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War-affected Karen communities urge suspension of mega development projects during peace process

A Karen people's forum representing 15,000 conflicted affected villagers has called for the suspension of all large scale economic projects until political agreements are in place to ensure community benefits and protection.

The forum took place on October, 26-28, 2012 to address concerns that the current Myanmar government is using the peace process to push forward unregulated and unacceptable development projects without proper safeguards or policies,

Villagers at the forum demanded that both the Myanmar government and the Karen National Union (KNU) improve the cease-fire and peace process, and allow the participation of communities and civil society groups in decision-making in order to have sustainable peace and development in the country.

"Large-scale economic investment must be suspended during the peace negotiations," said forum spokesperson, Saw Lu Ber Moo. "The government and the KNU must first address the issue of local ownership of natural resources."

The forum took place in Kyainn Seik Gyi township, where over 100 democratically elected community development project leaders from 27 villages from Kyainn Seik Gyi township and Ye township met and discussed development issues and the peace talks between the KNU and the Myanmar government.

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