Gender Inclusion Is Key to Social Justice: A Case Study of Two Villages Downstream of the Proposed Mongton Dam, Shan State

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Abstract
This paper focuses on ethnic rural women in Southern Shan State, Myanmar and their access to and control over livelihood opportunities and involvement in decision making processes. It aims to analyze their vulnerability, especially within the context of the proposed mega Mongton dam project, from the perspectives of social justice and gender equality. This study used the ‘gender impact assessment’ tool developed by Oxfam and surveys with individual households and focus groups with mixed and women-only groups.

The study concluded that at the national level, policies are not gender inclusive, although a few legal frameworks are starting to include gender in their content. At the household and community levels, women, to a much greater extent than men, are more subjected to poverty, have restricted access to natural resources, and a lack of (or) inadequate access to education and health services. This, in addition to traditional and cultural barriers and compounded by a lack of gender sensitive policies, lowers them to disadvantaged positions where their voices are rarely heard. Therefore, in regards to the proposed Mongton Dam, this paper aims to inform relevant policy makers of the importance of an inclusive approach that considers vulnerable groups, such as ethnic rural women, in making decisions that impact their lives.