



Conflict Factsheet

Salween River Dam Conflict in Myanmar

Type of conflict

Main

Intensity

3

Conflict Locality

South Eastern Asia

Time

2013 –ongoing

Countries

Myanmar, Thailand, China

Resources

Fish, Biodiversity, Agricultural / Pastoral Land, Water



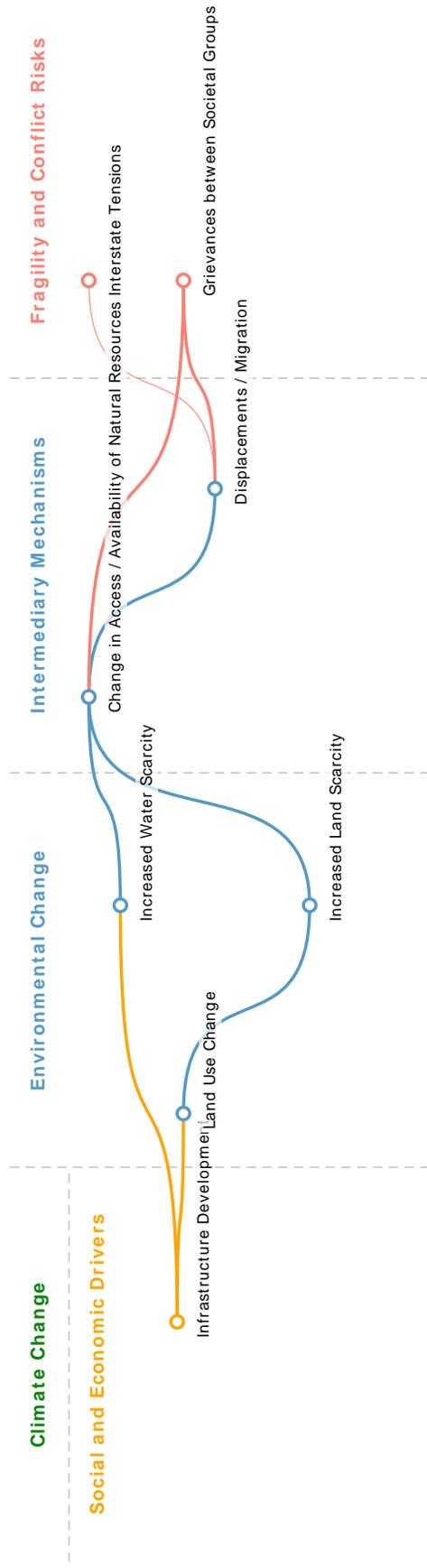
Livelihood
insecurity
and migration

Conflict Summary

Myanmar confirmed the approval of six dam projects for the Salween River in 2013. These hydro-electric dams are to be built in conflict zones currently destabilised by civil war between independence groups and the Burma Army. The dams have further destabilised conflict areas, causing a flow of refugees across borders.



Conceptual Model



Context Factors



Fish, Biodiversity, Agricultural / Pastoral Land,
Water

History of Conflict
Unresponsive Government



Resolution Efforts

No conflict resolution process.

Case Study

In 2013, plans for six hydro-electric power dams for the Salween River were approved. These projects are moving forward in places where conflict between ethnic resistance forces and the Burmese Army exists ([International Rivers, 2013](#)). The dams have become a fracture line for violent skirmishes between these forces and have displaced thousands - some of whom have crossed the border into Thailand and China. The projects are shrouded in secrecy, and it is difficult to know the actual extent of the damage of these dams to the environment or to human security.

The importance of the Salween river

The Salween River is 2,800 Km long and originates in the Himalaya Mountains, flowing through China's Yunnan province into Burma and Thailand down to the Andaman Sea ([Salween Watch, 2014](#)). It is one of the last international free-flowing rivers in the world. The river is home to at least thirteen ethnic groups and boasts rich biodiversity, which sustains the livelihoods of thousands with fishing and cross border trade ([FAO, 2011](#)). The dams are being planned and constructed jointly between Chinese corporations, Thailand's EGAT International Co., Ltd. and Burmese investors ([Salween Watch, 2014](#)).

Handling the impact of the dams

Some of these dams will affect Thai and Chinese communities, either by the flow of refugees across borders, or, by the physical impacts of the dam on water and land access. Although there has been some effort by Thai authorities to include public participation in dam development, there has been no attempt in Myanmar and little attempt in China. Environmental impact assessments are secretive, and construction of some dams has started without public notification ([Salween Watch, 2014](#)). Recent reports by activists and NGOs, such as International Rivers and Salween Watch, have emphasized the danger of building these dams in war-torn areas in Myanmar. Violent confrontations between warring groups over dam construction sites will hinder dispute resolution of overall conflicts ([Noreen, 2013](#)).

There has been no attempt by Burmese authorities or foreign investors to address the grievances of the Burmese people over the dams. Conflict resolution is made particularly difficult because violence over the dams often occurs between already warring rebel groups and the Burmese Army. Conflict resolution will require a comprehensive approach that also addresses the existing reasons for civil war.

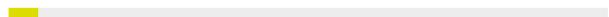


Intensities & Influences



INTENSITIES

International / Geopolitical Intensity

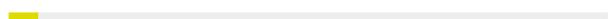


Human Suffering



INFLUENCES

Environmental Influences



Societal Influences



Diplomatic Crisis

No diplomatic crisis



Violent Conflict

Yes



Salience with nation

Regional



Mass displacement

None



Cross Border Mass Displacement

Less than 100.000 and less than 10% of the population are displaced across borders.



Resolution Success

Resolve of displacement problems

Displacement continues to cause discontent and/or other problems.



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 mostly ignored.



Causal Attribution of Decrease in Conflict Intensity

There has been no reduction in intensity



Resources and Materials

References with URL

[International Rivers \(2013\). Current Status of Dam Projects on Burma's Salween River](#)

[Salween Watch \(2014\). Hydropower Projects on the Salween River: An Update](#)

[FAO \(2011\). Salween Basin. In Water Report 37](#)

[Noreen \(2013\). Thailand must suspend Salween River dams, warn activists](#)



Further information

<https://factbook.ecc-platform.org/conflicts/salween-river-dam-project-myanmar>