



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Situation Update

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Dooplaya Situation Update: Kyainseikgyi, Kawkareik and Kyonedoe townships, October 2013 to January 2014

This Situation Update describes events occurring in Kyainseikgyi, Kawkareik and Kyonedoe townships, Dooplaya District during the period between October 2013 and January 2014, and includes information regarding ongoing militarisation and forced labour; the environmental and other impacts of mining and rubber tree cultivation; education; and drug-related sexual violence.

- *Beginning on November 11th 2013, during a troop rotation, Tatmadaw Light Infantry Battalion #545 ordered S--- villagers to transport materials using their own tractors; villagers were forced to do this work without pay or the provision of food, but money for gasoline was provided.*
 - *Coal and stone mining projects led to deforestation, the pollution of water sources used for drinking and bathing and to skin and lung problems.*
 - *Villagers raised concerns regarding drug problems leading to killings, rape and sexual harassment. A disabled girl in W--- was raped by a man under the influence of drugs and subsequently became pregnant. A court case was filed and ended with a decision from the court sentencing the perpetrator to a jail term.*
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Situation Update | Kyainseikgyi, Kawkareik and Kyonedoe townships, Dooplaya District (October 2013 to January 2014)

The following Situation Update was received by KHRG in March 2014. It was written by a community member in Dooplaya District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. It is presented below translated exactly as originally written, save for minor edits for clarity and security.¹

Introduction

The information in this situation update was documented between October 9th 2013 and January 15th 2014. It includes information on: 1) ongoing militarisation; 2) local villagers' situation; 3) education; and 4) killing and violent cases in the area.

Ongoing militarisation

Regarding the military activities, on November 11th 2013, Tatmadaw [troops] based in Hpoh Hsee Muh village, Kaw T'Ree [Kawkareik] Township, Dooplaya District, began rotating. [Light Infantry Battalion (LIB)] #548 moved to another area and [LIB] #545 moved into the village from Kyaik Done [town]. When they were travelling to the village, they ordered the villagers to

¹ KHRG trains community members in eastern Burma to document individual human rights abuses using a standardised reporting format; conduct interviews with other villagers; and write general updates on the situation in areas with which they are familiar. When writing situation updates, community members are encouraged to summarise recent events, raise issues that they consider to be important, and present their opinions or perspective on abuse and other local dynamics in their area.

transport their materials with their [the villagers own] tractors. They ordered the villagers to go to Kyaik Done to collect their materials and then bring them back to S--- village. They [the Tatmadaw] brought food and plantation seeds with them. They only paid [the villagers] for the cost of the gasoline, but did not pay them anything for food [which the villagers had to buy for their own consumption during the journey]. As for the Tatmadaw based in Noh T’Kaw Township, we saw that they rotated and transported rations and plantation seeds to their new bases.

Local villagers’ situation

In the area [Kyainseikgyi Township], we see that the villagers face problems because of flooding. The villagers’ paddy grains died because of flooding. Flooding also damaged a lot of the natural environment [bamboo and trees]. A company came to a place in Ta Moh Theh and did coal mining, and in a place in Meh Kwaw Hkee, there is a stone mining project. Because of those projects the villagers face deforestation and their food has also been contaminated. The villagers get many skin diseases because of drinking and bathing in polluted water. Because the villagers breathe so much dust from the stone, they also get lung disease [respiratory problems], headache and dizziness. The villagers reported this to the leaders [Burma government township level officials] to help them solve the problems that they are facing. However, the villagers said that they have not received any response from them yet.

In Kruh Tuh [Kyonedoe] Township area, there is a big cliff called Lay T’Ler. For many years, the villagers and religious leaders have built their shrines on the cliff. They also built a monastery on the top of the cliff and another one on the base of the cliff. A company came in and started to mine the cliff, so the villagers feel like their religion has been damaged. The land and the plantation fields have also been damaged. The river has been polluted and the trees and bamboo have been cut down. The villagers’ livestock have also vanished. In Hpah Bu village, there is a forest that has been protected for a long time. The villagers were collecting *t’la aw*² from that forest to earn income for their livelihood. But now an armed group sold that forest and Mon people³ bought the land and planted a rubber plantation on it. They cut down the trees and bamboo and, even though the villagers and the village head [tried to] stop them, they did not listen. They reported it to the leaders but did not hear anything back yet, so it has become a big problem for the villagers. That *t’la aw* forest is 100 furlongs (20 km. / 12.5 miles)⁴ in length, and the width is 1,000 furlongs (200 km. / 125 miles). Currently, almost all of the forest has been damaged. As for the villagers who live in Kaw T’Ree Township area, they face [arbitrary] taxation problems. There is no problem caused by the KNU [Karen National Union]. But The Tatmadaw is still creating many problems for the villagers.

Education

Some areas in Noh Ta Kaw Township face a lack of education as there is no school. Especially in P’Aww Hkee village, there is no school [building] and the children have to study on the ground [in the open]. The village leaders are trying to build a school in order for the children to get an education. The village is small and the population is small, so even though they tried to build one school, they did not succeed [due to lack of funds]. In K’Kya village also, the number of students is growing each year, so it has become a problem because they do not fit in the school anymore. Some students [have to] study on the ground [outside]. The students’ parents and the

² *T’la aw* trees are teak-like trees with large leaves, which are traditionally collected by villagers and used to make thatched shingles for the roofs of houses.

³ The Mon people are believed to be some of the oldest inhabitants of Southeast Asia. Most live in the central Myanmar government demarcated areas of Mon State, located in the south of Burma and bordering Kayin State, Bago Region (formerly Pegu Division) and Tanintharyi Region (formerly Tenasserim Division). These areas overlap to an extent with KHRG’s research areas, which follow a locally defined system of demarcation.

⁴ A furlong is a unit of distance equivalent to 0.2 of a km. or 0.125 of a mile.

village leaders are trying to strengthen the school, but there are many problems as they are weak financially. They need support and encouragement from the leaders.

Killing and sexual violence

In the area, the community is facing drug problems [particularly related to the use of *yaba*],⁵ which have led to more killing, rape and sexual harassment [than in the past]. The livelihood problems cause some people to abuse other people's rights. An incident reportedly happened in K'Yin Kyauk Pya village in Kruh Tu [Kyonedoe] Township in which a villager was killed because of a drug issue.⁶ In W--- village, Ta Ree Ta Kaw village tract, Noh T'Kaw [Kyainseikgyi] Township, a girl named Ma P--- who is mute and mentally handicapped was raped by a perpetrator who was under the influence of drugs and she got pregnant, but the victim does not know what date she was raped, as she is mentally handicapped [and therefore cannot] remember. The perpetrator is reported [by villagers] to be called D---. He is a villager and is a married man who has four children already with his wife.⁷ In K'Yin Hlaing village, Kruh Tu Township, we see so many cases in which the villagers are violently abusing each other because of drug use. It has become the biggest problem and biggest concern for the villagers.

Conclusion

I have reported everything that I saw and heard had happened in the area when I was travelling to document human rights abuses.

Further background reading on the situation in Dooplaya District can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- "Chapter: The impact of anti-personnel and other mines in Southeast Myanmar since the January 2012 ceasefire," (July 2014)
- "Villagers report negative impacts of stone mining on their livelihoods in Kyaik Ma Yaw Township, 2011 to 2014," (June 2014)
- *Truce or Transition? Trends in human rights abuse and local response in Southeast Myanmar since the 2012 ceasefire*, (May 2014)
- "Dooplaya Situation Update: Kawkareik Township, May to August 2013," (February 2014)
- "Tatmadaw soldiers pilfer villagers' livestock in Dooplaya District, May to August 2013," (November 2013)

⁵ *Yaba*, which means "crazy medicine" in Thai, is a tablet form of methamphetamine. First developed in East Asia during World War II to enhance soldiers' performance, methamphetamine has become increasingly popular in Thailand, Laos, Cambodia Vietnam, and in Burma where it is typically manufactured. See, "[Yaba, the 'crazy medicine of East Asia](#)," UNODC, May 2008 and "[Woman raped and killed in Pa'an District, October 2012](#)," KHRG, December 2012.

⁶ Further information on this incident will be published as it is received.

⁷ According to information received through telephone calls with a KHRG community member in June 2014, as of mid-June 2014, the perpetrator was being kept in the local police station and the township leaders had filed a court case. By the end of June, the court case had come to an end, with a decision from the court sentencing the perpetrator to a jail term. The victim was being cared for by local members of the community and village leaders. The victim is reported by villagers to have delivered a child, which died shortly after the delivery.

