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Press release by Tavoyan Women's Union

**Women say Dawei project destroying local economy and should be stopped**

A new report by the Tavoyan Women's Union (TWU) exposes how the Dawei Special Economic Zone Project is already undermining local agricultural and fishing livelihoods, with particularly serious impacts on women, and calls for its immediate cancellation.

"Our lives – not for sale" is based on interviews with women from six villages, inhabited by over 10,000 people, in the main project area, where initial construction of this multi-billion dollar Thailand-Burma joint venture is underway. Women describe how widespread land confiscation, destruction of farmlands and restricted access to the coast are destroying the economic backbone of their communities.

Most women said they had lost all or part of their income from farms, orchards and coastal shellfish collection, and are now facing food insecurity. Over three quarters of the women had been forced to take their children out of school for financial reasons, including from primary school. Girls are increasingly being sent to work in Thailand to earn money for their families, placing them at risk of trafficking and exploitation.

There have been no attempts to mitigate the project's impacts on women. Already marginalized, women have been given little information about the project, and have been excluded from decision-making over compensation processes, as land documents are mostly in the name of men. Sexual harassment from the project workers has been threatened women's security.

Tens of thousands of people will be forcibly relocated for this giant industrial project, causing Tavoyan women to fear for the survival of their communities and culture once they are separated from their ancestral homes and lands. Citing the chronic pollution of the Map Tha Put industrial estate in Thailand, TWU deplores the decision by Naypyidaw to allow Thailand to establish a project that will be ten times the size in this pristine coastal area.

The Dawei project has barely begun, but is already destroying the economic backbone of our communities. It must be stopped before it proceeds any further," said Su Su Swe of TWU.

The report describes how local women around Dawei are increasingly taking action to protect their rights, leading protests against land confiscation and a planned Chinese oil refinery and Korean coal-fired power plant.

"Women are taking a stand and saying their lands and lives are not for sale by Naypyidaw," said Soe Soe New.

The Burmese government claims to be ensuring women's rights are protected in rural development programs in accordance with CEDAW.

Further information can be viewed on [www.tavoyanvoice.com](http://www.tavoyanvoice.com)

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