

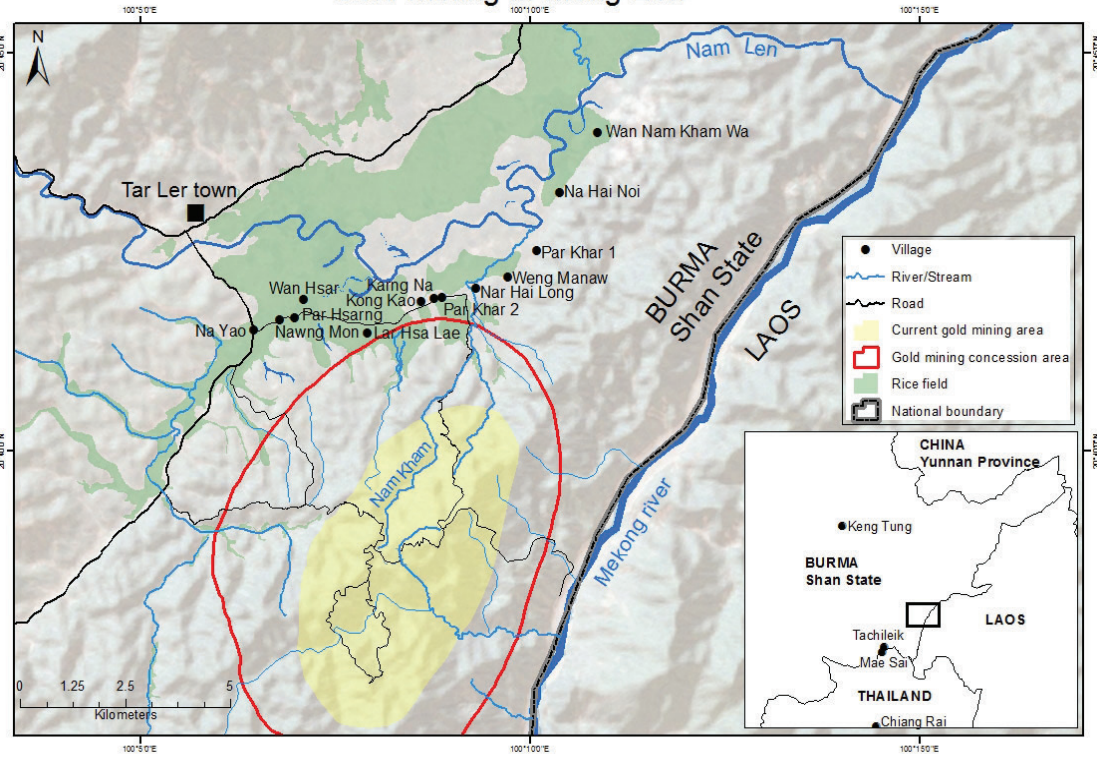
# STOP GOLD MINING IN MONG LEN!



Shan Farmers' Network

*Stop gold mining!*

## Gold Mining in Mong Len



*Poisoned water sources near Wan Na Hai Long*

## ***Stop gold mining in Mong Len!***

Since 2007, over ten companies have been digging for gold in the “Loi Kham” hills between the town of Ta Ler and the Mekong River, in Tachilek township, eastern Shan State. So far, about eleven square miles of forested hillsides have been dug up for gold mining, causing soil erosion and water pollution that has destroyed the farming livelihoods of about 340 people in two nearby villages. Over 1,500 people in eight more villages in the fertile Nam Len valley are being threatened as the gold mining expands. The villagers are demanding an immediate stop to the gold mining, the restoration of their lands and water sources to their original condition, and full compensation for all the losses they have suffered.

### ***Large scale gold mining destroying the Loi Kham hills***

The “Loi Kham” hills in the West Mong Len tract of Ta Ler sub-township are filled with gold (“Loi Kham” means GoldenHills in Shan). Villagers traditionally used to pan for gold in the Nam Kham stream that flowed from this area, but there was no large scale gold mining before 2007.



***Destruction by gold mining in Loi Kham hills***

## *Stop gold mining!*

In 2007, Sai Lao Heng Co., Minn Oo Aung Co., Hein Linn Sann Co, Sann Baramee Co. and Wanna TheinThan Co. began digging for gold in the area. Later, Sai Thip Co., Loi Kham Long Co., Sai Saik Pyo Ye Co., Shwe Taung Co. and KML Co. also started gold-mining operations. Security is being provided for the mining by Burma Army Border Guard Force 1009, formerly a Lahu militia force, linked to Lahu militia leader Khin Maung Latt (who owns KML mining company).



***Burma Army BGF 1009 taking security for the gold mining companies***

The companies have built roads into the forested mountains. They have used dynamite and bulldozers to dig up the land. They use large amounts of cyanide, which is a deadly poison, to extract the gold from the soil, and also use a lot of water to rinse the gold.

They pump water from the source of Nam Kham stream, use it to rinse the gold, then release it back into the stream, which flows down

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to the Nam Len valley below. This water is mixed with cyanide and with other mining waste. Also, a lot of soil from the mining area is washed down from the mountain into the Nam Kham stream when it rains.

### *Nam Kham stream becomes shallow and poisoned*

Two villages, Na Hai Long and Weng Manaw, in the Mong Len valley rely on the Nam Kham stream for their farming and other livelihoods. The stream used to be about ten feet deep, and was very clear. Now, the stream is only about six inches deep, and is polluted and muddy from the mining waste. Villagers used to use the water for washing, cooking, watering their fields, and also for fishing. They used to have shrimps and fish breeding ponds next to the stream. They also used the stream to run small hydropower generators. Now they cannot use this water for anything.



*Nam Kham stream has become shallow and poisoned*

Because the stream is now so shallow, it cannot contain the rainwater flowing down from the hills, which floods over nearby fields and villages. This floodwater is filled with soil and poisonous chemicals from the mining waste. It has killed the crops in the fields, killed fruit

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trees (such as mango and coconut) and other plants next to the stream, and has polluted the wells in the village. Also, sand has been washed into people's house compounds and the village temple, making it impossible to grow vegetables around people's houses, and chickens have nothing to eat. The village graveyard is now covered in sand, and can no longer be used.



*Rice fields destroyed by gold mining waste*

### ***Rice fields and vegetable gardens destroyed***

Now all the fields (about 357 acres) around the villages of Na Hai Long and Weng Manaw have become uncultivable. The villagers used to rely on growing two crops of rice a year, as well as planting other vegetables. Now they cannot plant anything in their former fields or gardens. Some have been able to use or rent land farther away, but there is little land available in the area, and the competition for land is causing conflict.

### ***Farm animals poisoned***

Villages used to rear cattle and buffalo, which grazed in the

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fields along the stream. These animals became sick after drinking the water in the stream, and some died. Therefore the villagers have sold their remaining animals. There are also no more fish ponds.



*Animals which died from the poisoned water*

### *Health problems from polluted water*

When villagers waded through the Nam Kham stream, or through floodwater from the stream, their skin becomes itchy. If they get any cuts, these get infected and take a long time to heal, unlike in the past, when healing would take just a few days. Many children have skin infections.

### *Mining trucks cause damage to roads*

The road leading to the mining area from Na Yao is mostly not surfaced. The mining trucks have caused the road to be badly damaged, with potholes, making it difficult for other vehicles to use it. There are eleven villages along the road, which are all impacted by this, but the company has not taken any responsibility for fixing the road.



*Road damaged by mining trucks*

### ***Children taken out of school, and youth going to work in Thailand and Laos***

Because they cannot earn money from farming, some parents have taken their children out of school. In 2013, parents in Na Ha Long took seven children out of school in Ta Ler, because they could not afford to pay for their education.

Before 2008, no young people in NaHai Long village used to go and work in Thailand because they could earn such a good income from farming. However, now about three-quarters of the youth in Na Hai Long have already left to go and work in Thailand and Laos because they cannot earn a living at home. In Laos, they are finding work in the casinos on the Mekong River.



## *Villagers get very little compensation*

Since 2012, villagers in Na Hai Long and Weng Manaw have been writing to township authorities to demand a stop to the mining, and for the companies to restore the lands to their former condition, and to provide proper compensation. Farmers used to be able to earn about 50,000 baht annually per acre from their rice fields.

In 2012, they received compensation from the companies, but it was only about 10,000 baht per acre, for some fields. In 2013, they received about 15,000 baht per acre, for only 92.35 acres, even though they had asked compensation for 181.94 acres.

The only other assistance to the villagers from the companies was some new pipes to bring water down from the mountains to Na Hai Long village, and a water storage tank there. They also provided 24 solar panels and batteries to the village, since the hydropower generators could no longer be run. However, the solar batteries only lasted for about a year, and villagers have had to buy new ones to replace them.



*Gold mining company signboard*

## ***Companies pressure villagers to stop making demands***

In February 2014, the villagers appealed to the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party MP in Tachilek to help stop the mining and arrange proper compensation. He then wrote to the Shan State Chief Minister asking for an investigation into the impacts of the mining. As a result, in mid-April the Shan State government authorized the township authorities to order the mining companies to stop their operations temporarily. . However, the mining has not stopped. Instead, the mining companies have tried to pressure villagers to withdraw their demands.

On 28 May, 2014, Sai Tip Co. and Loi Kham Co. drafted a letter on behalf of the Na Hai Long and Weng Manaw villagers to the Shan State parliament. It said these companies had provided development assistance and yearly compensation to them, so the villagers wanted to withdraw the complaint they had made in February 2014, and allow Sai Tip and Loi Kham companies to continue mining. The companies brought the letter to the villagers to sign, saying they would only provide further compensation if the villages signed it. However, no one agreed to sign it.

### ***Our demands***

We, the Shan Farmers' Network, make the following demands to President Thein Sein, the Shan State parliament, Sai Ai Pao (Chairman of the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party and Shan State Mining Minister) and all the companies carrying out gold mining in the Mong Len area:

1. To stop immediately the gold mining operations in the Mong Len area, and withdraw all equipment and personnel from the area.
2. To restore the waterways and lands to the condition they were in before the mining began.
3. To provide full compensation for all the losses incurred by local villagers due to the mining.

***All farmers in Shan State must join together to protect our lands!***

# Stop gold mining!



