

# Irrawaddy Myitsone Dam

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The Myitsone Dam under construction (Courtesy *The Irrawaddy*)

**BREAKING NEWS:** In a huge success for civil society groups in Burma, China and internationally, the Burmese government on September 30, 2011, decided to **suspend the Myitsone Dam** until 2015. Read our latest [press release](#). More news to follow soon.

China Power Investment plans to build a second Three Gorges Project for China – this time in Burma. The **Myitsone mega-dam project** on the headwaters of the Irrawaddy River will export 90% of its electricity to China. The Myitsone project is part of a **seven-dam cascade** that represents a USD\$20 billion [investment by China](#). However, there are serious doubts about the quality and independence of the **Environmental Impact Assessment** for this mega-dam project, as well as concerns regarding the **resettlement** process and the role of the project in exacerbating the long-standing **conflict** between the ethnic Kachin people and the military government.

Burma does not have any environmental protection laws and much less study and planning has been conducted for the Myitsone project compared to the Three Gorges Project. While the developers have committed to studying the **downstream impacts** on the rich and vital Irrawaddy River delta during the project construction period, it may not be enough to save the communities and ecosystems that depend on this critical river system.

## Chinese dam building on Burma's national heritage

The Myitsone Dam is located a mile below the confluence of the Mali and N'Mai rivers in Kachin State, the source of the Irrawaddy River. The dam's reservoir will submerge important historical and cultural sites at the Mali and N'mai Hka rivers, as well as what is widely recognized as the birthplace of Burma. The dam is also located in a region that is recognized as one of the world's top biodiversity hotspots and a global conservation priority. If built, the Irrawaddy Myitsone Dam would inundate approximately 766 square kilometers of

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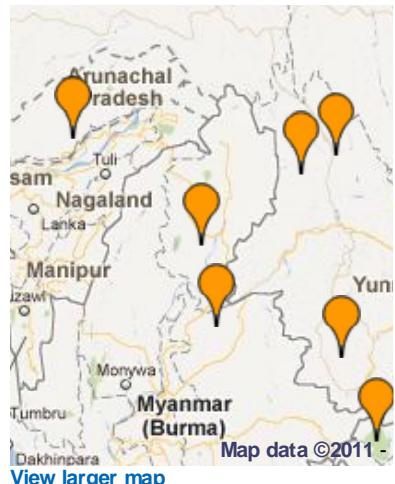
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forested area and cause irreversible damage to Burma's **key river system**, as well as to downstream rice paddy communities.

Groups within Burma, including **Aung San Suu Kyi**, oppose the dam not only because of its environmental impacts, displacement, and threats to cultural sites, but also because the dam is located less than 100 kilometers from a major fault line, posing a risk to basin inhabitants should an earthquake weaken the dam structure or cause landslides in the reservoir. If the Myitsone Dam were to break during an earthquake, it would endanger the lives of hundred of thousands of people by flooding Kachin State's largest city, Myikyina.

### **Our work**

International Rivers is working to support local groups' efforts against the Irrawaddy Myitsone Dam, including conducting corporate research, technical analysis and international awareness-raising activities on the threats to the Irrawaddy River.

#### MORE INFORMATION:

- ▶ Read China Power Investment's interview on the suspension ([Chinese language](#) and [English](#))
- ▶ Read the full [Myitsone Dam briefing and timeline](#)
- ▶ For more information on the Irrawaddy Myitsone Dam, download the report *Damming the Irrawaddy* (in [English](#), [Burmese](#), and [Chinese](#))
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- ▶ China Power Investment's [promotional website on Myitsone](#)
- ▶ "[Why Myitsone Plan is Being Halted](#)," *BBC News*, 30 Sept 2011.
- ▶ "[Thousands Flee as Kachin Fighting Escalates](#)," *The Irrawaddy*, 27 Sept 2011.

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