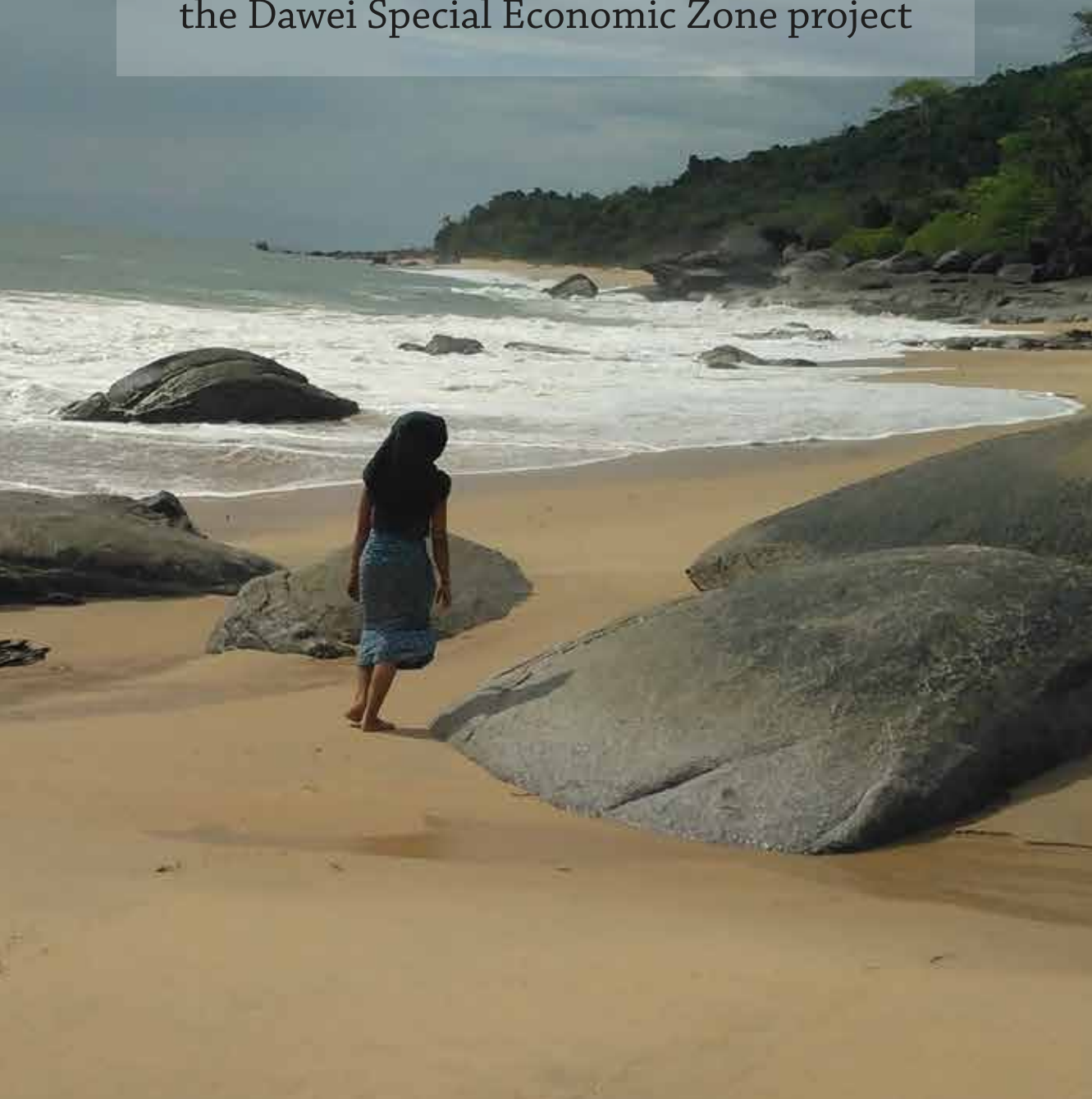


# OUR LIVES NOT FOR SALE

Tavoyan women speak out against  
the Dawei Special Economic Zone project



# ABOUT TWU

Before 1995, the Tavoyan Women's Union operated under the name of the Tavoy District Women's Union. On 5 May, 1995, the Tavoy District Women's Union changed its name to Tavoyan Women's Union, which held its first congress from May 5 to 9, 1998. The congress reorganized and replenished the Union with a new generation of women who had taken part in the mass uprising of 1988.

## Vision

Our vision is to build a society of peace, justice, freedom and equality in Burma.

## Mission

- To achieve equality in accordance with the integral rights of every woman
- To expand and improve women's participation and capacity in our society
- To achieve security, peace and development of women's lives

## Programs

- Program to combat violence against women
- Political capacity-building program
- Education program
- Health program
- Peace-building program

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



This report exposes the damaging impacts of the Dawei Special Economic Zone (DSEZ) project on rural Tavoyan women living in six affected villages in southern Burma.

Most of the local population are fisherfolk and farmers, who have lived sustainably for generations in this isolated coastal area. They have been given no choice about accepting this multi-billion dollar Thailand-Burma joint venture, which will turn their pristine lands into the largest petrochemical estate in Southeast Asia.

Despite delays and funding constraints since implementation began in 2010, the project has been progressing steadily on the ground. Most of the coastal area near the project has been turned into a no-go zone, and large areas of farmland confiscated and destroyed to build initial infrastructure.

TWU conducted interviews with 60 women, chosen randomly from six villages in Htein Gyi tract, where the deep sea port is

being built. Findings from these interviews show that the project has already been extremely damaging to the livelihoods of local communities:

- Almost all the women have suffered loss of income since the project began, due to land confiscation, destruction of farmlands, and restricted access to the coast. Just over a third of the women now have no income at all from their former livelihoods.
- About half of the women had suffered land confiscation, but only a third of them said that their families had received compensation. Amounts of compensation were uneven, and as low as 500,000 kyat per acre (US\$500), for land which could yield an annual income of over one million kyat (US\$1,000).
- Whereas families were previously able to live comfortably off income from their farms and other livelihoods, they are now facing food insecurity, and can no longer afford to send their children to school. 49 of the women said they had taken their

children out of school since the project began; a third of these women had taken children under 13 out of school.

The interviews also highlighted specific vulnerabilities of women related to the project, mostly due to traditional gender discrimination:

- While there has been very little information provided about the project to local communities, women have received even less information about the project than men. It was mainly men who attended meetings held about the project; some women only learned about the project when bulldozers began clearing their lands.
- Women have been excluded from decision making over land sale and compensation, as men's names are automatically listed on land documents as household heads. Among 60 women, only two were listed as the users of their land, as their husbands had died. Compensation was therefore usually paid into the hands of men, giving them sole discretion about spending. In cases where women were listed as land users, they were vulnerable to bullying by male authorities to give up rights to their land. All the village administrative officers in this area are men.
- Livelihoods carried out specifically by women have been drastically affected by the project. Shellfish collection along the seashore is a traditional source of income for women, but now is severely restricted due to blockage of access to the coast.
- There has been sexual harassment by project workers of local women, making it unsafe to go out foraging for food in the vicinity of the project.
- Due to food insecurity as a result of the project, girls are increasingly being sent to work in Thailand to earn money to send back to their parents. This is regarded as a duty for daughters rather than sons, due to the gendered expectation that girls are

caregivers in the family. Girls under 18 must travel illegally to Thailand, placing them at risk of trafficking, exploitation and abuse.

- Due to the low priority placed on educating girls, most women have very low levels of education, and fear they will have no means of survival when they are resettled away from their lands to make way for the project. They have no hope of finding jobs in the DSEZ, where only educated or skilled workers are expected to be hired. Over two-thirds of the women interviewed had only completed primary education. Seven were illiterate.

Despite the clear vulnerability of women related to the project, there has been no attempt by the project developers to identify or address these problems. The Burmese government is obligated under the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) to ensure that rural women can participate in and benefit from development projects, but has implemented no mechanisms to ensure this. The new Myanmar Special Economic Zone Law, issued in January 2014, makes no mention of women whatsoever.

TWU has been opposed to the DSEZ from the outset, due to the complete lack of transparency and exclusion of local communities from decision-making around the project, and due to the large-scale social and environmental damage it will cause. We have visited Thailand's Map Ta Phut industrial estate and seen firsthand how the dangerous levels of pollution have devastated local farming, fishing and tourism livelihoods and caused high rates of cancer among local communities. We are determined not to accept a similar project in our homelands.

Local women have started to take action against the DSEZ and related projects. They have held public protests, and in a village

south of Dawei, have led their community to block Chinese and Burmese military developers from proceeding with a planned oil refinery linked to the DSEZ project.

TWU stands in strong solidarity with these brave women, and makes the following demands:

**To the Burmese and Thai governments, and to the project developers:**

- Immediately stop the DSEZ project.
- Return any lands which have been confiscated to their original owners.
- Provide proper compensation to those whose lands have been confiscated or whose crops or farmlands have been damaged by the project.
- Stop restricting access to the coastal area
- Allow all roads built for the project to be used freely by the public.
- Hand over buildings constructed at the project site to local communities, to be used for the benefit of the public

- Dismantle the small port already built for the project, as the dock is too high to be used by local people's fishing boats

**To the Burmese government**

- There should be constitutional reform to establish a federal system of government, in which decision making power over large-scale development projects such as the DSEZ is devolved down to the state and regional level.
- For any future large development projects in the Dawei area, ensure that there is Free Prior and Informed Consent of local communities, with equal participation of women. There must be transparent Environmental Impact Assessments, Social Impact Assessments and Health Impact Assessments conducted before the project.
- In compliance with CEDAW, review existing laws related to rural development, to ensure the protection of rural women's rights.

# Contents

Executive summary .....	i
Introduction .....	1
Survey period and methodology .....	1
Map showing surveyed villages .....	2
<b>1. Background</b> .....	<b>3</b>
About the Dawei Special Economic Zone .....	3
Current status of the DSEZ project in Htein Gyi village tract .....	5
Traditional livelihoods and gender roles.....	7
<b>2. Findings</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>General impacts of the DSEZ</b>	
<i>Local livelihoods and income severely affected by the project</i> .....	9
<i>Children being taken out of school</i> .....	11
<b>Specific impacts on women</b>	
<i>Poorer information access for women regarding the project</i> .....	12
<i>Women excluded from decision-making over land sale and compensation</i> .....	12
<i>Women's shellfish collection livelihoods impacted by access restrictions</i> .....	14
<i>Sexual harassment by project workers</i> .....	14
<i>Daughters migrating to Thailand to earn money for family</i> .....	15
<i>Women's lack of formal education causing concern for future survival</i> .....	15
Women taking public action to protect their rights.....	16
DSEZ violating the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).....	18
<b>3. Conclusion and recommendations</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>Appendix</b> .....	<b>20</b>



# INTRODUCTION

There have been several reports analyzing the Dawei Special Economic Zone project and its damaging impacts on local communities. However, these reports have not focused on the impacts on women and their particular vulnerabilities related to the project. TWU feels this is a serious omission, and has therefore compiled this report to highlight the specific concerns and recommendations of local women regarding the project.

## SURVEY PERIOD AND METHODOLOGY

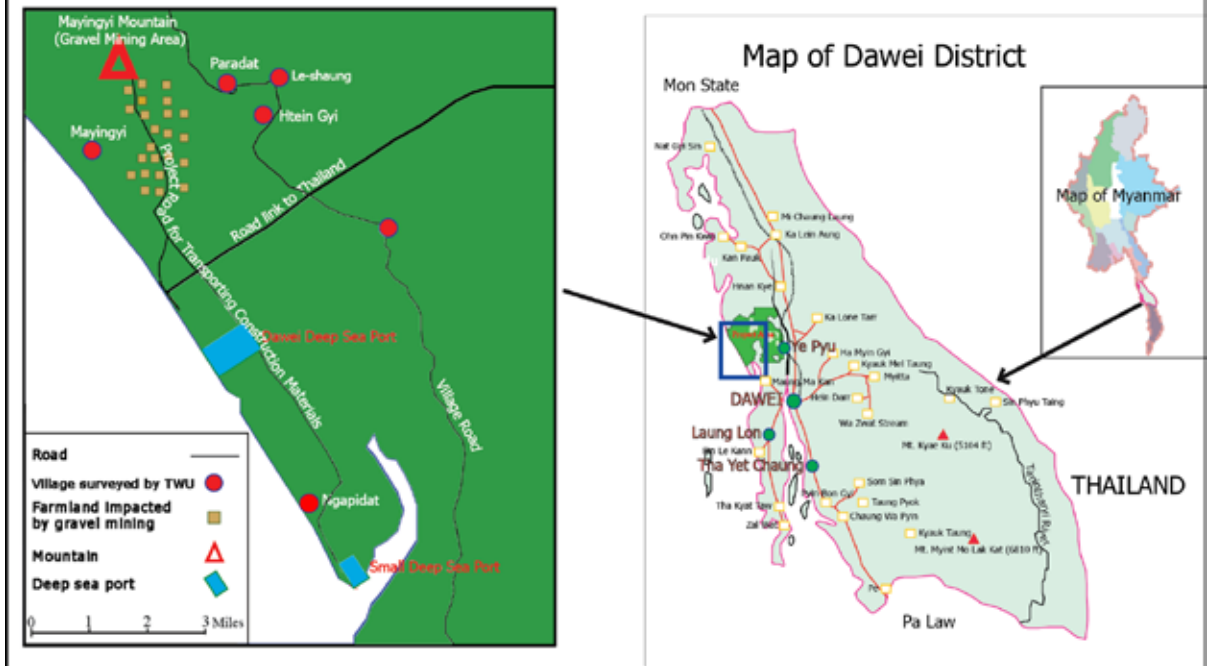
TWU conducted the survey from September 2013 to September 2014 in six villages lying in the Dawei Special Economic Zone. We interviewed sixty local women from Mudu, Mayingyi, Le-shaung, Paradat, Htein Gyi and Ngapidat villages. We chose these villages, because they are closest to the planned port area, and are already suffering direct impacts from the project. The total population of these villages is over 10,000 people. The chart below is the population figure given by the government at the start of the project, but the numbers are now higher than this.



Township	Village	Households	Population
Yephyu	Le-shaun	610	3,337
	Htein Gyi	415	2,253
	Mudu	343	2,029
	Paradat	321	1,662
	Mayingyi	136	821
	Ngapidat	18	145
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,843</b>	<b>10,247</b>

*Note: Each of the above villages are located inside or in close proximity to the current SEZ area boundaries. However, many other villages, are omitted from these official lists*

## Location of Villages in DSEZ surveyed by TWU



We chose the women to interview by dividing each village into four sections, then randomly choosing four households in each section to identify women to interview within different age groups. Some women did not want to be interviewed because they were too afraid of the authorities. While we were collecting data, we were watched by authorities, intelligence agents or police informers, which made some locals too afraid to answer our questions.

The interviews were according to age groups as follows:

- Age 18-25: three women from each village = 18 women
- Age 26-35: four women from each village = 24 women
- Age above 35: three women from each village = 18 women

We asked them 31 questions. Data-collectors documented the interviews on paper in addition to making voice-recording.

We also held focus group discussions for up to 10 women at a time, one or two times in each of the 6 villages.



# I. BACKGROUND



## About the Dawei Special Economic Zone

In May 2008, the Burmese and Thai governments signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to build the Dawei Special Economic Zone (DSEZ), and in June 2008, the Italian-Thai Development Co. (ITD) and the Burmese Port Authority signed another MoU. On November 2, 2010, ITD and the Burmese Port Authority signed a contract to implement the work and started work at once. In July 2012, a local contractor, Max Myanmar Co. withdrew from the DSEZ project and in November 2013, ITD also suspended project implementation. Then on 17 July 2013, the project was changed into a mutual benefit Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) project of the Thai and Burmese governments.

The DSEZ construction area is 18 miles

north of Tavoy city. The project's deep sea port will have a harbor to accommodate 54 vessels including large container ships; there will also be large-scale industries such as petrochemical product factories, steel mills, oil refineries and storage tanks, fertilizer plants, coal and gas powered generators, small-scale industries, a water reservoir and urban dwellings. In addition there will be a highway and railway running to Thailand.

Implementation of the DSEZ project will involve an area of 204.5 square kilometers and affect 20 to 36 villages having 4,384 to 7,807 households or a population of 22,000 to 43,000. Over 9,000 acres of wet rice fields, more than 9,000 acres of rubber plantations, at least 12,000 acres of cashew nut plantations, over 8,000 acres of orchards and more than 47,000 acres of other types of land will also be destroyed.



*Project construction near Ngapidat village*



*Plan for Dawei Special Economic Zone*

## *Thailand outsources polluting industries to Burma*



*Map Ta Phut Industrial Estate*

Thailand has strong commercial interest in developing the DSEZ project. Bypassing the Malacca Strait, which is hundreds of miles south on the trading route between Europe, the Middle East and Indochina, traders can save time and fuel in addition to benefitting Thailand's economy.

Another key reason why Thailand wants to develop the DSEZ project is because it has been unable to expand its existing giant petrochemical estate at Map Ta Phut, in Rayong province, due to local resistance to the devastating social and environmental impacts of the project. Toxic pollution over the past 20 years has destroyed local fisheries, agriculture and tourism, and caused a huge increase in cancer among surrounding communities. National cancer rates are highest in Rayong for many kinds of cancer.<sup>1</sup>

Myanmar Times reported that in an interview with the New York Times newspaper on 27 November 2011, former Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva said, "Because some industries are not suitable to exist in Thailand, we decided to relocate them to Burma." The DSEZ project will be ten times bigger than the Map Ta Phut Industrial Estate.

### *Impacted villagers given no information, suffer land confiscation*

From the outset, there has been failure to provide information to affected communities about the DSEZ project. No transparent Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), Social Impact Assessment (SIA) or Health Impact Assessment (HIA) was carried out before the project, and there has been no meaningful consultation with the local population or collection of locals' opinions since the project started. Although there are plans for resettlement of villages that lie in the project area, no arrangements have been made for villagers' long-term livelihoods. Land confiscation has been carried out without locals' consent, and under pressure and intimidation from authorities.

Previously, the project included a 4,000-megawatt coal-fired power plant, but as it would pose huge risks for the local population, the No.2 Electric Power Minister stated on 9 January 2012 that it would be cancelled. However, civil society groups and environmental activists worry that plans for the plant will be resumed, so are continuing to campaign against it.

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<sup>1</sup> *Towards Ecological Recovery and Regional Alliance (TERRA), Dawei Points of Concern, August 2012*



## Current status of the DSEZ project in Htein Gyi village tract

Since the project began in 2010, stretches of coastal land in Htein Gyi tract have become restricted areas, and large areas of farmland have been confiscated and bulldozed around villages further inland. A 150 km road has been constructed from the Thai border to the coastal project site, cutting through villagers' farmlands and orchards. Some company buildings have been constructed at the main port site, and a "small" deep sea port has been built about five miles south of the main port area. Gravel has been excavated from a mountain north of the project site, and brought to the construction areas along new roads built along the coast. A resettlement village has also been built, north of the project area, with 700 houses.

A seasonal fishing village called Charkan, on the coast next to the planned deep sea port has already been demolished. In the remaining villages in the tract, it is forbidden to construct any new buildings or plant any new trees. Project roads along the coast can only be used by villagers riding motorbikes, not cars or tractors. Apart from land confiscation, villagers have also suffered large scale damage to their fields due to soil run-off from the gravel mining area.



The compensation process for land confiscation has been completely lacking in transparency, with many families yet to receive promised funds. Compensation received has been uneven and inadequate.

At the same time, the DSEZ plans have led to a rush of land speculation around the project area. Rich land speculators have been collaborating with local officials to pressure villagers to sell them their land at cheaper prices, planning to profit later from sale of this land.



## Traditional livelihoods and gender roles

*“Yaung nauk sedon pa” (meaning: the (male) hair-bun goes in front of the (female) hair-bun) is a traditional Burmese saying, common in the Tavoy area, denoting women’s inferior status to men. Both men and women used to wear their hair in buns in the past.*

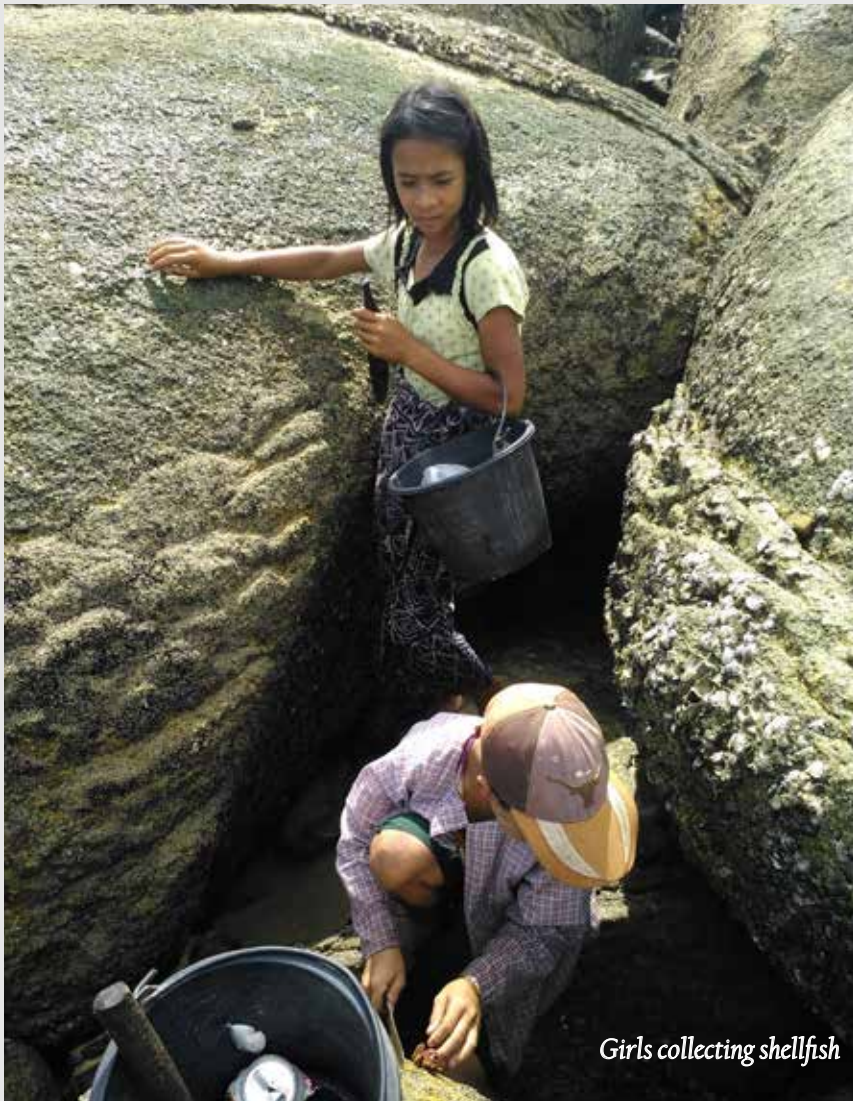
Communities living in villages in the Htein Gyi area have been relying on agriculture and fishing for centuries, and are skilled at these livelihoods. The main agricultural crops are rice, cashew nuts, rubber, betel and coconut, with other vegetables and fruit grown for consumption and sale. Produce is sold in local villages as well as in Dawei town.

As in other Tavoyan communities, men are traditionally regarded as the head of the household, and make decisions on all important family matters. Their names are automatically put on any land ownership papers. Only when husbands die, are their widows then listed as the house-owner. Land is passed down within the family, and is usually divided among sons. When sons marry, they are allocated some of the family land to build a new house.

Women are expected to marry and serve their husbands. The education of daughters is therefore not prioritized. Women are not expected to take any public roles, and it is usually men who take the leading role in religious or social groupings.

Within farming families, men and women share the agricultural work, while women are also expected to do all the housework and childcare. Women go into the surrounding





countryside to collect wild products such as bamboo shoots and mushrooms, or go fishing for extra food sources. Families are mostly self-sufficient in food, and only have to buy a few ingredients such as oil, onions and garlic.

For villagers relying on fishing, men go out each day to fish at sea on motorized boats, while women search for fish, clams and oysters along the seashore, among coastal rocks and mangroves, for food and also to earn income for the family.

Families who own little or no land, either rely on livestock rearing, or on wage labour, mainly on others' farms and orchards. However, men are paid more than women, usually earning 5,000 kyat (approx US\$5) a day, compared to 3,000 kyat (approx US\$3) for women.

With combined income from all family members, most families in the Htein Gyi area were able to earn enough to live comfortably, with sufficient savings for their children's education and donations to local Buddhist temples.





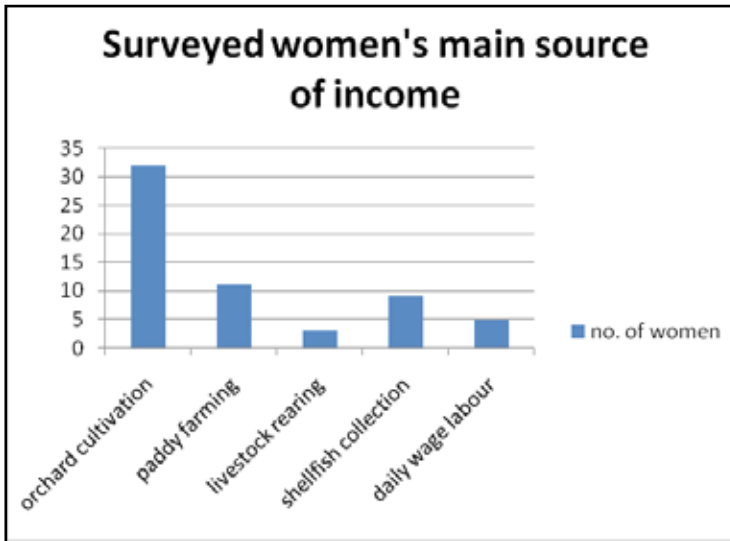
*Women peeling cauliflowers*

## 2. FINDINGS

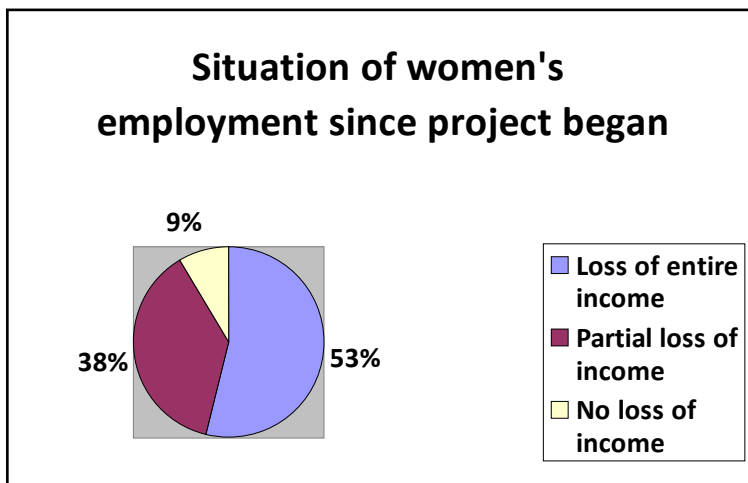
### GENERAL IMPACTS OF THE DSEZ

Local livelihoods and income severely affected by the project

Out of the 60 women interviewed, over two-thirds relied on their farms and orchards as their main source of income before the DSEZ began. The others collected shellfish, reared livestock and did daily wage labour (see chart below).



When asked about the impacts of the DSEZ on their income, 53 of the 60 women said they had suffered a loss of income since the start of the project. 23 of these women, all paddy or orchard farmers, said they had completely lost their income. The seven women who said their income had not been impacted were wage laborers on others' farms, or reared livestock.



The main cause of loss of income for women farmers has been land confiscation, as well as damage to farmlands from road construction and gravel mining. Out of the 60 women interviewed, 27 had had all or some of their lands confiscated. Some described how the ITD company had used bulldozers to clear their land and destroy all their crops and trees, after which they were forbidden from accessing the land for any purpose.



Only one third of the women whose lands were confiscated said their families had received compensation, but with no standard rate, and mostly very low amounts. One woman said her family had received only 500,000 kyat (US\$500) per acre of their cashew nut orchard, although annual income per acre was over 1,000,000 kyat (US\$1,000).

A woman from Paradat explained: "As they blasted the Mayingyi mountain and took out rocks to build roads, soil has washed down onto our farms, which used to yield 60-70 baskets of rice a year. Now with the soil washing down, we cannot break even. We have to work very hard to get even 30 baskets."

Most women from Mayingyi and Paradat had also suffered loss of income because of soil run-off from the gravel mine at Mayingyi mountain, which has destroyed their farms. In the Mayingyi region, DSEZ road construction and gravel mining have ruined about 200 acres of rice fields owned by 49 farmers, and also damaged 193 acres of farmland owned by 44 farmers in nearby Paradat village.

Other women had suffered damage to crops because road construction had blocked drainage channels from their fields, causing flooding.

Formerly, families were able to earn up to 3 million kyat (approx. US\$3,000) annually from an acre of farmland, growing paddy in



*Confiscated cashew nut orchard, cleared of trees*



*Farmland now unusable due to soil run-off from gravel mining (at mountain in background)*



the rainy season, and other crops such as water-melon during the dry season. These amounts enabled families to live comfortably, send their children to school, and also make sizeable donations to the local temples.

However, loss of farmlands has changed all this. With little or no compensation provided, many families now have to borrow money from local moneylenders in order to pay for daily living costs. Rates of interest are between 10 to 20%.

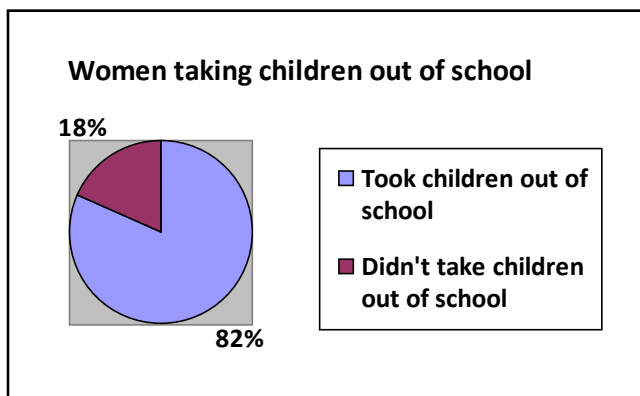
The loss of income is also impacting the ability of communities to donate to and sustain their local Buddhist clergy. For example, Mayangyi villagers used to contribute 1,000,000 kyat (US\$1,000) per year to the costs of educating two monks from the Mayangyi monastery who are studying in Yangon and Mandalay. However, now they are only able to provide 400,000 kyat (US\$400).



### Children being taken out of school

With family incomes falling due to the impacts of the DSEZ, parents can no longer afford to send their children to school. There are primary schools in each of the villages in Htein Gyi tract. Only Htein Gyi village has a secondary school. The cost of sending a child to primary school is over 400,000 kyat (US\$400) a year, and to secondary school over 700,000 kyat (US\$700) a year.

Among the women interviewed, 49 had taken their children (both boys and girls) out of school since the project began. 11 of these women had taken children under age 13 out of school.



## SPECIFIC IMPACTS ON WOMEN

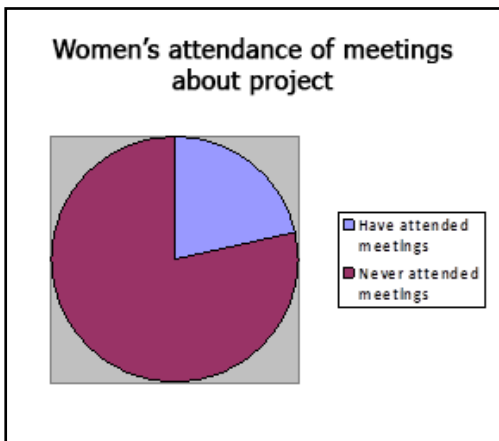
### Poorer information access for women regarding the project

Although there has been only little information provided to local communities about the project, our research indicates that women have had even less access to this information than men.

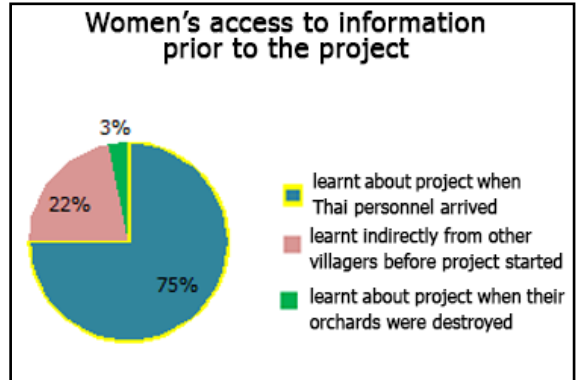
Information was generally provided through public meetings, which women were not expected or encouraged to attend. During the project implementation period, when authorities summoned the locals to announce information about the project, it was usually only men who attended the meetings.

"For the meetings, only men go there. Since they are heads of families, they can make decisions. If we asked them to learn about matters, they merely replied that we women would not understand a thing even if they explained it to us. We only knew about the deep sea port when bulldozers started to dig up the land," said a woman from Ngapidat village.

Another reason why it was mostly men who attended the meetings was that they were usually held at about 9 am, which is the time when women start cooking the first meal of the day, having been working in their farms or orchards since early morning.



Out of sixty women interviewed, only thirteen had attended a meeting called by local authorities on the DSEZ, but said they were not able to present their views and opinions at the meeting. Forty-seven women answered that only their husbands had attended a meeting on the DSEZ.



When we asked them whether they had got any information before the project started, forty-five women replied that they only knew about the project when Thai personnel arrived in their region, while thirteen women answered that they had knowledge of the project through some other locals. Two women answered that they only knew about the project when their orchards were destroyed. Even when authorities gave information to locals, interviewees said they only presented the good side of the project but not its negative effects.

### Women excluded from decision-making over land sale and compensation

Most of the Htein Gyi tract villagers do not have official land title certificates, but have documents showing they pay land taxes. Only two of the 60 women interviewed said their names were listed on documents as the owner of their land; both were widows. The rest of the women said that names of male heads of household were listed, or else these men were

acting as legal users, since the names on the document were of deceased grandparents.

This has meant women were more likely to be excluded from decisions about their land.

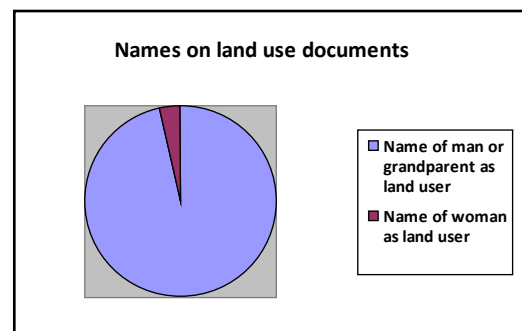
Although villagers have had no choice about having their lands confiscated for the DSEZ, landowners have been asked to sign that they will agree to certain amounts of compensation. Decision making about this has been with the formal landusers, in other words almost always with the men. Some women interviewed said they felt that the amount provided was far too low, but they could do nothing as their husbands had decided to accept it. For example, a woman complained that her husband had accepted only 500,000 kyat (US\$ 500) per acre for their orchard, which provided their family with their main livelihood.

Although very few people have received compensation so far, the money that has been paid out has mostly been given directly into the hands of men, as they are the legal landusers. This has led to wasteful spending by some men, who have not felt obliged to consult other family members about using the money. For example, a farmer in Mudu was given 40 million kyat (approx. US\$40,000) for over 20 acres of land. Within one year he had spent all the money, including on buying a car, which he later sold. Now he is working as a wage laborer and fisherman. His two sons and one daughter have migrated to Thailand to find work.

With rich land speculators colluding with authorities to buy up land before the project begins, some men are choosing to sell off their land to earn quick money. In some cases, men who were not legitimate users of land have forced women whose names were on legal land document to hand the land over to them, so they could get compensation.

A woman from Mudu village told the interviewers, "Our orchard is not inherited but bought with our savings 4-5 years ago. The transaction paper had my husband's name on it. Last year, when my husband passed away, his uncle wanted to take over the orchard. I was working in Thailand after my husband's death. Now, when I returned, my late husband's uncle forced me to sign a document handing over the orchard. As he came to me drunk at night and threatened me with a knife, I put my signature out of fear. His uncle is very close to the village head. Now I have nothing left."

The local land officials and administrative authorities coming to measure land and allocate compensation have all been men. In Htein Gyi tract, all the village administrators and village land management committee members are men. These male authorities have put pressure on women landowners to agree to their terms, and in some cases cheated them.



"In my home, all are women. We have been intimidated more because of our status as widows. When they came to do the land survey, they bullied us by forcing us to accept their terms or else we would have no chance in the future. The so-called support teams as well did not stand on the villagers' side. Land surveyors measured my five-acre land and stated that it was four acres only, thereby taking one acre for them. Since the emergence of the deep sea port [project], corruption has flourished in our land" said a woman from Ngapidat.



## Women's shellfish collection livelihoods impacted by access restrictions

Livelihoods of fishing families have already been directly impacted by the project, as the vibration of heavy machinery during construction along the coast has caused schools of fish to migrate far from the shore, resulting in poor catches and reduced incomes for fishermen. Going out further to sea also means more money spent on fuel for boats.

An added problem specifically facing women in coastal villages is that they are now facing difficulty earning income from collecting shellfish along the shore and in mangroves, due to restriction of access to coastal areas around the project.

Women previously earned Kyat 5,000 (US\$ 5) to 7,000 (US\$ 7) a day from shellfish collection.

A woman from Ngapidat village said, "In the past, when my husband sailed out to fish, I was able to collect oysters and clams to resell. As we have no boat of our own, he acquired a share in another person's boat, and uses that. But now I can't collect oysters. All places are strewn with signs and notices warning people not to trespass. If we enter, we will be arrested."

### Sexual harassment by project workers

Since the project began, it has employed hundreds of male workers from Thailand and Upper Burma. Young women going out to collect oysters around the project site have been sexually harassed by these workers. Some have become sexual partners of the workers, believing they would become their wives, but have then been abandoned. A few have started to sell sexual services.



*Women collecting shellfish*

"Nowadays, Thais and Gans (name given to Burmans from Upper Burma) are courting the pretty local girls. Some girls also want quick money and believe it is easy to get this from Thais. If some problem arises, the men settle it by handing out a little money. A Thai took in a girl saying that he would treat her as a legal wife but some time later he fled to Thailand. Now we dare not tell our teenage daughters to collect oysters. Since the migrant workers are not from our village, how can you pursue and take action against them if they commit rape?" said a local woman from Paradat village.

Unfortunately, there is a culture of impunity for sexual violence even when committed by local men, and incidents usually get hushed up with money. A woman from Mayingyi spoke of a recent incident of rape where the perpetrator paid off the woman's father. "An influential (local) man raped a woman who was just over age 20. When she got pregnant, the man gave her father 200,000 kyat (US\$ 200) to settle the matter. Since the village is far from the city and the locals have poor legal knowledge and also don't trust the judicial system, no one bothered to file a case with the police or magistrate. Most people dare not speak out but settle such matters on their own."

## Daughters migrating to Thailand to earn money for family

Traditionally, both sons and daughters were expected after leaving school to return to work in their parents' farms, but girls were also expected to help their mothers do household chores, and collect food in the surrounding countryside.

However, with parents now unable to survive from income from their lands, they are increasingly sending their children to work in Thailand. For boys, this is so they can earn a living to support themselves, but girls are expected to earn money to send back home for their families. This is due to the gendered expectation that daughters are "caregivers" of the family.

A woman from Paradat village whose fields had been destroyed by soil run-off from gravel mining, had sent her two teenage daughters to work in Thailand. She said: "We can't send our children to school anymore. We just took them out of school and sent them to Thailand--a 15-year old daughter and a 17-year old daughter. I have to survive by relying on the remittances sent home by them. I can't rely on the farm as before."

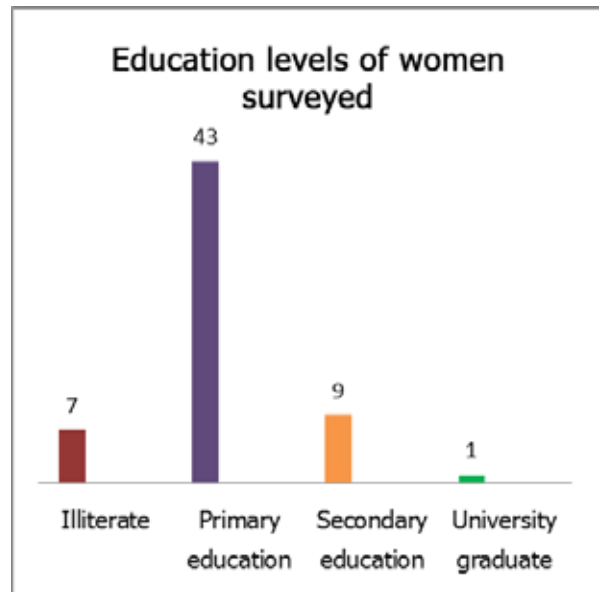
A woman from Mudu village said, "If we continue to live here, we will starve. Therefore we have to send our children to Thailand to work."

Young women from the Tavoy area going to work in Thailand usually find jobs as housemaids, or workers in seafood factories in coastal areas such as Mahachai, Ranong or Surat Thani. Girls under 18 are not allowed to travel legally to Thailand and need to rely on a broker, therefore running the risk of being trafficked, and other abuse and exploitation. The women are usually indebted to the broker, and sometimes forced to work in

captivity until the debt is repaid from their earnings. Wages are commonly lower than the standard minimum wage in Thailand.

## Women's lack of formal education causing concern for future survival

Most women in the project area have little formal education. Out of the 60 women interviewed, seven were illiterate, and 43 had only attended primary school.



With their income already impacted by the project, these women fear that if they have to resettle away from their farms, the chances of maintaining their livelihoods will be very slim. They are very worried about how they will earn an income to support their families, how their communities will survive, and whether they will be able to maintain their cultural identity.

As a woman from Ngapidat said: "The project has only just begun, but we are already suffering now. I can't imagine how much we will suffer in sixty to seventy years' time. The coming factories will be huge, so they will recruit educated people only. We

are not very literate and have earned our living by fishing and collecting oysters since our grandparents' time. Now we are losing our villages and means of living. Soon we will also lose our ethnicity."

Although it was expected that some local men might find work as laborers at the project site, this has not been the case. Women therefore have little hope that they will find work there. A woman from Mudu village said, "Not only for women but even for men, there is no work. They just kill the time at the snooker table all day. In the past men worked in the farms at this time of the year. Women also did rice transplanting. Now there is no farm to grow rice anymore. When there are job vacancies in the deep sea port worksite (construction work), they don't call up the locals. Only Gans (people from Upper Burma) are hired or graduates. There are no graduates in the villages."

The fears of these women are borne out by the experience of people living around the Map Ta Phut industrial estate in Thailand, where few locals are employed in the factories. As described by a Thai NGO: "Most local residents have had no chance to be employed in the industries (in Map Ta Phut), because they are not qualified enough to work in high-tech factories. Only a few are hired as housekeepers, gardeners or drivers."<sup>2</sup>

One of the women interviewed in a focus group discussion, who was from the fishing village of Charkan, had moved to the resettlement site at Bawar in 2013, but only stayed there one month, because there was no land and no means of earning a living. Even though there was a house provided, they were told that water and electricity would only be provided for six months.

## Women taking public action to protect their rights



*Women protest against husbands' arrest in Dawei*

In frustration with the project, some women impacted by the DSEZ have started to take action to protect their rights. For example, in 2012, a woman farmer from Mayingyi set up a barricade across a road which ITD had built as a short cut through her orchard, because the company had not informed her or provided compensation. She was able to prevent the company from further using the road.

Impacted women have also taken collective action to oppose land confiscation for urban developments in the northern outskirts of Dawei, linked to the DSEZ. After the DSEZ was launched, the regional government began confiscating farms and other land on either side of the Dawei-Kamyawkin road, as part of a "regional development project," aimed at capitalizing on the expected influx of investment from the DSEZ. The project involves building housing for ministers and civil servants, an international-standard hospital and high-end shopping malls. There are no plans to provide compensation or replace the lands of affected farmers. As a result, these farmers, including women, have been protesting against the project. The

<sup>2</sup> *Towards Ecological Recovery and Regional Alliance (TERRA), Dawei Points of Concern, August 2012*

authorities have responded by arresting the protestors and prosecuting them on various charges. At the time of drafting this report, 19 farmers have been arrested, of whom nine women were fined Kyat 10,000 each and ten men were sentenced to three to six months' imprisonment. The imprisonment of the men came at a time when it was a busy period for farming, causing great difficulty for their wives and other family members. As a result, about 30 women held a demonstration on September 5, 2014, to oppose the unjust sentencing.

Local women have also been organising opposition to a planned oil refinery in the village of Nyin Maw, south of Dawei. This joint venture between a Chinese company and the military-owned Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited will refine oil transported by tankers from the Middle East to the DSEZ's deep sea port. About one hundred villagers marched to Launglone to protest against the project in March 2014, and when the authorities and company officials continued to try and persuade villagers to accept the project, local women organized their own system of alert. Whenever officials arrived at Nyin Maw village to hold closed-door meetings with villagers, women would blow whistles and start beating steel containers in their houses. 50-70 villagers would then come



*Protest against oil refinery in Nyinmaw village*

with motorcycles, surround the meeting place and not let the officials leave until they revealed what had been discussed. As a result, the developers have so far been unable to proceed with the project.

Also in Launglone township, women have started leading protests against a coal-fired power plant planned in the coastal area of Yamezu by a joint Burmese-Korean company called 24 Hours. On December 14, 2014, women led nearly 700 villagers in a demonstration against the project in Thakyettaw village.



*Protest against coal fired power plant in Thakyettaw village*





*Local system of alert used by women against oil refinery project developers*



*Dawei police surrounding women protesting against land confiscation*

## **DSEZ violating the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**

Previous reports have analyzed how the DSEZ is violating the rights of local communities, as enshrined in various international conventions, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, and UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.

We wish to highlight that the DSEZ is violating numerous provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). There appear to have been no gender considerations at all in its development and implementation. Neither the DSEZ law of January 2011, nor the updated January 2014 Myanmar Special Economic Zone Law, contains any mention of women.

TWU is particularly concerned at the DSEZ's failure to adhere to CEDAW Article 14, relating to rural women, which stipulates:

1. States Parties shall take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which rural women play in the economic survival of their families, including their work in the non-monetized sectors of the economy, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the application of the provisions of the present Convention to women in rural areas.

2. State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development, and in particular, shall ensure to such women the right: (a) To participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels;

TWU's findings show that there has been no attempt at all by the DSEZ implementers to identify specific vulnerabilities of women, and ensure their participation in any stage of the project. On the contrary, by dealing primarily with the men in the community, the authorities are further marginalizing women and reinforcing their subordinate status.

Another provision under CEDAW Article 14 mentions that rural women should be granted the right "To obtain all types of training and education, formal and non-formal, including that relating to functional literacy." However, not only are the women impacted by the DSEZ are being given no training to enable them to earn a livelihood after they are resettled, but they are having to put an end to their daughters' education, and send them to Thailand to earn a living.



# CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our research shows clearly the serious damage inflicted by the DSEZ on local communities in the Htein Gyi area, even though the project has only just begun. Land confiscation, construction work, mining and access restrictions, have destroyed traditional agricultural and fishing livelihoods, causing food insecurity and debt, and forcing parents to take their children out of school.

We have also identified specific vulnerabilities of women related to the project. They have had poorer access than men to information about the project, and have been excluded from decision-making over land sale and compensation. They are facing difficulty carrying out livelihoods such as oyster collection, due to access restrictions to the coast. They have also had to suffer sexual harassment from project workers. Due to food insecurity, girls are increasingly being sent to work in Thailand

to earn money for their families, placing them at risk of trafficking and exploitation. With low levels of education, women fear that once they are relocated away from their lands they will have no means of survival.

This is only a small foretaste of the damage that is yet to come from this giant industrial project. TWU has been opposed to the DSEZ from the outset, due to the complete lack of transparency and exclusion of local communities from decision-making around the project, and due to the large-scale social and environmental damage it will cause. We have visited Thailand's Map Ta Phut industrial estate and seen firsthand how the dangerous levels of pollution have devastated local farming, fishing and tourism livelihoods and caused high rates of cancer among local communities. We are determined not to accept a similar project in our homelands.

## TWU THEREFORE MAKES THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS:

To the governments of Burma and Thailand, and the project developers:

- Immediately stop the DSEZ project.
- Return any lands which have been confiscated for the project to their original owners.
- Provide proper compensation to those whose lands have been confiscated or whose crops or farmlands have been damaged or destroyed by the project.
- Stop restricting access to the coastal area
- Allow all roads built for the project to be used freely by the public.
- Hand over buildings constructed at the project site to local communities, to be used for the benefit of the public
- Dismantle the small port already built for the project, as the dock is too high to be used by local people's fishing boats

## **To the government of Burma:**

- There should be constitutional reform to establish a federal system of government, in which decision making power over large-scale development projects such as the DSEZ is devolved down to the state and regional level.
- For any future large development projects in the Dawei area, ensure that there is Free Prior and Informed Consent of local communities, with equal participation of women. There must be transparent Environmental Impact Assessments, Social Impact Assessments and Health Impact Assessments conducted before the project.
- In compliance with CEDAW, review existing laws related to rural development, to ensure the protection of rural women's rights.

## APPENDIX

List of villages, households and population that will fall inside the industrial zone area (according to Burmese government data at the start of the project)

No.	Village name	Houses	Families	Population
1	Ralaing	384	340	1623
2	Pugawzoon	410	421	2212
3	Thabyu Chaung	169	162	746
4	Kya Khattapin Inn	333	320	1542
5	Kyauk Htauk	196	210	1900
6	Daung Shaun	82	101	603
7	Pain Shaun	369	378	2963
8	Kyaut Hwet Kon	205	197	1060
9	Mudu	343	347	2029
10	Paradat	321	314	1662
11	Htein Gyi	415	405	2253
12	Mindat	92	93	451
13	Myo Haung	242	287	2391
14	Sinpunit	41	49	509
15	Nattwin	236	268	2668
16	Mayinggyi	136	135	821
17	Le-shaung	610	626	3337
18	Nyaungbinseik	52	52	328
19	Ngapidat	18	23	145
	<b>Total</b>	<b>3,654</b>	<b>4,728</b>	<b>29,243</b>

## **Message of appreciation**

Special thanks to all who have helped and supported us to compile the report, particularly to all the local residents who helped us collect information for the report. Special thanks also to those, including the Burma Relief Centre, who helped develop the report, and to Trocaire, which provided financial support. Particular thanks to Nabuleh locals who patiently gave answers to our interviewers to draft the report.



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