In addition to their work with BEWG, each of our member groups carries out its own extensive program of work. Together, they cover a wide range of environmental, social, and human rights issues. Even though most BEWG member groups advocate from Thailand, it is important to recognize that all BEWG members work directly with their respective ethnic communities in Burma. Due to security concerns of local communities and BEWG members, this fact has not usually been discussed openly in the past. Space appears to be opening in Burma to more openly discuss work in ethnic areas, as well as to beneficially reach ethnic communities. Local community capacity building on environmental issues is a key aspect of all BEWG member programs.

Below is an update on the current work of each member organization.

AOW

During the critical time of the new Burmese government's political reform process, AOW published Burma's first oil and gas revenue transparency report in March 2012. The report is titled *Burma's Resource Curse: The Case for Revenue Transparency in the Oil and Gas Sector.* The report highlights the largest foreign sources of current and future oil and gas revenue and discusses Burma's currency exchange issues in reporting revenue, an elusive military-facilitated revenue pipeline that leads out of the country into foreign accounts owned by military companies, and uses case studies to provide positive examples of revenue transparency and resource sharing in other oil- or gas-rich countries dealing with the "resource curse". AOW has conducted advocacy and organized oil and gas revenue transparency workshops as follow-up activities with relevant state holders in Burma in order to escape Burma's resource curse.

In addition, AOW monitors multinational oil and gas companies' project activities in Burma, especially in Arakan State, including Burma's Shwe Gas Project and China-Burma oil and gas pipeline project and China's Special Economic Zone project in Kyauk Phyu Township, Arakan State.

The China National Petroleum Company's pursuit of a Shwe Gas Project-connected deep sea port and oil storage facility on Maday Island is also the focus of research and advocacy by AOW. Not only do the roughly 5,000 people living in 1,000 households on Maday Island face rapid change, but so does the island's natural environment, which houses one of the largest mangrove forests in the world. The people and natural environment of nearby Ramree Island also face continued change and challenge as DI pursues the Shwe Gas Project's onshore gas terminal complex and mooted special economic zone. AOW plans to launch short briefers on both Maday and Ramree Islands' peoples, livelihoods and natural environments in 2012.

Construction of the Shwe Gas Pipeline corridor, aimed at moving gas resources from Burma to China and oil resources from the Middle East and Africa to China, has led local grassroots activists to start questioning why Arakan State residents are not benefiting directly from a project that has more than enough energy to supply 24-hour electricity to Arakan State. The Arakan people's campaign for 24-hour electricity from the Shwe Gas Project has been conducted in Arakan State since 2010.

AOW has also been providing community awareness and mobilization trainings in Arakan State since 2009. Trainings cover community resource rights, development project impacts, company responsibilities and general knowledge on the current state of the projects – all of which are often hard to come by in project areas of Burma.

AOW has been capacity building with communities in the oil and gas project areas of Arakan State since 2009.

Arakan Oil Watch (AOW) is an independent, community-based, non-governmental organization operating in Burma. Founded in 2006, the organization's mission is to ensure that community rights, livelihoods, and environments are guaranteed and protected, and to monitor the activities of multinational oil and gas projects and their human rights, environmental, and financial impacts in Arakan State and the country of Burma. AOW is an active member of Oilwatch Southeast Asia, and networks with a variety of Burma-based organizations and international NGOs that monitor resource extraction and impact.
www.arakanoilwatch.org

BRIDGE

BRIDGE has a wide range of programmes focusing on forestry, women's empowerment, food security, community healthcare, and environmental awareness. Deforestation and degradation are key problems in Kachin State. Rural Kachin communities rely on the forests for food, housing materials, and tools; however, poverty forces many communities to harvest wood and forest products at an unsustainable rate. These products are then exported to China or sold at very low prices in border markets to Chinese companies; the low prices trap that local Kachin people into a destructive cycle of over-exploiting the forests. As part of its forestry programme, BRIDGE supports local communities to help them set up alternative economic activities and create their own rules for sustainable use of their forests. This includes training communities and helping them apply their traditional knowledge to manage natural resources sustainably, as well as providing practical help to communities establishing their own community forests. BRIDGE also runs a broader environmental awareness programme, including training for students in how to conserve natural resources and reduce waste, and workshops on conducting community-based environmental research. For World Environment Day each year, BRIDGE works to raise awareness about local environmental advocacy campaigns in communities throughout Kachin State.

BRIDGE's food security programme works to support communities in areas where crop yields are low, leading local people to harvest unsustainably from forests in order to supplement their income. Improving food security therefore also protects forests. BRIDGE provides training in irrigation methods and making fertilizer, and also runs an experimental farm in order to study ways to increase crop yields. BRIDGE has supported a number of farmers to switch to organic farming. In addition, BRIDGE's IDP camp organic farming programme provided over 80,000

kg of vegetables for the camp this year, and also includes training IDPs to raise livestock and fish.

BRIDGE further helps communities through its women's empowerment and community healthcare programmes. The women's empowerment programme provides training and support for local women and female IDPs to earn an income through knitting, weaving, and food preservation. BRIDGE's community healthcare programme gives health awareness and waste management training and workshops (including workshops for children) in local villages and IDP camps. BRIDGE also provides support to allow youth to travel to Thailand for medical training, and works to empower and further train local midwife groups.

BRIDGE's publications raise awareness about a variety of environmental issues, and help connect local communities with decisionmakers. The publications include a local newsletter, published three times a year, which includes environmental case studies written by villagers; the newsletter also records local oral traditions that would otherwise be in danger of being lost. BRIDGE's newsletter has proven to be an effective tool for engaging with local authorities. In addition, BRIDGE publishes an environmental magazine, showcasing local knowledge, twice a year, as well as a yearly comic book for children about environmental issues.

Bridging Rural Integrated Development and Grassroots Empowerment (BRIDGE) works together with rural communities impacted by political and socio-economic change in Kachin state to strengthen their capacities to manage their own natural resources. BRIDGE supports their community-based development activities and builds collaborations and partnerships that advocate for sustainable development and foster a culture of peace.

ERI

Earthrights International (ERI) will soon be releasing a briefer and related website on the oil and gas industry in Burma. The briefer will comprise an extensive survey of oil and gas blocks in the region, investment sources, involved companies and investing companies' home countries' foreign policies toward Burma. The briefer will be a tool for local people, NGOs, governments and policy makers. The website will contain all of the information from the briefer, will be interactive and will allow online collaboration, monitoring and open information sharing on the project.

ERI is among the organizations monitoring the Shwe Gas and Oil Pipeline Project.

In May 2011, ERI put out a briefer on the Shwe Gas Oil and Gas pipeline project entitled *The Burma-China Pipelines - Human Rights Violations, Applicable Law, and Revenue Secrecy*. ERI continues to represent a major international presence and voice on the need for human rights to be central to Burma's approach to its environment and development of the country.

ERI's coverage of the destruction of local livelihoods in Shwegyin Township (which is comiled in the *Accessible Alternatives* article, "Gold Mining in Shwegyin Township, Pegu Division") ended with the completion of the closely associated Shwegyin Dam in 2011 and flooding of the dam area. The current situation of most people displaced and forcibly relocated by the dam is unknown.

ERI is working with the ILO on engaging with the Italian-Thai Development Corporation (IDT) on its projects in Burma, such as the Dawei SEZ and ongoing mining in Shan State. ERI is also currently developing and providing impact assessment (EIA, SIA, CIA, HRIA) trainings for local ethnic communities in Burma facing the prospect of development projects.

ERI's Burma School continues to educate the youth of Burma on environmental issues.

EarthRights International (ERI) is a group of activists, organizers, and lawyers with expertise in human rights, the environment, and corporate and government accountability. Since 1995, ERI has worked in Burma to monitor the impacts of the military regime's policies and activities on local populations and ecosystems. Through their training program, ERI trains young environmental activists from diverse ethnic backgrounds in Burma to empower young leaders with skills and knowledge to work on earth rights issues in their communities. In addition, ERI works alongside affected community groups to prevent human rights and environmental abuses associated with large-scale natural resource projects in Burma.
www.earthrights.org | Facebook | Twitter | RSS

KESAN

Lands and forests are the main source of Karen people's livelihoods. Their daily lives are intimately connected with the land and the products of nature. The consequences of militarization, civil war, large-scale development projects and an unstable political situation have long put pressure on the environment, communities and livelihoods of the Karen people. Displacement, poverty, human rights abuses and landlessness have been among the most common results. Over the past two decades, Karen villagers have witnessed the spread of large scale monoculture plantations; increased mining; and continued logging, which is now reaching into formerly isolated areas of Karen State. Giant dams, gas pipelines, and road and railway projects in conflict zones have also led to massive dispossession and displacement. The political changes in the country, and the current peace and reconciliation process between the Burmese government and KNU, have also created a new atmosphere for more land, forests and livelihoods to be lost, especially as many people do not have official land ownership records from either the Burmese government or the Karen National Union (KNU). Companies and individuals have already started pursuing the expansion of mining, logging and mono-plantation activities. Particularly at risk are farmers.

Although the KNU banned logging in 2008, illegal logging still occurs in parts of Karen State. Both the Megatha Wildlife Sanctuary and the last remaining substantial tract of forests in Kawkareik Township are being seriously threatened by illegal logging and mining activities. Antimony, tin, zinc, lead and gold mining also continue to expand, displace people and

contaminate Karen areas of Burma. Unlike ten years ago, rubber plantations now cover large parts of Karen State. More are being mooted to KNU authorities by interested companies.

The Shwe Gyin Dam, finished in 2010, is the first dam to be completed in a Karen-majority area of Burma. A total of 24 villages and 1950 acres of farmland, orchards, and paddy fields were lost to the dam's reservoir. No villager received compensation for their lost lands, homes or crops. Military camps secure the hydropower dam and its surroundings. The Salween River's proposed Hatgyi hydropower dam will flood part of the Kahilu Wildlife Sanctuary and disrupt seasonal flooding and sedimentation cycles, affecting river, delta and offshore fishing, as well as soil fertility in the still-fertile flood plains. The dam will displace an estimated 2000 villagers, in addition to the countless numbers already displaced by fighting for control of the project area.

The Dawei deep sea port, special economic zone and road link project requires the expropriation of 250 square kilometers of land as well as large swathes of land required for the transport corridor and water and energy supply infrastructure that will serve the project. Negotiations on compensation to impacted Karen, Tavoyan and other villagers have been protracted, confusing, insulting and controversial.

KESAN monitors logging, mining, plantations and dam projects in Karen areas. Information collected is used to pursue good governance of projects and promote company corporate social responsibility. KESAN also provides technical support to communities and KNU staff on land demarcation, forest demarcation and land titling. In addition, KESAN works with communities to raise awareness on natural resource management, free and prior informed consent (FPIC), community forests and land rights.

KESAN has been working with communities in Thailand and Karen areas of Burma since 2001.

The Karen Environmental and Social Action Network (KESAN) was established in 2001 as the first local community-based organization to raise environmental awareness among Karen people. KESAN works to empower and educate communities and local institutions to revitalize existing indigenous knowledge and practices for increased livelihood security in Karen and Kachin States and in areas along the Thai-Burmese border. KESAN strives to build up local capacities in forest and natural resource management, raise public environmental awareness, and support community-based development initiatives. In addition to playing a leading role in environmental law and policy formulation, KESAN advocates for environmental policies and development priorities that ensure sustainable ecological, social, cultural, and economic benefits and promote gender equity.
www.kesan.asia | Facebook | Twitter | RSS | YouTube

LNDO

The Mong Pyat coal mine has grown in recent months. Chinese companies using imported Chinese labor have upped production for export of coal to China. Environmental impacts from coal mining are growing in the local area. There are reports of cattle deaths from drinking water polluted by the mine and widespread human sickness downstream from the mine. The Lahu National Development Organization (LNDO) is working with local villagers to record and

document the impacts of the mine on local people. They hope to release this material in the coming year.

Farmers in Shan State continue to struggle with GMO seeds from China and Thailand. Crops growing from these seeds are not able to be replanted – forcing farmers to buy new seed every year – and require large amounts of chemical inputs, which are sold by the same vendors supplying the seeds. LNDO is working with local farmers on seed saving and non-chemical farming techniques.

LNDO has been working with communities in Lahu areas of Shan state since 1997.

The Lahu National Development Organization (LNDO) was set up by leading Lahu democracy activists in March 1997 to advocate for the welfare and well-being of the Lahu people, including the promotion of alternatives to destructive development projects and opium cultivation. LNDO seeks to protect the livelihoods and lands of Lahu and Akha peoples and to increase understanding among the local ethnic nationalities about human rights, democracy, federalism, community development, and health issues. LNDO also aims to develop unity and cooperation among the Lahu and other highlanders from Shan State and to provide opportunities for the development of civic leadership skills among local groups.

NEED

Currently, NEED Burma is planning for future expansion. The current situation is ripe for political change, owing in part to Burmese social focuses and global pressure on Burma. There are many new opportunities for activities inside the country that did not exist before. In response to the changing situation and in order to fully take advantage of these opportunities, NEED is planning to move its major program activities. There will be a greater focus on the food security and livelihood program, such as mangrove reforestation, organic agriculture, and environmental documentaries, that is expanding a lot more in Arakan State. Our other partners have already worked closely on food security and community livelihoods, with projects in areas of Burma such as the Lahu and (Danu) Aung Ban areas and the southern Mon area.

Network for Environmental and Economic Development (NEED) was founded in March 2006. NEED is a nonprofit NGO working to strengthen Burmese civil society so that all the people of Burma may benefit from the practice of indigenous and holistic development strategies, based on economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable ideas. NEED concentrates on the promotion of environmental conservation, sustainable agriculture, and economic development in Burma.
www.need-burma.org | Facebook | RSS | YouTube | Blog (Burmese)

The Pa-Oh Youth Organization

Mining in Shan State

The Pa-Oh Youth Organization (PYO) and Kyoju Action Network (KAN) are tracking mining projects in southern Shan State and related developments such as dams and production facilities. Ongoing mining in pursuit of coal, gold, iron and what is suspected to be uranium continues in south east Shan State. Many of these projects occur in the watershed regions surrounding Inle Lake and are directly connected with land confiscation and non-existent or little-used pollution controls. All projects impact local communities and ecologies directly. As water resources are impacted in all projects, communities and environments downstream from projects also suffer from polluted water resources – including Inle Lake and dependent communities. PYO, in cooperation with KAN, is hoping to launch a documentary video on mining in the Inle Lake region and its impacts on community and environment in mid-2012.

Community Forests

Sustainable forest resources are a cornerstone of local community livelihoods in southern Shan State. KAN represents an inter-ethnic collaboration of community forest groups. On June 5, 2012, KAN celebrated World Environment Day with watershed protection and tree-planting activities in southern Shan State.

Opium Replacement Projects

PYO, along with local partner organizations, is currently working with southern Shan State communities to visually document the history of opium production in their region. In parallel with the documentation process, PYO is working with communities, community leaders, local restaurants, local organizations and crop buyers to design a locally appropriate opium replacement project. A central challenge of such projects is ensuring that livelihoods replacing opium cultivation are sustainable and provide a decent standard of living.

Local Capacity Building

PYO and KAN have been building local community capacity on environmental and development project issues in southern Shan State since 1998 and 2010 respectively. They also facilitate inter-ethnic community and youth exchanges and work specifically on empowering women in local communities.

The Pa-Oh Youth Organization (PYO) was set up in 1998 striving for peace and justice through empowering youth. PYO published the report *Robbing the Future* in June 2009 after two years of research at the site of Burma's largest iron mine and the Pangpet No. 5 Steel Mill in Shan State. PYO continues to monitor the situation and educate communities of the environmental and social impacts of this and other mining projects.
www.paohyouth.org/ | Facebook | Twitter | RSS | Vimeo

Sapawa

Tasang Dam

Sapawa's core work continues to focus on documentation, research and advocacy around Shan State's massive Tasang Dam. Sapawa has been covering militarization, forced relocation, land confiscation, displacement and environmental degradation around the Tasang Dam since 1996. Although the dam has yet to be constructed, many of the same abuses continue in the area, as do surveys and connected resource extraction conducted by project companies and sub-contractors. Sapawa will continue to cover these abuses and related developments, using new forms of media to reach wider audiences.

Logging and the Mung Pu Community

Illegal logging continues in the thick forests relied upon by the Mung Pu community for herbal medicines and their daily livelihoods. These forests are near to the Tasang Dam site and logging is directly connected to the Tasang Dam project.

Mining Uranium and the Ke Hsi Community

Mining can also connected to the Tasang Dam project. Ke Hsi community land continues to be confiscated, forcing villagers off their lands and ruining community and local livelihoods. Negative environmental impacts from the mining extend from pollution of soils to pollution of rivers, affecting not just locals but communities downstream as well. Sapawa plans to work with the Ke Hsi community to help them document abuses and advocate for the redress of grievances.

Local Capacity Building

Sapawa continues to run six month internships for youth from Shan State, providing environmental and advocacy training.

Shan Sapawa Environmental Organization (Sapawa) works along the Thai-Burmese border and inside Burma to promote environmental protection and human rights in Shan State, Burma. Sapawa was established in 2003 by Shan alumni of EarthRights School and the Shan State School for Nationalities Youth who had become increasingly concerned at the environmental situation in Shan State. Sapawa's vision is a just and peaceful Shan State free of environmental destruction and exploitation. The mission of Sapawa is to empower Shan communities to protect their rights and livelihoods, and preserve their natural resources, and to expose the destruction of the environment and human rights violations occurring in Shan State to local peoples as well as the international community, in order to find ways to prevent such violations.
www.shansapawa.org | RSS