

The production of water insecurity in Hakha Town, Chin State, Myanmar



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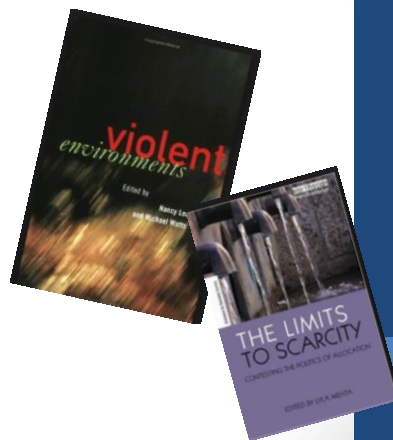
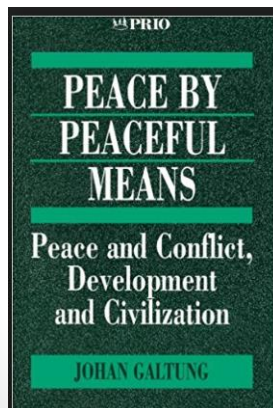
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Introduction

- Hakha town is the capital of Chin State, Myanmar
- Over the past decade, this town's population has suffered severe water shortages
- At present, there is no credible centralized municipal government water supply in Hakha town
- Our analysis draws on concepts from peace studies and political ecology to understand the social processes changing landscapes and producing water scarcity
- We explore how local people have organized themselves around managing natural springs and streams



Conceptual approach: Peace Studies and Political Ecology



Brief history of Chin State

- After the WWII, the Chin joined the Panlong Agreement
- In 1962, General Ne Win came to power leading to Burma's socialist period.
- Until 1988, all State Council chairmen were Chin Nationals, and there were no military battalions stationed in the State.
- In 1988, echoing uprisings across the country, many Chin university students resisted the junta government
- In response to subsequent persecution, more than 200,000 Chin fled to become refugees in India, Malaysia, and resettled to third countries.
- Between 2010 and 2015, under present Thein Sein, there was a lot of change in Myanmar as a whole.
- In 2015, the NLD was elected nationally, and in Chin State



Burmese cultural influence

- Many Chin consider Chin State to have been relatively less affected by Burmese cultural influence compared to other ethnic states.
- There are various symbols and practices of Burmanization, two large military bases are located on the peak of Rung Mountain after the 1988 uprising, and two Buddhist temples.



The Causes and Consequence Deforestation

Hakha village before 1960s



Hakha's watershed landscape and resources at present



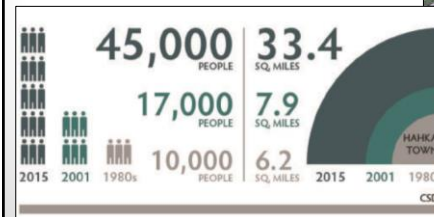
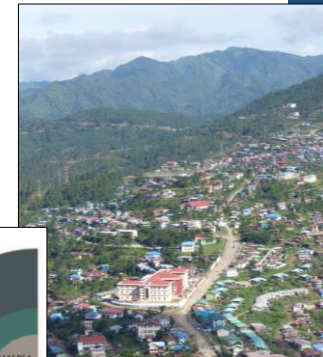
Road construction

- There have two major roads built under the socialist government regime through Hakha town.
 - A road from Hakha to Mutupi in 1975
 - From Hakha to Gangaw in 1983



Urban Expansion and Population Growth

- Extensive forest clearance has taken place as the town has expanded up the mountainside.
- Reasons for the rapid population growth include migration from rural areas, and the expanding presence of government.



Militarized mountains



- 2 military bases were built on the Rung Mountain, clear-cutting forests in the process.
- Accompanied by associated housing and infrastructure



Agriculture & fuel-wood collection

- There were early government policies in the 1970s to replace virgin forest with local productive trees
- Besides from house construction, small-scale agriculture was permitted in other areas of watershed, as well some larger scale tea and acacia plantations, which ultimately failed.
- Smaller trees were also cut to meet demand for firewood



The production of water scarcity

- Water demand growth linked to population growth is one factor in increased water scarcity
- Water scarcity is also socially produced by:
 - the politics of land use and deforestation in the watershed,
 - Systematic underinvestment in water storage and distribution infrastructure.
 - Weak existing formal institutions



Impacts and differentiated vulnerability

- Economic impacts
 - Buying water
 - Buying food
- Time spent collecting water
- Conflict over water resources
- New migrants into the town are particularly affected



A mosaic of water supplies and systems of governance

- **Local water user committee** Elected from the community, who manage larger water tanks distributed to around 150 HH



A mosaic of water supplies and systems of governance

- **Private water supplies** when springs are located within their land.
 - Many of these springs have been owned for generations and water spring sell to nearby households.



A mosaic of water supplies and systems of governance

- **Bottled water supply**



Politics of the Timit Dam

- In February 2014, at-the-time President U Thein Sein visited Hakha town for Chin National Day, and agreed to support the Timit Dam
- The project has been critiqued for....
 - Not completing an environmental impact assessment and other studies
 - Poor engineering design
 - Lack of consultation with residents, including on water pricing and the construction of large water storage tanks



Landslide

- A landslide event in July 2015 destroyed over 500 house and 4 churches.
- Over 4,000 people were directly affected.
- Emergency response was led by Church Groups, and the Hakha Rescue Committee.
- People have been forced to move into a “new settlement” now under construction.
- Conditions in the new settlement are basic, and resettled people are uncertain how they can make a future living.



Conclusion

- Water is a basic human need, and addressing water insecurity in Hakha town is an urgent concern
- Our study has revealed the inter-related physical and social processes that relate to water insecurity in Hakha
- The circumstances that precipitate water scarcity is in fact the product of profound, deeper forms of structural processes
- Our overarching recommendation is that addressing water scarcity in Hakha town should not only be approached as a technical and engineering challenge, but should also be recognized as a governance challenge

Thank you for listening



www.csds-chula.org/water-security-in-hakha/