### Myitsone Dam Conflict in Myanmar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of conflict</th>
<th>Intensity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main</td>
<td>3</td>
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**Conflict Locality**
- South Eastern Asia

**Countries**
- Myanmar

**Time**
- 2007 – ongoing

**Resources**
- Fish, Agricultural / Pastoral Land, Water

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**Conflict Summary**

The construction of the Myitsone Dam along the Irrawaddy River in Myanmar has caused protests and conflict between rebel groups and government forces. The Chinese owned dam has acted as a fault line between ethnic minorities and Burmese officials, whilst also straining Sino-Burmese relationships.
Conceptual Model

Context Factors

Fish, Agricultural / Pastoral Land, Water
Conflict History

In 2005, plans to build the Myitsone hydro-electric dam along the Irrawaddy River were released by the China Power Investment Corporation (CPI) and Myanmar’s private corporation: Asia World Group (EJOLT, 2011). The effect of the dam on water accessibility, fish stocks, land degradation and livelihoods of the Kachin minority group has led to protests from both regional and international environmental and human rights organisations. In 2010, violent clashes between government forces and Kachin rebels erupted and, as a result, plans for construction were suspended until the next government elections in 2015.

Environmental and social impacts of the dam
The size of the Myitsone Dam is fashioned on the Three Gorges Dam in China and is set to become the world’s fifteenth largest dam, producing up to 13,360 MW- 90% of which will go to China (International Rivers, 2011). It is estimated that 766 km² of forest will be inundated along Mali and N’mai Hka river banks, once the dam is fully operational. These areas are sites of cultural and spiritual importance and are the cultural heartland of the Kachin-Burmese people (International Rivers, 2011). Although it was originally reported that only 2,146 people were going to be relocated, 12,000 people had already been relocated by 2011, and an estimated 20,000 people have been displaced due to violence (International Rivers, 2011). The livelihoods of many have been affected and many have been insufficiently compensated.

The dam is located 100 kilometers from a major fault line in an earthquake-prone area and should the dam break, it will flood Kachin State’s capital (KDNG, 2014). Communities downstream have protested against the ecological impacts, as the dam once complete will prevent the river sediment from enriching agriculturally productive floodplains, affecting one of Myanmar’s key rice-producing regions (Bhattacherjee, 2014). The local fishing community will also be affected, since the fish cannot swim upstream to spawning areas.

Outbreak of violence
The release of an EIA report by CPI points out the lack of engagement with affected communities and of assessment of the long lasting effects of the dam on the environment, including enhanced risks of earthquakes and flooding. As a result of the government’s lack of attention to Kachin grievances, violence erupted between the Kachin Independence Organisation and government forces in 2011, ending a seventeen year ceasefire (International Rivers, 2011). The dam has thus become an exacerbating factor of state fragility as it has renewed conflict between the Burmese army and ethnic Kachin rebels.

As a result of conflict, construction has been suspended until the end of 2015, when Burma votes on a presidential election. However, dam plans have not been abandoned and protests have ensued, while Kachin rebel groups continue to target dam infrastructure with terrorist attacks. Furthermore, suspension of construction by the Myanmar government has affected Chinese-Burmese relations, which is reflected in the 90% decrease in Chinese investment in Myanmar since 2011 (Bhattacherjee, 2014).
Resolution Efforts

The violence which erupted as a result of the impact of the dam following dam construction led to a government held workshop in 2011 with ministers, Chinese investors, and NGOs to discuss the hydropower projects on the Irrawaddy (International Rivers, 2011). The government also initially engaged with regional NGOs, such as the Kachin Development Networking Group and stakeholders in search of a solution, however, little more has been done. Protests have since been held locally and nationally with the help of Burmese-based NGOs, such as the Burma Rivers Network (EJOLT, 2011). Public figure and formally exiled politician, Aung San Suu Kyi, has also helped to mobilise international awareness about the dam and the impact of the dam on the environment and peace (EJOLT, 2011).
### Intensities & Influences

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<th>Intensities</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International / Geopolitical Intensity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human Suffering</td>
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**INFLUENCES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environmental Influences</th>
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<tr>
<td>Societal Influences</td>
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**Diplomatic Crisis**

Diplomatic crisis involving non-violent tools such as economic sanctions

**Violent Conflict**

Yes

**Salience with nation**

National

**Mass displacement**

Less than 100,000 and less than 10% of the country’s population are displaced within the country.

**Cross Border Mass Displacement**

No

### Resolution Success

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<th>Resolve of displacement problems</th>
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<td>Displacement continues to cause discontent and/or other problems.</td>
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**Reduction in geographical scope**

There has been no reduction in geographical scope.

**Increased capacity to address grievance in the future**

There is no increased capacity to address grievances in the future.

**Grievance Resolution**

Grievances have been partially addressed.

**Causal Attribution of Decrease in Conflict Intensity**

The decline in intensity can be explained purely by the decline of the environmental stressor.
Entry Points for Resilience and Peace Building

Social inclusion & empowerment
The Burmese government held a workshop with ministers, Chinese investors, and NGOs to discuss the project, and has engaged with regional NGOs. However, no concrete steps have been taken.

Promoting social change
International awareness campaigns about the impact of the dam on the environment and peace have been mobilized.

Resources and Materials

References with URL
KDNG (2014).

Further information
https://factbook.ecc-platform.org/conflicts/myitsone-dam-myanmar