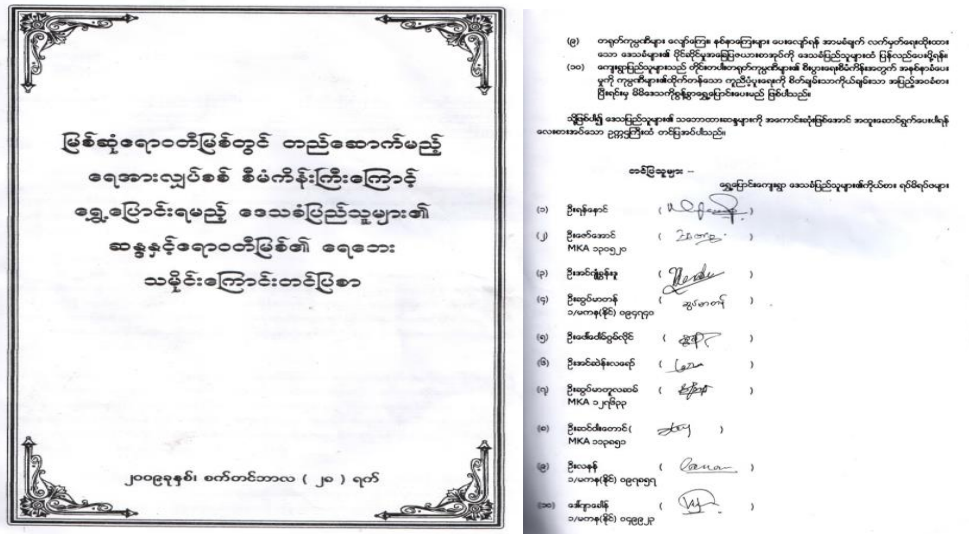


Figure 5 Appeal letter from project-affected villagers to the Burmese Government: Copied to SPDC in Myitkyina, Waimaw and Njang Yang Townships

On 17 April 2010, a series of small bomb blasted in different project sites in which most bombs were exploded in Tanghpree village. Tanghpree villagers and village heads were inspected by the authorities for the bomb case since they opposed the project. Since then, they were gradually moving to a new village since the bomb blast happened.

Villagers from former Tanghpree village said that

“Since the bomb blast, the villagers were afraid to stay in the village. So we decided to form ‘Zinlum’ to help the villagers for still resisting relocation. It also meant that we didn’t want the project even most of villagers moved to new village.”(Aung Min Thar relocation Villagers, Focus group, June 17&28, 2014)

According to an interview with a member of Mungchyng Rawt Jat group, Tanghpree villagers formed “Zinlum group” aimed to help those who still remained in the old village. The group arranged daily transportation for children to school in order to encourage the parents’ resisting the projects. With the financial aids from one of the local NGOs, they also helped the villagers for their livelihoods such as supporting pig raising at home.

There were some constraints in organizing among local communities. According to interviews with Aung Min Thar relocation villagers or former Tang hpre villagers, they didn't have a significant problem in terms of participation in opposition in community level among their native villagers even though they had various personal cases. Since almost native villagers were the same religion and ethnic, they had common value of their places, traditional practices and their culture. Those factors were their strength in doing their opposition and basically followed the paths of their community leaders.

However, Burmese migrants became a restraint in the case of resisting dislocation and organizing for their movement. Tension between the villagers and migrants made the native villagers to move a new village. The migrants, who arrived for the construction of the pagoda at the confluence and temporarily settled at tanghpre village, were counted the agreement of relocation.

Original Tanghpre villagers in Aung Min Thar village said that,

“Burmese migrants got the best places at the new village. They didn't own the house in old village. So they moved first as soon as the government told to move.” (Aung Min Thar relocation villagers, Focus group, June 28, 2014)

“We had to resettle for sure but we still protested relocation. On the other hand, we worried about the place to stay in future. We didn't believe that the government will leave the places for us.” (Aung Min Thar relocation villagers, Focus group, June 28, 2014)

4.2.4 Abilities to reach out to outside resources

Generally, the villagers cooperated with local churches and civil societies to reach out to outside resources. Firstly, they collaborated with the village heads to send the letters to the government. They sent the letters via their village heads to the government office. In order to reach the Kachin ceasefire groups, the villagers easily sent the letters to the KIO office at Shatapru quarter in Myitkyina. The villagers supposed that those groups could negotiate to the military government and help them.

When the villagers organized mass gatherings, they approached local churches. They sent invitation letters to churches for participating in their mass gathering. Besides, they came close to youth through university Christian fellowship and youth leaders in local churches.

The church leaders exchanged information with local non-governmental organizations and community based organizations since they didn't know how to reach international advocacy. With limited opportunity in domestic politics, the villagers started connecting many exiled communities such as Kachin ethnic communities in China to force the Chinese government to discontinue the project in 2009. They also sent a letter to Kachin communities in China, Thailand, and around the world with the help of CBOs in Myitkyina. They didn't know how to use the internet or how to publish articles so that they cooperated with them in order to produce some articles such as a social impact assessment of their livelihoods.

4.3 Outside Resources

The involvement of outside resources is mainly verified in three reasons. Supporters are mentioned in section 4.2.1, legal consultancy in section 4.2.2, media in section 4.2.3 and scientific knowledge using in opposition in section 4.2.4. Regarding this analysis, the significance of outside resources is studied chronologically.

4.3.1 Supporters

During this long progress of movement, only local communities couldn't stand and oppose the government's plan. Local communities emerged from this opposition and discovered how their opposition could be supported and effective in terms of their aims to stop the project. For these main reasons, they didn't want their cultural sites and historic places to disappear in future. They spoke up over their disagreement on the project as often as they could while their lives settling in their old places over several decades were changing. The movement included non-governmental organizations, community based organizations, church organizations, political groups and individual artists with their individual interests. Opponents to the project variously stood their objections either publicly or cautiously with their efforts and

applicable resources. They utilized their resources - funding, coordinating, media coverage and legal supports even though some of their supports failed. Their participation was after the government had already signed an agreement on building the dams with China Power Investment Corporation in 2007. Regarding the support of actors' involvement, the connection of movement became broad and turned into a public affair.

Church societies

Local churches basically provided a venue and unforeseen needs when the church leaders from project-affected villages were holding mass gathering activities for many times. Since the surrounding villages were forced to move out from old villages, churches organized mass prayer gatherings in early October 2009 including not only project affected villages but also various religions at the confluence. . In total over 300 people participated with their main objective being to cancel the project and not be relocated. Cooperating with church pastors, University Christian Fellowship in Myitkyina (UCF) also coordinated with its youth for public prayer gatherings in October 2009. A signature campaign for petition against Myitsone project came because of their cooperation to send the Chinese Government.

A youth leader, a former UCF member, from Myitkyina said that

“Not all of us signed on a petition letter. Some of us had the dilemma to involve and showed our names on behalf of our organizations and churches. If they signed, their mother churches would have been already included. Some of them couldn't decide to mention their names for that reasons. At that time, churches were strictly monitored by the authorities since churches were so organized within Kachin societies.”(Youth leader, In-depth interview, June 25, 2014)

“Youth leaders provided a space for gathering and gathered all their youth. Even though some of them didn't sign, at least they realized how much the project will affect our lives and culture. But the organizers

finally collected hundreds of signatures from local people and Kachin people from China.”(Youth leader, In-depth interview, June 25, 2014)

“The reason why they collected from China was all Kachin from Burma and China didn’t want to build the dam at the confluence. They thought that the participation of Kachin in China could somewhat pressure to Chinese Government since the Burmese government didn’t care of local people lives.”(Youth leader, In-depth interview, June 25, 2014)

The supports from overseas had been one of the pressures to the project implementation. The Kachin National Organization (KNO) based in the UK raised this issue to the international media as they had advantages of using media freedom by protesting at the Burmese Embassies around different countries including UK, USA, Australia and Japan to cancel the dam (Kachin news, 2010). Objection letters were send to the People’s Republic of China’s Embassies although there was no response from Embassies of China. The news was broadcast and concerns by the international communities were voiced, pressuring the Burmese government to stop the project.

NGOs

It is discovered that Kachin Development Networking Group (KDNG) was the first local NGO involved in the seven dams’ project. The organization utilized its networking among Kachin NGOs including in Burma and abroad. It was coordinating the negative impacts of Myitsone project by producing the reports among Kachin civil societies including local ethic armed groups. Its main strength was advocating Myitsone issue to domestic and international communities in order to stop Myitsone dam and other six dams. It has been monitoring the development issues including Myitsone project since 2004.

A member of KDNG said that,

“Our group (KDNG) had been lobbying to KIO to do development programs for Kachin State has so rich in natural resources. We had been monitoring about extracting natural resources in Kachin State such as logging in Hugawng region and jade mining in Hpakant Region. But some of leaders in KIO were not quite aware of development and their roles. They thought that politics and development were separate subjects. But Myitsone was very important for Kachin people so that they (KIO) started involving in Myitsone issue with its political role.” (KDNG, In-depth interview, July 4, 2014)

For Myitsone project, KDNG’s main strategies were supporting local villagers for their movement and advocating environmental and social impacts of the Myitsone project both internationally and nationally. In 2007, the group published a report titled, “Damming the Ayeyarwady” in order to raise aware that the Myitsone issue was not only a matter of Kachin people but also to the whole Burma. The report was based on impacts on the ground. Furthermore, in 2009 another report monitored the process of Myitsone project titled “Resisting the Flood.” All of their publications were in English language in order to raise international advocacy. KDNG published not only issues of Myitsone but also logging and mining of Kachin State on its website www.kdng.com. Its publications have built international support.

One LNNGO, based in Kachin State, involved in advocating Myitsone opposition by doing their organizational projects. It has been working for rural development projects in Kachin State since the 1990s. Their main objective is to strengthen the capacity of rural people. As the organization really focused on rural people, it trained youth and adults to work for their communities. It has really focused on the Myitsone issue since 2006. But they really avoided confronting with the authorities because civil societies were strictly limited under the military government. They didn’t involve directly in talking about the Myitsone project. Their way of giving awareness of the Myitsone issue was using as an example in environmental issues during the training. Having discussion and knowledge about community development during the training, the participants realized the important of the

Myitsone Projects. They had commitments to deliver their realization of the Myitsone plan to their respected communities.

A senior staff said that,

“During 2006, all NGOs’ programs were strictly controlled by the government, even a curriculum of training. We needed permission from the government. Myitsone issue was one of the most difficult issues to discuss in terms of community development since it was quite important cooperation with China and Burma. And the project site was related to both Burmese government and KIO.” (Senior staff, In-depth interview, July 3, 2014)

However, the real situation on the ground didn’t give community organizers the chance to work freely. Since 2007, some of them worked on community development projects in rural areas. Some could tactfully mobilize without clashing with officials. They projected development plans with the communities. They avoided criticism of Myitsone project as it was a sensitive issue in Kachin State at the moment. Though, some bravely talked about their projects. It created their projects to be focused by the officials. Consequently, not only community organizers but also the training coordinators were investigated by government officials and they signed not to clash with the government and talk about the political issue in their development projects.

A senior staff said that,

“It was not the only inquiry from the authorities. In 2010, we were inspected for a bomb blast case. I was called to the police office in the middle of the night and asked who can be the bombers. Not only me, were some of religious pastors who involved in mass gatherings and signature campaign called in different times. But luckily, we were not detained at police office for a long time.” (Director of a LNGO, In-depth interview, July 3, 2014)

Moreover, a NGO, mainly works for advocacy and media based in Yangon, started involving in myitsone issue since 2009. One of the coordinators from that NGO was interested in the issue of natural disaster . Along with the disaster issue, Myitsone issue was negatively popular in Kachin State. It engaged their partner civil societies by using a media tool by producing a documentary film and a book “Don’t Want to Miss the Ayeyarwady ”. These books were distributed to civil societies.

Moreover, two non-governmental organizations in Kachin State supported the villagers for their livelihoods especially for resisting relocation since 2010. Because of their support, the local villagers could resist dislocation and partly recover their livelihoods since they were not allowed to enter the project sides where they used to depend on.

Community based organizations/Civil societies

The community based organization in Myitkyina was taking the role of coordinating between the villagers and outsiders who were concerned on the dam issues since 2006. It delivered the reports and information from local villagers to civil societies. It prepared for the travel and accommodation arrangements for outsiders and interviews with local villagers due to their interests. It focused to make the Myitsone issue a national issue.

According to an interview with the coordinator,

“I used my name because mentioning our organization was dangerous at that time.” (Community based organization, In-depth interview, June 13, 2014)

“Throughout 2009, I coordinated a weekly small forum for civil societies in Kachin State. We discussed how they were going to step forward in movement. In 2010, we arranged an exposure trip for project-affected villagers mainly the leaders to Thailand in order to get the ideas that mobilized their movement.” (Community based organization, In-depth interview, June 13, 2014)

A member of KDNG said that there was an awareness raising night campaign about the environmental impacts of the Myitsone project in mid-2006 since opponents couldn’t oppose its objection and protest publicly.

“The activists distributed the pamphlets, posters and flyers everywhere in Myitkyina. The signs of “No dam” and “No Myitsone” were everywhere. Because of police investigation, the campaign didn’t last very long.” (A member of KDNG, In-depth interview, July 4, 2014)

Since the artists, experts and environmentalist involved particularly for this movement, the movement became more popular in the public. As spotlight people, they were able to use their celebrity position making this issue to the public. Production their art works to the public was a successful tool of them. According to artists in Yangon,

“We were involvded in this movement not only because of the dam projects but also our childhood memories closely with the river.” (Artists, In-depth interviews, July 22- 29, 2014)

Several artists were displaying a series of Exhibition called “Art of Watershed 1, 2, 3” in Yangon during February and March in 2011. They focused on their exhibition because the exhibition could clearly show the real situation of along the Ayeyarwady River and people lives without talking Myitsone project was not good for people in Burma.

“At the exhibitions, photos that showed relationship between people and along the river were shown as well as “Mali-Nmai Zup” photo story book.” (Artists, In-depth interviews, July 22- 29, 2014)

A week before project suspension, one of the civil society organizations ororganized a mass seminar called “Natural Environmental and Burma”. There were experts, journalists, novelists, cartoonists, environmentalist involved the event. The seminar mainly talked about “20 Questions for Ayeyarwady” by U Win Myo Thu from Eco Dev which also provided the supports to effected villagers. The reason that they did this seminar was to prove that myitsone project will mostly give negative consequences to Burma in the variety of economic, environmental and political perspectives.

According to a novelist from Yangon,

“Those questions are really effective. They highlighted profit beneficiaries, economic benefit, 7% of project profit, water in and out controller and method, climate change, natural disaster, clear energy, require electricity or building, fisheries, national nutrient development, biodiversity, pure water distribution, human rights violation, equality and justice and natural resource curse.” (Novelist, In-depth Interview, July 25, 2014)

“Three of us raised international advocacy by talking “The Life of Ayeyarwady ” at Singapore in 2011. Even after suspension, we organized “A Stage Script for Literature Talk” of Ayeyarwady River prepared by Ayeyarwady Forever group since the project was not totally cancelled.” (Novelist, In-depth Interview, July 25, 2014)

In October 2011, the art exhibition called “The Sketch of a River” was conducted for three days in Yangon organized by the Green Hearts Conservation Group. The exhibition was to do awareness raising of the environmental damages affiliated with people lives especially to highlight the upstream river’s damages to people who live along the Ayeyarwady River and to have a strong participation from civil societies including politicians and media sector who could pressure the policy of the government.

The organizer of the exhibition said that

“The exhibition highlighted the possible impacts of Myitsone Hydropower dam. The issues of gold mining, logging and other environmental damaged activities along with the project were shown. It was full photos, paintings and cartoons about Ayeyarwady River. We also produced Sketch of a River the Ayeyarwady”.” (Graphic designer, In-depth interview, July 22, 2014)

“To create this event, we had been working since 2009. Our initial purpose was to create our own arts. But when the Myitsone issue occurred, we changed our purpose. We were travelling along the Ayeyarwady River to survey the situation of the river. Due to their survey trip, the Burmese and Chinese governments have built so many bridges on the river without safe technology. Those infrastructures have obstructed the water flow. Consequently, lives of people have been affected due to the destruction of the river flow.” (Graphic designer, In-depth interview, July 22, 2014)

During the exhibition, pro-democracy leader Daw Aung San Su Kyi exhorted the government to prevent the adverse consequences of the projects by reviewing the project. She called for the people to be united regarding the Ayeyarwady River to get a positive result for the country.

Political groups

Political bodies in Kachin State officially started to raise their voices after an MOU for Myitsone and Chibwe dams was signed in 2006. Publicly on May 21, 2007, the Kachin National Consultative Assembly sent an appeal letter to General Than Shwe to halt the project. Besides, since the government was gradually mentioning their updating activities of Hydropower projects, the Chairman of Kachin Independence Organization sent a letter to General Than Shwe and to Chinese authorities in mid-2007. Both groups involved because the project areas especially the confluence is the identity of Kachin People and the origin of the Ayeyarwady River. Especially for KIO, another reason was building the dam will be consequently related to the control of the upstream areas by the Chinese and Burmese government so that this project was not only for the negative impacts but also for its political role in Kachin State.

According to a spokesperson of the KIO,

“KIO sent the letters many times. KIO also spoke with Northern military commanders (U Kyaw Win & U Ong Myint) through dialogue

even though we didn't tell the public. Our main reason was to build the other dams in other places but not at the confluence. It affects Kachin culture and local people.”(A spoke person of KIO, In-depth interview, June 22, 2014)

“But we didn't get any definite answer from the Northern military commanders and General Than Shwe. Instead, U Ong Myint told the company to survey including our regions. We sent our soldiers with EIA team within our region.”(A spoke person of KIO, In-depth interview, June 22, 2014)

By holding a national referendum for the Constitution in the country in 2008, the country was preparing the way to democratic transition. The military government intended to hold elections in 2010 so that the opportunities of the political system would become more open than before. Since political prisoners were released, politicians played the Myitsone issue along with their political stands. Burma's pro-democracy leader, Daw Aung San Su Kyi, called for a re-assessment of the Myitsone project to the project holders (Watts, 2011). As she raised her voice, this movement was recognized worldwide. The chances for support were improved as the country opened towards democratization.

4.3.2 Legal consultancy

Even though the opponents were against of the projects, their support was less active in confronting the legal perspective. Due to in-depth interviews with church leaders, the opposition once tried to bring the Myitsone issue to the court at the Kachin State level for the reasons of violating their cultural heritage and ethnic identity in 2006. They had resource persons who helped them to confront this issue at the court. This case was intended to increase their opposition to the government and to give the information to the people.

Church leaders from Aung Min Thar relocation village said that,

“We didn't believe the judiciary system of the country. But, at least, we showed our opposition. Two Burmese lawyers helped us to bring the

case. We need five various representatives from various organizations such as culture and tradition. We had already asked them to come. But three of them didn't come and we failed before we confronted in the court. Consequently, the two lawyers lost their careers.”(Church leaders, in-depth interviews, June 16 – July 12, 2014)

As the country situation improving in democratization, the chances for movement became more flexible than previously. On the one hand, some LNGOs and CBOs gave the ideas of legal confrontation in the villagers' movement. However, the villagers didn't attempt to confront legally as their movement. The villagers were receiving information regarding land issues and human rights mainly after the suspension from civil societies.

4.3.3 Media

The international media and related organizations were not only spreading the dam project news but also raising the environmental awareness regarding to Myitsone dam while media freedom in Burma was restricted under the military government. Seven cascade hydropower dams were mentioned in The Ayeyarwady online news source and the Guardian online since 2008. Burma Rivers Network and the International Rivers Organization also published online publications about the projects including the briefing of Myitsone Dam, Environmental impact assessment of BANCA and Independent expert review of EIA. All of these helped raise international awareness.

Moreover, one particular journal, Weekly Eleven, had been describing the river related issues such as the quality of water; water shed areas and transportation along the river. Since 2007, it highlighted the environmental issues as the water flows along the river and its related people's livelihoods. However, it did not particularly mention the dam projects in the upstream area. Since 2009, mainly Weekly Eleven and 7 Days journals included the news of environmental aspects for the Ayeyarwady River more frequently. People became more concerned about the river along with the projects' impacts.

Since media freedom was relaxed during transition, the tracks of the news were changed. The news journals within the country frequently mentioned the news of Myitsone dam and the movement of opponents. They continuously used the name of the Myitsone project. The articles were gradually allowed to criticize the government plan. Relocation of local villagers and unfair compensation were stated. The media challenged the new government as the contract of the previous military government and CPI should be transparent to the media and the international community as a democratic government. However, while media freedom was eased at the national level, there was not much difference in media freedoms in Kachin state where the project sites are situated. There were no newspapers journals published from Kachin State until the Myitkyina newspaper in 2013. Even though the expression of media was weak in order to reach the public, the participation of public has been not only for the information from the media but also their cultural value of the Ayeyarwady River which gives them their livelihoods and the national identity of the country.

4.3.4 Scientific knowledge

The participants of the Myitsone social movement have so much concerned on the scientific knowledge of the project in their opposition. Firstly, local villagers got the documents at the confluence restaurant which contained the overall data of the possible project construction. Some NGOs such as KDNG produced a report about environmental impacts by doing research around the project sites and with social impact assessment cooperating with local villagers. They researched and surveyed the Myitsone project and compared with Chinghkrang dam and Washawng dam in Kachin State- already broken because of flooding and dams on the Mekong River (KDNG, 2007). Some opponents used the information from Burma Rivers Network and the International River Network when they were advocating the harmful impacts of Myitsone project. Furthermore, the civil societies from lower Burma were the main opponents who highlighted scientifically proven to the media and the public. In the exhibitions or seminar or workshops, the experts such as botanist, environmentalists raised up their technological knowledge about damming the river and its related damages.

4.4 Political Opportunities

A prospect of political situation has shaped this project since the project was planned until it was halted. Transition of political situation has opened several opportunities regarding to general transition and some specific prospects related to Myitsone Hydropower Movement. This section is divided into two sub-topics. Section 4.4.1 provided the importance of regional politics to explain the different opportunity in Kachin State. Section 4.4.2 mainly clarified specific political opportunities in the context of general opportunities.

4.4.1 Importance of Regional Politics

In addition to intimidating the natural environment and people lives, this project plan distressed the fragile political environment among local ethnic armed groups in Kachin State and the military government. It can be found that the military government used this project politically and strategically for their benefits. In Myitsone's case, the role of local armed groups in relationship with the central government made different stands on political objectives during the ceasefire period. The government was using Kachin rebel groups for the implementation of the Myitsone project by playing on its political relationship with them.

On 1st June 2006, the Northern Regional Commander had informed the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) and the National Democratic Army-Kachin (NDAK) to survey the project sites for Chinese companies before the MOU was signed in late 2006. This was not for consultation with the Kachin ethnic armed groups. Prior to the political transition in 2010, the military government also offered all Kachin ethnic armed groups to stand as Boarder Guard Forces of the military government. Apart from the KIO, two groups had accepted the government's offer - NDAK which led by Mr. Zahkung Ting Ying turned into Boarder Guard Force (BGF) and Lasang Awng Wa armed group became Pyi Thu Tsist. Both groups had been prioritized for the government in cooperation with the government from rebel groups.

The government allowed both groups to take economic benefits from this project. The government used them to confront with local villagers in relocation case. Both groups were organizing the opponents to sell their lands to them for the reason

that they had to move despite their resistance. Some of the villagers believed that they had been once fighting for the Kachin people so that they sold their land to them. Both groups advantaged by doing gold mining. Some distrusted them as they turned to cooperating with the Burmese government and they kept resisting relocation. Not only doubts and uncertainty but also untrusted attitude occurred among the villagers and local armed groups.

In contrast with the Boarder Guard force and Pyi Thu Tsist, the Kachin Independence Organization stands for its role as the only left Kachin ethnic armed group. The KIO was against the project for the benefits of the people and their political role in Kachin State. Relationship between the KIO and the central government played one of the key steps in this movement. When the KIO was informed by the Northern Military Commander of the survey, it didn't reveal their opinion for the project. Since the KIO publicly announced that the Myitsone project to be stopped in 2007, the government was not taking the concern of the KIO's stand for its political role and ignored its ethnic people. According to a member of BANCA team, the environmental impact assessment team including Chinese and Burmese scientists who surveyed in KIO-controlled areas for the projects. It was after the ground breaking ceremony of Myitsone and Chibwe dams. Representatives from the KIO accompanied the assessment team in KIO areas.

Among various reasons to resume the civil war in Kachin state since 9th June 2011, the Myitsone project stood as one of the important reasons to fuel fighting between the KIO and the government during the democratic transition in the country. The reason that the Myitsone issue contributed towards resuming fighting was because the KIO had requested many times for the project to be halted without answer. In their letter, the KIO only asked for the building of the dams to be done at different parts of Kachin State but not at the confluence. Having disregarded these requests, the tension among both groups became higher and fighting was breaking out over Kachin State especially in the KIO controlled areas which lie mostly along the Chinese boarder. Due to civil conflict in Kachin State, transportation for construction materials couldn't be transported from China to project sites so that the construction was stopped. It can be considered that the suspension of Myitsone was before the

President's decision to halt the project on 30th September 2011. In this case, the new government took the advantage of the civil conflict by suspending the projects.

4.4.2 Specific political opportunities in the context of general opportunities

Burma held the national election towards democratization in 2010. Generally, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) led by former military leaders won most of the election seats. The new civilian government is trying to reform the country in politics, economics and other democratic practices although it is a slow transition. The government has released some political prisoners who were detained under the military government for political reasons. It has relatively relaxed media restrictions which is compatible with democratization. Since then, varieties of contributors have reinforced a long demonstration for stopping the Ayeyarwady Myitsone dam. This suspension was not just because of public pressure. While Burma was in transition of democratic government, public movement for the Myitsone Project became the first movement in Burma. Hence, the President suspended the project so as to show the country was really in transition.

Under the military government, Burma had been over dependence for many decades. China has been supporting the government while it was being sanctioned by the West. Hence, China had an over-influence on Burma politically and economically. As a move to reform the country, the new government, including former military leaders, wanted to mitigate the influence of China. During its transition to democratization, the opposition of the Myitsone project from the public was one of the biggest challenges to the civilian government. By taking this reason, the President halted the Myitsone hydroelectric project until 2015 which was the unexpected decision for China. Suspension was to reveal the government was the elected government and to consider the energy security of the country while one third of entire population accessed to electricity until 2013 (BBC, 2013a). As another way, Burma faced to reduce an overwhelming reliance on China when the country tried major reforms.

Politicians began raising their opposition in the Myitsone project. Having said that from politicians, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate and Burmese pro-democracy leader, Daw Aung San Su Kyi, raised her voice as a symbol of the public and her

party. She sent her personal statement to both governments on 11st August 2011. It called for a reconsideration of the Myitsone Dam for its serious impact with both environmental and social consequences. Furthermore, she attended as a guest the “The Sketch of a River” exhibition. The strength of opposition to the Myitsone Project was stronger and spread faster in the public than previously as well as the interest of public throughout the whole of Burma. To reach that stage, the semi-civilian government played her role of internationally recognized person. After from house arrest, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was the one who got the public’s trust and international communities’ concern. As she raised her voice, the movement was stronger and stronger. Suspension of the Myitsone dam gave credit to the new government from the whole world. On the one hand, it meant that the new President heard the will of people and politicians including Daw Aung San Su Kyi. After that, the sanctions from western countries were eased in some ways.

According to a local politician, the President and Parliament had challenges to prove that Burma was acting more democratically to the country and the world during transition. There was a rival between the President and the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw⁵ – Amyotha Hluttaw⁶ and Pyithu Hluttaw⁷. For the Amyotha Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw, there is a long procedure in making a decision. The public outcry about Myitsone hydroelectric project was about to be discussed in Pyi Thu Lut Daw before the President’s announcement of his decision to halt the project. Within the government, the President took the praise from the people and international communities before the legislative body made a decision. The people protested for the Myitsone dam project to be cancelled totally even though the government had to balance a relationship with China. As an elected government, the decision should have been made to cancel. It can also be considered that the suspension of the project until 2015 could be one of the hooks that the current President might consider for re-election in 2015 by lobbying for the Myitsone project as the people in Burma utterly value the Ayeyarwady River as their lifeblood river. Importantly, the issue of controlling the upstream area of the Ayeyarwady River due to dam construction by

⁵ Pyidaungsu Hluttaw is the Assembly of the Union which is made up of two houses.

⁶ Amyotha Hluttaw is House of Nationalities, a 224-seat upper house.

⁷ Pyithu Hluttaw is House of Representatives, a 440-seat lower house.

China can challenge to the national security of the country. In fact, controlling the upstream River can affect everyone along the River and the people of the country.

As a consequence of public protest, the first vice president of the new government, U Tin Aung Mint Oo, resigned in July 2012 after a year of suspension of the Myitsone project. It was assumed due to his main involvement in the Myitsone project while he was a military general not only as a chief of the Trade Council but also as a chairman of the Myanmar Economic Corporation. Apart from being the Vice President from ex-military generals, he was resisting to reform overt corruption which was related to investment deals with the Chinese. Likewise, he was supporting the continuous implementation of the Myitsone project since he was one of the powerful generals who had a closely questionable relationship with the Chinese. Having assumed, he was resigned for all of controversial deals of the military government with the Chinese for all of the ex-generals who were sitting in the Parliament. As the public accused a lack of consent for the Myitsone project, the new military-back up government put all concerns towards the resignation of the vice president as he was one of the richest former military generals.

4.5 Implications of Myitsone Hydropower dam for large scale hydropower projects in Burma

As Burma has abundant water resources, hydropower projects have been planned since the previous military government. However, the military government didn't consider its people in the decision making process of these projects. Only the government and the investors agreed to these large scale projects including the seven cascade hydropower projects in Kachin State. There was a lack of transparency and accountability during the implementation of these projects during the military government. The participation of local people was not considered as a necessary element in the projects. Impact assessments including Environmental impact and Social impact assessments had not been important as well. However, the new government has gradually considered the implications of project implementation in order to transform towards a democratic government. The government is transforming its governance to have transparency, accountability and participation since this transition. There are some increases in the implications of the government in large

scale development projects including hydropower projects since the suspension of the Myitsone project.

Suspension of the controversial Myitsone dam project has supported the transformation of the new government as paying attention to the public while the government of Burma is undertaking political, economic and administrative reforms. Movement of the public pressured the government for internal reforms in which environmental conservation has been considered in government reforms of its principles and policies in doing projects. One of the reasons is that opponents of the Myitsone project complained to the government and project partners for not considering the environmental impacts and its effects to people. Before suspension of the Myitsone project, the movement of opponents really focused on an insufficient undertaking of EIA and lack of SIA and highlighted the negative impacts for the environment along with people lives. On 30th March 2012, Burma passed the National Environmental Conservation Law to establish an integrated environmental monitoring system to develop standards for environmental quality as well as to encourage green initiatives.

In addition to the enactment of these laws, the government is empowering Ministries for their responsibilities as one of internal reforms because Ministries have to make decision as policy implication's bodies, related with large scale projects. Ministries such as the Ministry of Electric Power, the Environmental Conservation Ministry and the Myanmar Investment Commission are not strong enough to implement as an elective government. According to President U Thein Sein (Aung, 2014), the ability to implement large scale projects by the government are still challenging in the country. Ministers do not have the knowledge to manage the projects and are unaware of their responsibilities and their jobs. Lack of advanced technologies and of skillful technicians is also a challenge to the government. The value of natural resources including renewable or non-renewable resources has to be added in legal framework (Aung, 2014).

The government has basically transformed the roles of different government agencies on large scale hydropower projects after suspension of Myitsone project. As the government focuses on economic growth of the country, they welcome the foreign capital investment in large scale development projects. The Ministry of

Environmental Conservation and Forestry (MOECAAF) has become one of the important Ministries in the decision making for large scale investment projects. According to the Environmental Conservation law of 2012, the MOECAAF has duties and powers are to implement and plan environmental policies at the regional and national level particularly in conservation and control the environment. Its role in large scale projects is to determine the submission proposals of economic incentive mechanisms. Related to large scale projects, the MOECAAF has to carry out the system of environmental impact assessments (EIA) and social impact assessments (SIA) in terms of whether a project can cause a significant impact on the environment or not. Both assessments are legally required by law since the government is undergoing political reforms.

In addition, Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC), one of main ministries related with investment, is formed due to the Article 11 of Foreign Investment law of 2012. It is given the duties and powers to carry out as in Articles 12 and 13 of FIL. Its' role on large scale investment projects is to exercise the paragraph 56(b) of Foreign Investment law of 2012 with the approval of the government. MIC has the role of decision making on investment projects including domestic and international investments including the activities are permitted or prohibited, the level of foreign capital requirements and of local skillful employers in businesses. Also, MIC implements the economic activities due to the "Classification of Types of Economic Activities" related to FIL since 2013. On January 31 2013, Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) released the classification of types of economic activities in which high technology requiring large investment including hydropower projects under 49 % foreign investment can be allowed with the recommendation of the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry. Construction of large scale irrigation dam and embankment, hydropower and other heavy electricity generation economic activities will be allowed depending on the situation of Environmental Impact and Social Impact assessments.

Ministry of Electric Power (MOEP) is formed from MOEP-1 and MOEP-2 in 2012. It is mainly comprised of seven departments for electricity sector development – department of electric power, of hydropower planning, of hydropower implementation, electricity supply enterprise, hydropower generation enterprise,

Myanmar electric power enterprise and Yangon city electric supply board. Its main duties are producing sufficient supply of electricity, promoting sustainable energy, implementing the electricity production by environmental friendly ways, encourage public-private-participation in each sector of seven departments. Importantly, MOEP has a policy in requirement of EIA and SIA in hydropower plants in order to reach millennium goals.

As implications of the Myitsone movement, local communities and various factors such as NGOs, CBOs and politicians have been more involved and concerned in the development of large scale hydropower projects in Burma. They contributed in different sectors in the issues of hydropower projects since the new government also doesn't want to change much different from the previous government as most income for the government is from the large scale investment projects. They have taken a symbol of the Myitsone movement and raised their voices in the public for large scale projects including Letpadaung copper mine project, Myitsone project for cancellation and dams on Salween River. An environmental coalition of civil societies on Dam projects is growing in activities. After the Myitsone movement, and Letpadaung copper mine movement, which implied movement of Myitsone until suspension, became the biggest protest for large scale projects in Burma. Although local communities have suffered negative impacts on their lives as local communities from Myitsone project did and political opportunities were during democratic transition, the Letpadaung protesters didn't succeed as a result of the Myitsone project. Besides, as a continuous movement of the Myitsone project, the protestors from lower Burma have done a walking campaign from Yangon to the confluence where Myitsone is planned to construct in March 2014 (Ponnudurai, 2014). The campaigners called for a complete termination while China has been trying to resume the project since suspension. The marchers included former political prisoners, environmentalist, and activists from civil society organizations and local people who were interested in the campaign and from project-affected villagers of Myitsone project (Ponnudurai, 2014).

4.6 Chapter Summary

Regarding the analysis of data collection, this long movement of the Myitsone Project has emerged from the marginalized communities. It can be said that the project-affected villagers were the initiators of the movement while they were

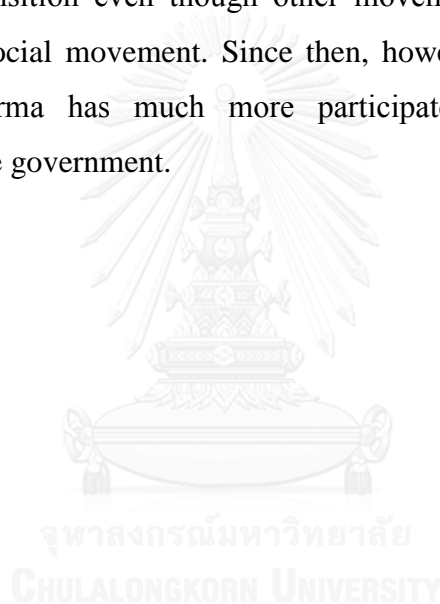
struggling for their lives. Even though native residents were lacking basic communication infrastructures, they afforded to reach outside of their communities in as many ways as possible. The main community leaders, church leaders, organized among church members as most villagers are Christians. They also extended their problems to be heard to a wider society by delivering the information through dialogue and letters. The implementation of the projects would intimidate their cultural sites, their natural environment and their livelihoods. To raise their opposition, the villagers mainly conducted mass gatherings, and sending appeal letters to the Burmese government and local ethnic armed groups. During their mobilization, they were facing social problems among their villages due to resettlement.

As the projects threatened not only the natural environment, but also the livelihoods of people who depend on the Ayeyarwady River, many people became opponents of the project. LNGOs raised awareness about the environmental issues, took coordination and networking with the villagers and supported the ideas to the villagers in their mobilization although some of their plans failed due to intervention from local authorities. Community based organizations actively supported mobilization in different ways even though they didn't mention their activities and their name under the military government. Political bodies in Kachin State also declared that they didn't want the project at the confluence and sent a letter to the top military general. The government's decision to remain silent and not respond to these letters fuelled the start of civil war broken between the military and Kachin Independent Army after the democratic transition. Significantly, movement of villagers decreased as the supporters became stronger from the whole country during political transition.

By suspending the Myitsone project, the government received the appraisal from international communities for recognizing the public's desire as a transition. As one of the advantages, the new government could rebalance the country reputation from the over-influence of China in economy and its political power. The decision to suspend the project showed that the elected government considered the people unwillingly desire for the Myitsone project and the security of the country. By releasing political prisoners and relaxing media freedoms, many politicians and media could mention and highlight the situation of the Myitsone project. The movement was

strengthened by raising their voices on the issue. They also received the political benefits for gaining the trust and interest of the public since the public was opposing the Myitsone project.

The new government has further implications of myitsone dam suspension about its rules and policies of large scale project investment. It is empowering the capacity of the ministries in order to carry out the economic growth of the country along with environmental conservation which became a concerned issue for large scale projects and businesses. The impact assessments are legally necessary in Burma. Moreover, this myitsone movement is a role model for the later movements in Burma since democratic transition even though other movements haven't advantaged the result as Myitsone social movement. Since then, however, civil societies and local communities in Burma has much more participated in large scale projects' implementation of the government.



CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusion

The Myitsone Hydropower project is one of the most environmentally concerned issues by the public in Burma. When the project was initiated in planning steps, there was no consultation with local communities by the project stakeholders. The companies only dealt with the military government. The information of the project didn't flow to local communities. They weren't acknowledged during the decision making of project planning. Local communities in project sites didn't know the government's plans even though their lives had been changed due to the impacts of the projects in the short term or long term.

Among the project affected villages, there was one village who actively organized in the village and among other villages. In organizing local communities, the roles of church leaders were significant since the beginning. Church leaders initiated this movement even though they didn't aim to start a movement but simply to support. They introduced the possible problems associated with the plans of the government to large church societies in Kachin State. In contrast, village heads involved in the relocation of the villagers and forced signatures for dislocation apart from Tanghpri village heads that negotiated with the government for better compensation and a suitable place for their villagers to relocate.

The construction of the Myitsone dam has huge negative impacts on local communities and the natural environment. Local communities have lost their original lands, and their sustainable livelihoods. Their significant cultural sites will be destroyed. Also, the dam will damage the water resources along the Ayeyarwady River in which millions of people in Burma depend for their livelihoods. In the relocation of six villages, there was a lack of adequate compensation, no transparency and unfair distribution among the villagers. The stable living, livelihoods and social lives of villagers had changed since displacement in the new villages.

When local villagers started their disagreement about the Myitsone project, they didn't have a space to raise their voice. They passed their information to civil

society and local ethnic armed groups even though they didn't have support to conduct their activities. Since the project was signed in 2006, a few NGOs and CBOs started to get involved. The flow of information was delivered and the Myitsone project became a regional issue in Kachin State. With the work of local NGOs, the Myitsone project was advocated to international NGOs focused on the river and environment. As Burma was preparing for the road to democracy, people in Burma especially from lower Burma were raising their participation for changing the political landscape from the 2010 election. Advocacy of local NGOs, CBOs and individual artists, environmentalists and activists helped this issue become a national issue. The government and companies didn't respond to the movement of local people and various actors.

Since Burma has gradually transformed its political system into democracy in 2010, there is increasing concern on the transformation of the country from Burma and international communities. To bargain the influence of China in Burma, to be acknowledged from international societies and to ease sanctions from western countries have given the space for the public outcry over the suspension of the project from the new President on 30th September 2011. Since then, large scale projects have been one of the most concerning issues in Burma during political reforms. Social movements about the Myitsone project were recognized as a symbol of movement by local communities and a number of actors who are concerned over and oppose the implementation of large scale projects in Burma.

This research has studied the factors of how local communities started their mobilization with less supports from a broad society. However, the value of the project areas and possible negative impacts on their lives stimulated their opposition. They struggled to reach out to the supporters although they were less given political opportunities under the military government. Various civil societies effectively proceeded on the movement in order to raise awareness in the public about negative impacts of the projects for people relying on the river for their lives. The opposition of local ethnic armed group in Kachin State has been one of the reasons to fire the civil conflict during democratic transition. However, given political opportunities of democratic transition including reducing China influence on Burma, proving

democratic government, considering the national identity and energy security made the President Thein Sein to suspend the Myitsone hydropower dam project.

This thesis applied the hybrid framework of resource mobilization and political opportunity. As described in section 1.4, the analysis of emergence of the Myitsone social movement, the way people participated and the concept they used in this Myitsone movement cannot be fully explained in a specific theory of social movement. Although the thesis used a hybrid framework, the movement still displayed that it's still required to understand the movement by this theory. However, this hybrid framework was the suitable framework in understanding of Myitsone movement which comprised of local community organizing, the supports of outside resources in various ways and a number of political opportunities of democratization to occur a social movement. This framework explained the context of emergence and progress of Myitsone movement until the outcome of suspension. Hence, this thesis can be implicated as social movement in strengthening the governance of large scale projects.

5.2 Recommendation for Future Research Areas

In Burma, many hydropower projects have been constructed and many are being planned mostly in ethnic states. Apart from the suspension of Myitsone project, there is no other project that has been stopped because of public protests. There is also increasing interest from the international institutions in the hydropower sectors in Burma. Hence, the areas of future research could focus on;

1. the different implications of the government between the Myitsone and Letpadung movements regarding different results during the democratic transition,
2. how the plans of hydropower development projects affect the prolonged conflicts among ethnic armed groups and the central government during democratic era and
3. how the support of international institutions can strengthen the environmental governance of the government

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