

The ARAKAN PROJECT

Forced labour after the elections:

An overview of forced labour practices in North Arakan, Burma
(November 2010 to July 2011)



Submission to the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) for consideration by the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) – ILO Convention 29

22 August 2011

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(November 2010 to July 2011)

The Arakan Project, 22 August 2011

Research funded by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), USA

The Arakan Project is an independent NGO engaged in research-based advocacy focussing on the human rights situation of the Rohingya minority of North Arakan State, Burma/Myanmar. The project coordinator, Chris Lewa, can be contacted at: chris.lewa@gmail.com

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QUOTES FROM ROHINGYA FORCED LABOURERS

“During the election campaign, contesting political parties promised that forced labour would stop under an elected government but we now see the opposite - forced labour has increased.”

-- A villager from Kha MOUNG Zeik, North Maungdaw, 7 April 2011
(Interview #04)

“We had hoped that, after the elections, we would finally get some relief from forced labour and sentry duties but nothing has changed. Whenever I do forced labour for a couple of days without a break, my family goes hungry. Often I work without any food for the entire day and go back home empty-handed. So I can’t even eat at night. It happened many times this year.”

-- A villager from Buthidaung Township, 24 July 2011
(Interview #13)

“We are like beasts of burden – even worse because of the way they treat us. A cow is treated well so that she won’t die. But the Myanmar authorities don’t care if a Rohingya dies of hunger.”

-- A villager from The Chaung, Maungdaw Township, 29 July 2011
(Interview #05)

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INTRODUCTION

This report, prepared by the Arakan Project, documents and analyses forced labour practices in North Arakan State/North Rakhine State of Burma/Myanmar over the 9-month period which followed the national elections of 7 November 2010 that brought a new ‘civilian’ government to power. It aims to provide information to the International Trade Unions Confederation (ITUC) to be incorporated in their annual submission to the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) reviewing Myanmar’s compliance with ILO Convention 29. It updates our previous report “*Forced labour in times of elections*” dated 24 August 2010, covering practices in the run-up to the elections in 2010.

This submission is based on field reports transmitted by sources within North Arakan and on 13 interviews with Rohingya visitors and seasonal migrants carried out along the Bangladesh-Burma border between March and July 2011. It includes an analysis of trends and practices while relevant excerpts from these 13 testimonies have been included as annexes.

ANALYSIS

On 7 November 2010, for the first time in 20 years, multi-party general elections were held in Myanmar as part of a ‘roadmap to democracy’ proposed by the military regime. The Election process and results were widely denounced as fraudulent and a pro-regime party, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) captured a large majority of the parliamentary seats. Despite being denied citizenship, the Rohingya were nevertheless allowed to vote, contest as candidates and form political parties, and six Rohingya representatives were elected.

During the period immediately preceding the elections, forced labour demands had noticeably decreased, raising hopes among Rohingyas for a better future under the new government, including some respite from compulsory labour. Unfortunately, their expectations were short-lived. Within days, forced labour exactions did not simply resume but, by December, reached a peak unseen since the early 1990s due to extensive repair of the border fence.

Whatever progress may emerge from the new government in Nay Pyi Taw, the plight of the Rohingya in North Arakan has not improved on the ground. On the contrary, the scourge of forced labour for the authorities remains much the same as in the past, with some Rohingya families ordered to contribute up to 15 days a month to various concurrent infrastructure projects and other regular maintenance and guard duties.

Forced labour trends and patterns

The high prevalence of forced labour observed this year in North Arakan is primarily related to the construction, upgrading or rehabilitation of the border fence, roads and bridges along the Bangladesh border. These infrastructure projects typically serve border security purposes and require large pools of labourers. Since early 2009, the military and the NaSaKa have continued to expand throughout North Arakan and, in particular, along the border fence and in remote border areas to the far north of Maungdaw and Buthidaung. The erection of the border fence with NaSaKa outposts along its length connected by roads to the main highway and the upgrading of other strategic roads suggest that the authorities intend to secure access

right up to the border to military vehicles, to tighten control on cross-border movements as well as to monitor more effectively the full length of the common border with Bangladesh.

During this dry season, the largest number of forced labourers has been requisitioned for the border fence and for road construction. Extensive repair was carried out on the border fence embankment. This was mostly completed in 2010 but washed away by floods and tidal surges while construction of new sections is still progressing in the far north of Maungdaw. 'Building and re-building' roads linking Army or NaSaKa camps and outposts, annually damaged by monsoon rains, and upgrading existing road networks also necessitate soaring demands for forced labour. As heavy rainfalls affected North Arakan in July and August 2011, emergency repair is already being undertaken, but more forced labour is expected to be used after the monsoon to properly rehabilitate newly damaged sections.

Construction of the border fence and of certain strategic roads and bridges is undertaken and supervised by Garrison Engineers (GE), specialised engineering units within the Tatmadaw under the Ministry of Defence. Sufficient government funds have been allocated to these projects to pay adequate wages to the labour force (the market rate varies between 2,000 and 3,000 Kyat a day). However, GE subcontract most construction projects to the NaSaKa Sectors, who siphon off the budget earmarked for the manpower and use forced labour instead. As a result, few labourers are fully remunerated - mostly those who are employed directly by GE in certain areas. Some just received a portion of the promised wages and the majority did not get paid at all. The NaSaKa also employ new tactics to collect manpower such as requisitioning larger number of workers to maintain their camps but then trucking them to the border fence.

In North Maungdaw, sentry duty increased following the alleged infiltration of militants at the end of February 2011 but a new 'patrol duty' is now imposed whereby villagers have also to patrol villages at night in addition to guarding it from sentry posts.

Orders to supply logs, bamboo poles, stones, etc. to be collected by villagers in the hills have also intensified to match increased demands for building materials at road construction sites, at new outposts and camps and for brick kilns. A sizable portion of these materials (logs, bamboo poles and bricks) are sold commercially by the NaSaKa and the Army.

With the onset of the monsoon, construction on infrastructure projects has been suspended but villagers are now summoned for cultivation and plantation work for the NaSaKa and Army. Forced labour on paddy cultivation decreased in recent years as the Army and NaSaKa rented out some of their paddy fields but it has not stopped. Planting rubber trees, physic nuts, bamboo seeds, etc. for government agro-forestry projects restarted with the first rains. This year, villagers reported that the NaSaKa and Army were also cultivating monsoon vegetables and planting fruit trees with forced labour, mostly for commercial purposes.

Demands for forced labour differ from place to place depending on the terrain but mostly on the number of camps established in the area. In Maungdaw Township, the NaSaKa present all along the border is the main perpetrator, and villagers are mostly recruited to work on the border fence and road construction as well as bridge construction and portering in the far north. In Buthidaung Township, it is the Army which is mostly responsible for forced labour and villagers are regularly targeted by orders to supply logs, bamboos and stones due to the hilly terrain but also to work on road construction and larger cultivation and plantation areas.

Child forced labour

Observers estimate that 35 to 40% of forced labourers are children, some as young as 10 years old - although not so many are seen on the border fence or road construction where the authorities want able-bodied men who can do heavy work. As families are compelled to fulfil so many forced labour orders and also need to work in order to survive, sending their children to replace them is often their only option.

1. The border fence

The Burmese authorities started erecting a fence along its common border with Bangladesh in March 2009. The section running along the Naf River south of Taung Pyo was mostly completed in 2010. Only a small section was added at the southern end from Pa Dinn to Za Ma Thet. Construction of the northern section along the land border with Bangladesh, which lies in a remote jungle area, is still in progress. Work is slow due to the harsh terrain and lack of access roads for the transport of materials. In July 2011, the northern section of the fence was completed up to border pillar No. 55, in Tat Chaung Village Tract under NaSaKa Sector 1, in the far north of Maungdaw. In the northern part, villagers had to build a brick base instead of an earth embankment to fix the poles.

However, this dry season, widespread forced labour was used by the NaSaKa to repair and widen the southern part of the border fence. The embankment was badly damaged by torrential rains during the 2010 monsoon and also collapsed in many areas as the earthworks were not compact enough to resist the daily tides on the Naf River. Major repair, reconstruction and widening of the earth embankment in South and Central Maungdaw started in full swing soon after the elections and peaked in December 2010.

Initially, the NaSaKa recruited labourers promising full wages. But workers ended up being paid far below the ongoing labour market rate and, within a couple weeks, many abandoned the worksite. The NaSaKa then sent orders to village administrators to collect forced labourers and kept them overnight at the worksite until they were replaced by another group. Some workers claimed they had to work for 10 days without a break. In some instances, when a village administrator failed to supply the required number, NaSaKa personnel raided villages at night to grab villagers in their sleep and forcibly brought them to the construction site. Another NaSaKa tactic to collect manpower for the border fence was to demand a quota of labourers for camp maintenance which was much larger than usual, then keep just a few for odd jobs in their camp and transfer the rest to the border fence. In some areas, the village administration has collected money from the villagers to pay the labourers.

Anyone who did not want to work had to pay 10,000 Kyat. People who could afford it generally preferred to pay the fine and, consequently, the poor had to perform many more days of forced labour than their normal rotation stint.

2. Road construction

Forced labour has also been recruited on a large scale for road construction projects. Many new roads were built, almost exclusively for military and strategic purposes or to facilitate access to the border. Last year, NaSaKa outposts were established at the mouth of rivers flowing down into the Naf River in order to seal these gaps in the border fence. This year, the GE had the NaSaKa build a series of roads to link these new check posts to the main

'highway' running north-south in Maungdaw Township. Villagers residing in these areas were forced to contribute their labour. In March 2011, the construction of another new road started in Ba Da Gar in North Buthidaung toward Wa Net Yone Army camp, situated in the deep jungle near the border with Bangladesh and Kyauk Taw Township. Although some machinery was used for major excavation work, forced labour was still requisitioned to clear the jungle and cut trees. Recently, however, this project was allegedly subcontracted to Mikko, a private company involved in logging which, according to villagers of the area, does not use forced labour. Moreover, in 2010, the NaSaKa started building a road between their Sector 1 and 2 offices in North Maungdaw and work resumed during this dry season.

Many villagers were also ordered to work on the repair and upgrading of existing roads. During the 2010 monsoon and again this year, heavy rainfalls considerably damaged the existing road network. While some emergency patching-up took place on the spot, major repairs were carried out during the dry season. In many instances, roads being repaired were also upgraded, especially those used by the military, and villagers were instructed to widen and raise the road embankment, by adding earth and stones on both sides as well as on the road surface.

Villages located near these roads received regular orders from the NaSaKa and/or the Army to dispatch a quota of workers. Our sources claimed they were generally not remunerated. Especially in Buthidaung, villagers had to work simultaneously on several road repair sites according to orders issued by different camps and they also had to collect stones not just for local roads but also to be transported by truck to roads elsewhere.

In early March 2011, a young Rohingya man died while performing forced labour on a road link to the border fence near Nga Khu Ya in Central Maungdaw. His family reportedly received financial compensation.

3. Construction of bridges and culverts

North Maungdaw has been particularly affected by the construction of bridges and culverts. Under NaSaKa Sector 3, at least 3 bridges have been constructed in Taung Pyo, Kun Thee Pin and across the river between The Chaung and Lake Ya respectively, and 6 culverts were built on the border fence to channel water underneath the embankment.

Further north, villagers were compelled to work on a new bridge over the Purma River in NaSaKa Sector 2 and others on another bridge over the Ray Aung River in NaSaKa Sector 1.

Bridge construction also requires the supply of building materials such as stones, sand, wooden poles and wooden boards, which villagers had to get themselves and carry to the bridges.

4. Other construction work

- During this dry season, a small outpost was transformed into a new Army camp with forced labour in Nga Kyin Tauk village tract, north of Buthidaung town, specifically to park armoured vehicles and store arms and ammunitions. Villagers had to clear the area, build many houses and sheds, dig drains and trenches, as well as construct roads within the camp and to connect it to other camps in the area (Interviews #11 and 13)

Although we are not aware of other new camps being built, existing camps have been enlarged to accommodate more troops.

- There was no report of new model villages being established in 2011. However, forced labour was used in at least 4 existing model villages in Maungdaw Township to refurbish houses abandoned by settlers brought in earlier: in Du Chee Yar Tan, Nyang Chaung, Kyi Kan Pyin and Loung Doun. Villagers in the area had to supply all building materials and the renovation work consisted in repairing roofs and replacing doors, walls and floorboards. The NaSaKa provided household items and brought in some new settlers' families.

- In another instance, in January 2011, villagers from Tat Min Chaung near Buthidaung, including many children, had to contribute to the construction of a new pagoda by carrying bags of cement, bricks and sand all the way up to the top of the hill.

5. Portering

Porters are mostly collected by the Army in villages of North Maungdaw and North Buthidaung as there are no motor roads in these remote hills of dense jungle to dispatch food supplies to the ever-increasing number of troops being stationed there. In Buthidaung North, portering only takes place during the dry season but demands for porters occur throughout the year in Maungdaw North.

Villagers from North Buthidaung have to carry food supplies on a regular basis to Army camps and outposts in Wa Net Yone, near the border with Kyauk Taw - which takes 2 days or more to reach, all the way uphill, and another 1 ½ days to return. Porters are also sent to another jungle camp in Sindaung, east of Taung Bazar. In North Maungdaw, food rations for those remote outposts are first transported by road to Ta Man Thar camp, then by boat during the monsoon or by porters during the dry season to Ye Aung San Ya Bway camp where they are stocked and then distributed by porters to military bases further north in Maungdaw, but also over the Mayu Range to Ba Da Gar Army camp in North Buthidaung.

6. Camp maintenance

Camp maintenance is a standard duty in all villages, always carried out with forced labour and never paid. Village authorities recruit a regular quota of labourers every day on a rotation basis – 10 to 30 labourers depending on the size of the camp. Odd jobs include clearing the camp area, fetching water and filling up the bathroom tanks, repairing houses, barracks and fences, collecting firewood, washing clothes and dishes, cutting grass, etc. Some villagers complained that they had to work on a pig farm for the Army, looking after the pigs and cleaning their sheds – a task resented by Muslims. Camp labour becomes a heavy burden for villages that must respond to simultaneous demands from several camps or outposts from various agencies.

Reportedly, the daily quota of camp labourers increased significantly in some areas of Maungdaw, but the NaSaKa kept only a few for odd jobs in their camp and trucked the rest to work on the border fence to make up the labour force and to avoid paying them.

7. Sentry and patrol duties at night

In the past dry season, sentry duty increased in some areas, predominantly in Maungdaw Township along the border with Bangladesh. Around the end of 2010, the authorities stepped up security due to a number of robberies and cross-border raids by boat from Bangladesh.

In early March 2011, a serious security incident occurred near Kha Moug Zeik in North Maungdaw. Rumours spread that some Rohingya militants based in Bangladesh had entered the area for the purpose of organising armed resistance. The authorities responded brutally, arresting and torturing several village leaders and other villagers suspected of involvement with the rebels. Consequently, sentry duty sharply increased in North Maungdaw – in NaSaKa Sectors 1 and 2, as well as in some villages of Sectors 3 and 4. Sentries in these areas had to spend 2 nights a week in teams of 8 in the sentry posts and a new ‘patrol duty’ was also imposed on them, requiring small groups of villagers to patrol the villages and hamlets during the night. When the authorities considered that security threats had declined, sentry duties decreased again.

8. Collection of logs, bamboo poles, stones, etc.

All construction projects require building materials to be supplied by the villagers, and orders for logs, planks, stones and bamboo poles are regularly issued to the village authorities. Each family is assigned a quota of materials which they have to find, cut and carry from the forest. However, a significant portion of the forest resources supplied to the NaSaKa and the Army are sold commercially.

Two or three times in the past dry season, families had to supply between 10 and 50 logs per order, either to a brickyard or to a camp or worksite. A person often can only carry 1 or 2 logs at a time and it can take many days before the quota is fulfilled. Many camps have brickyards, especially the military camps in Buthidaung Township, which require large quantities of logs for the brick kilns. There is also a brickyard in Buthidaung Jail for which prisoners in shackles have to collect logs in the forest. In addition, villagers are sometimes ordered to carry bricks to the construction site.

Orders for bamboo poles of a certain dimension are also common in forested areas of Buthidaung. Over the last two years, it has been hard to find them as many bamboo plants were destroyed due to rat infestation. Villagers are sometimes paid a nominal price per piece, well below the market rate. The authorities are now ordering villagers to plant bamboo seeds.

It was also reported in some areas of Buthidaung Township that people had been ordered to collect stones, mainly for road construction,

9. Cultivation and plantation work

During the monsoon season, cultivating paddy but also other commodities and planting tree saplings for the Army and NaSaKa are the main forms of forced labour, as construction work is generally halted, except for emergency repairs. Although some of the paddy fields are rented out to villagers on a share-cropping basis, forced labour ploughing, planting and harvesting paddy continue to be used in various camps. A villager reported that the Army

has started growing vegetables and fruit trees such as mango trees during the monsoon, partly for their own needs but mostly for commercial sale.

Planting of rubber and physic nut seedlings has resumed this year, although physic nut for bio-fuel production is apparently no longer as common as in the past. The authorities have ordered villagers to clear new hills for rubber plantations, to weed existing ones and to dig holes and plant seedlings. Villagers are allocated a quota of seedlings to plant from the government nursery which they have to purchase – sometimes these are provided at no cost.

CONCLUSION

Following national elections on 7 November 2010, a new civilian government was sworn in on 30 March 2011. But, for the Rohingya villagers in North Arakan, nothing has changed. Forced labour is as pervasive as ever and there was even a spike in forced labour demands just after the elections around the end of the year. Even though a budget has been allocated to pay fair wages for work on strategic infrastructure construction projects such the border fence and certain roads, villagers at the grassroots level have hardly benefitted and the funds have disappeared in cuts by the NaSaKa and other authorities. So far, no serious measures have been implemented for the purpose of eradicating forced labour.

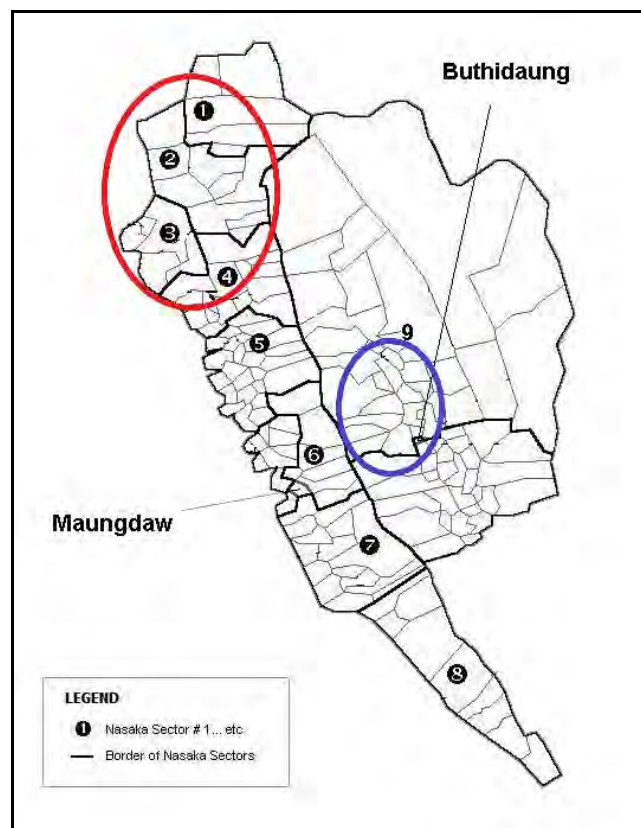
ANNEXES: FIELD INTERVIEWS

Between March and July 2011, The Arakan Project field team conducted 13 detailed interviews with Rohingya visitors and seasonal migrants from Northern Arakan State, Burma. They mostly came from two regions where forced labour is particularly prevalent: the far north of Maungdaw Township and from areas of Central Buthidaung. All were interviewed within one week of their arrival in Bangladesh.

Their testimonies below – mostly excerpts related to forced labour -- have been presented geographically - by townships (Maungdaw and Buthidaung) and then from north to south. The first interview is of particular interest as the informant is a village leader directly involved in recruiting forced labour for the NaSaKa and other authorities.

Terms used by interviewees:

- NaSaKa: Border security forces (9 sectors along the Bangladesh-Burma border)
GE: Garrison Engineers, specialised engineering units under the Tatmadaw (in charge of strategic infrastructure construction such as army camps, the border fence and certain roads)
VA: Village Administrator (lower-tier of administration replacing VPDC)
Kani: Local measurement – 1 acre = 2 ½ Kani



This map shows the 9 NaSaKa Sectors and areas where the interviewees came from are circled, in red for Maungdaw and in blue for Buthidaung.

A. MAUNGDAW TOWNSHIP

- Interview #01

Ethnicity/Religion: Rohingya, Muslim
Age/Sex: 47, male
Marital status: Married with children
Occupation: Farmer and *raigaung* (village leader)
Village: xx Village Tract, Maungdaw Township
Date of interview: 29 July 2011
Ref: #11/39

I am a farmer but also work as a *raigaung* for the village authorities. I supervise 7 *sehgaung* [leader of 10 houses]. Our village tract Administrator is a Rohingya. I do this because I have no other way to be exempted from forced labour and avoid hassle from the authorities.

Our Village Administrator receives orders to recruit forced labour from the NaSaKa and sometimes from the Army. He then calls all *raigaung* and *sehgaung*. He passes down the orders to us, which the *raigaung* then distribute to all *sehgaung* before the evening so that work can start the next morning. Recruitment of labourers is the responsibility of the *sehgaung*. They also inform villagers when there is an emergency, tax collection, etc. Our responsibility as *raigaung* is to check whether requirements are fulfilled and whether work progresses smoothly. If a villager refuses to go, the *sehgaung* informs us and we discuss the matter with our village administrator. In many cases, we inform the NaSaKa or the Army because they would otherwise blame us if their requirements were not met.

Since construction of the border fence started, GE (Garrison Engineers) oversees the work but the NaSaKa controls the supply and payment of manpower.

We have to supply 2 types of labourers to the NaSaKa: ‘routine labourers’, whom the NaSaKa call ‘lawa’ – helper/volunteer – and who are never paid, and ‘general labourers’ who are offered wages if their work is satisfactory. The NaSaKa receives payment from GE; sometimes they pay full wages but, most of the time, labourers do not receive full payment.

The NaSaKa supply manpower for the GE projects and receive money to pay wages. However, they recruit forced labour to work in their camp but instead they send them as unpaid labour to the GE worksites, and pocket the labourers’ wages.

The NaSaKa outpost in our village has to supply 35 labourers from our village tract twice a week to the Kyein Chaung camp for maintenance work. These labourers are not paid. The Kyein Chaung camp also collects a similar number of labourers from other village tracts on different days of the week. They have thus a large pool of manpower available every day but they keep only 10 to 15 workers to maintain their camp and send the rest to work on the border fence embankment or other GE projects so that they will receive the labourers’ wages, which they then keep for themselves. I noticed that 2 years ago the NaSaKa of Kyein Chaung used to order only 15 to 20 labourers once a week to work in their camp but, after the border fence started, they demanded twice as many labourers twice a week.

Nevertheless, the NaSaKa also recruit some labourers for GE worksites such as embankment repair or bridge construction and promise to pay them. However, after working a full week,

labourers only receive half or at the most two thirds of the promised wages. This is how the NaSaKa use forced labour, stealing wages allocated by the government.

Since I became a *raigaung*, we have received daily orders for forced labour from the NaSaKa. In addition to the 35 sent twice a week to Kyein Chaung, we also need to supply 5 to 7 labourers for the NaSaKa outpost in our village.

There is a large, ancient pagoda on the top of the hill often visited by many officials. The NaSaKa have now decided to widen the road up the hill in order to allow cars to reach the foot of the pagoda. The distance from the main road is about 4 km. In January, they ordered our village to cover the road and both edges with soil. We started this work mid-January and it is still ongoing. 25 to 30 labourers are sent there every day.

We also have to send 3 to 5 men every day to collect firewood for the troops, to carry their food rations and to guide them.

Rubber planting

The NaSaKa own about 200 acres of rubber plantations in our area. For about a month in December/January, the NaSaKa ordered about 100 labourers a day to clear the plantations and manure it with cow dung. Every year, just before and during the monsoon, the NaSaKa Sector 4 sends orders about these plantations to all villages under their jurisdiction. This year they ordered our village tract to purchase 3,000 rubber seedlings from the NaSaKa headquarters in Kyi Kan Pyin for 900,000 Kyat in total and to plant them in the existing plantations. First, we had to clear spots and dig holes for the new plants and also weed out dead saplings and replace them with new seedlings.

This responsibility falls on the village leadership. We had to buy the seedlings and call the villagers to contribute. Our village administrator collected 1 million Kyat – he paid 900,000 Kyat for the seedlings to the NaSaKa headquarters and 100,000 Kyat to hire a boat to carry them to our village in June. Then we recruited 50 labourers to clear the plantations, dig holes and plant the seedlings.

• **Interview #02**

Ethnicity/Religion: Rohingya, Muslim
Age/Sex: 21, male
Marital status: Single
Occupation: Shopkeeper
Village: Ye Aung San Ya Phwai Village Tract, Maungdaw (North)
Date of interview: 30 March 2011
Ref: #11/02

Both the NaSaKa and the Army use forced labour in our area – the NaSaKa for road and bridge construction and the military for porters to pick up rations from Ta Man Thar and carry them to Army camps and outposts in the far north of Maungdaw and Buthidaung. Both also recruit forced labour to work in their camps – 40 to 50 labourers every day. There is a large Army camp close to the NaSaKa Sector 1 camp in Ye Aung San Ya Bway/Aung Tha Pya. They demand additional forced labourers for other work such as carrying bricks, building new houses, carrying rations or for construction of bridges and roads.

Border fence construction

The construction of the border fence is still going on. All the posts have now been erected up to border pillar No. 46 and work continues to progress towards the North. We heard that the fence will continue up to the tri-border junction. GE (Garrison Engineers) supervises this work with the assistance of Rakhine villagers, including new settlers. Settlers are involved in recruiting labourers together with the NaSaKa. Local labourers carry bricks and fence posts. They are also building a road and border security outposts made of bricks along the border fence.

Labourers working on the border fence construction are paid, but only half the going daily wage, sometimes less. Each labourer has to work for 15 days without a break to be eligible to claim wages. My step-brother worked there and received only 10,000 Kyat for 15 days' work.

Bridge construction

A bridge is under construction in Ray Aung and 60 to 70 labourers from different villages are working on this project. Each family had to supply stones to the construction site. My family had to supply 60 baskets; since the quota is 20 baskets for each household and my mother and my two step-brothers live in 3 separate houses. My 2 step-brothers also work on the bridge 2 days a week but I paid the village authorities to remove my name from the list of labourers and to replace me. We also have to supply other building materials such as poles and planks. Since I am not accustomed to working in the forest and carrying loads, I usually hire someone else to do this on my behalf or I purchase the building materials and supply them.

Construction of NaSaKa buildings

The NaSaKa Sector 1 office is situated in my village and they are constructing a new building inside their camp. They need bricks for the walls, wood for the roof as well as planks for the doors and windows. They use forced labour to carry bricks, sand and water to the construction site. One labourer per family is recruited for 1 day a week to work there, including my 2 brothers.

Camp labour

Both the NaSaKa and the Army Camp use labourers every day to maintain their camps and surrounding areas. They always fear that rebels will attack them so they order us to clear all the bushes and jungle around their camps and to reinforce the fences. Odd jobs in these camps also involve fetching water, collecting firewood, looking after their garden, etc.

Portering

The Army camp has a food store to supply food rations to other Army camps and outposts deep in the jungle and hills in North Buthidaung, especially in Ba Da Gar area. They use villagers as porters to bring food supplies from the south and carry them to the northern camps. In addition, they use forced labour to guide them during patrols.

The NaSaKa also recruit unpaid porters to bring their rations from Kha Maung Zeik. When there is water in the river, rations are brought by boat but during the dry season people have to carry them on their shoulders.

Sentry duty

Sentry duty increased after rumours spread that some militants had entered the NaSaKa Sector 1 area from Bangladesh. This affected all villages under NaSaKa Sectors 1 and 2. Since March my brothers have had to do guard duty in our village sentry posts up to 2 nights a week.

I do not perform forced labour as I pay the local authorities to find someone to replace me. But I cannot escape supplying all the construction materials demanded by them such as stones, beams, planks, etc.

• **Interview #03**

Ethnicity/Religion: Rohingya, Muslim

Age/Sex: 25, male

Marital status: Single

Occupation: Farmer

Village: Ye Aung San Ya Bway Village Tract, Maungdaw (North)

Date of interview: 6 April 2011

Ref: #11/06

Forced labour for the Army and the NaSaKa is nothing new for us. It has become part of our daily life in North Arakan.

Bridge construction

My hamlet is very small and has only 52 houses but the NaSaKa demand 15 labourers every day to work in different places but mainly on bridge construction. A large bridge is being built over the Purma River. Work started about 3 ½ months ago. Whenever I worked on this bridge I found 80 to 120 people there, all forced labourers. Before the construction started, each family had to supply 15 baskets of stones and 8 long wooden poles to support the bridge platform. Initially I had to work 2 days a week on this bridge but it has now decreased to 1 day a week.

Construction of a brick building in the NaSaKa camp

A brick house is under construction inside the NaSaKa Sector 1 camp. So far I have worked there for 7 days carrying bricks, cement, sand and stones and I also had to collect planks from the hills. The building is yet to be completed and I will need to work more days on it.

Supply of logs for a brickyard

Each hamlet under the jurisdiction of NaSaKa Sector 1 was ordered to supply a quota of logs for their brickyard. The logs had to be 6 feet long with a diameter of 10 to 12 inches. We were instructed to fill an allocated area with these logs – 6 x 6 x 56 feet long. I have already worked 20 days this year collecting logs for this purpose. Later, the bricks had to be carried to the border fence. In this hilly area, the border fence is not erected on an embankment as it is along the Naf River further south. Instead, the authorities have built a 4 foot high brick wall on top of which they fixed barbed wire.

Camp labour

I have to spend 1 day a week for camp labour to supply firewood for their kitchen. They need a huge quantity of firewood because many families of the NaSaKa personnel live in the camp. We have to carry water for them and also bring their food rations from Sector 2.

There is also an Army camp near the NaSaKa camp with about 300 soldiers. Their houses are made of wood, bamboo and thatch for the roof and so need regular repair. We have to supply bamboo poles, planks and sungrass at least once a year in addition to their daily requirements for firewood and water, etc. Just for camp maintenance, they use 30 to 35 labourers on a daily basis. I have to work there 1 day a week, sometimes more.

Portering

We also have to carry Army supplies from Kha Maung Zeik in Sector 2 to other Army camps and outposts in the jungle to the North.

Road construction

There is also a road under construction to link up the offices of NaSaKa Sectors 1 and 2. Construction started in early 2010 but the road was damaged during the last monsoon. The NaSaKa ordered it to be repaired and widened enough for trucks to pass. They again collected labourers from the end of March [2011]. A few hundred villagers work there every day but my turn has not come yet.

Sentry duty

Sentry duty has increased considerably in our area. Whenever there are rumours about rebels or robbers in the area, the authorities increase the number of sentries. Sometimes 8 sentries work together in a single post as happened last month. Now we have to do guard duty about 5 nights a month.

• Interview #04

Ethnicity/Religion: Rohingya, Muslim
Age/Sex: 35, male
Marital status: Married, 1 child
Occupation: Farmer
Village: Kha Maung Zeik Village Tract, Maungdaw Township (North)
Date of interview: 7 April 2011
Ref: #11/07

North Maungdaw is much worse than Central and South Maungdaw in terms of forced labour. Transport infrastructure north of Taung Pyo is poor and the terrain is hilly and rough so the Army and the NaSaKa use a lot of porters and forced labourers.

During the election campaign, both contesting political parties [USDP and NDPD] promised that forced labour would stop under an elected government but we now see the opposite - forced labour has increased. Before the elections I used to work for the Army and the NaSaKa for about 4 days each month but now I have to work 10 to 12 days a month. In addition, sentry duty has also increased.

Camp labour

The NaSaKa routinely use forced labour to clean their camp, trim the grass, clear the jungle around it, repair their houses and dig trenches around their camp and around their outposts along the border. We also had to replace the platform covering the trenches with new poles and planks.

The Army camp of Kha Maung Zeik uses labourers every day: 3 men to carry water from the stream to their camp, 2 men to clean their offices and houses, 1 man as a courier and 1 man to carry their shopping from the local market to the camp. Every day at least 7 people are selected from different villages by rotation.

Supply of logs for brick kilns

The NaSaKa collected large quantities of logs for their brickyard this year and we also had to supply logs for the brickyard of Kyein Chaung, which we had to transport by making rafts. This year I had to supply 30 logs, which had to be 12 foot long with a diameter of 12 inches, so big that a man could only carry one at a time. Every family had to provide the same quantity, except for the relatives of the village leaders.

Bridge construction

In January [2011], we received an order to collect rocks from the hills, break them into pebbles and carry them to a worksite where a bridge is being built over the Let Ya River. Each family, including mine, had to supply 5 large baskets of stones as well as 6 baskets of sand. I also had to work on the bridge construction. Between 160 and 180 people worked there to build the bridge and the approach road on either side of the bridge. Shop owners and traders paid between 10,000 and 30,000 Kyat depending on the size of their shop or the type of their business to avoid working on the bridge.

Road construction

Around mid-March [2011], the NaSaKa started constructing a road linking their Sector 1 and Sector 2 offices. The area is dense forest and hilly. Every day around 250 or 300 labourers work on this road construction site cutting trees, clearing the jungle, excavating hills and carrying soil. The work is progressing simultaneously from both sides as forced labour is recruited from Sector 1 and Sector 2 areas. Our village chairman sends 50 labourers a day to work there. Each labourer has to bring along a basket to carry earth and a big knife. So far I have worked 6 days on this road construction site and the work will continue till the monsoon.

Rubber planting

There are about 10 or 12 rubber plantations in our area, all belonging to the government. Every day the NaSaKa orders village heads to provide 15 labourers per village to clean these plantations, dig holes, plant new seedlings, replace dead plants and look after their rubber nursery. Moreover, the NaSaKa is currently extending its rubber plantations and 3 new hills have been selected and are being prepared. In March I worked for 4 days in the rubber plantations.

Portering

The Army also uses porters and guides. Often they pick them up in the market and along the roads, and force them to accompany the troops during patrol or to carry whatever they had bought in the market. We also have to carry rice and food from Kha Maung Zeik to 4 other Army camps situated further north, deep in the jungle. All rations are distributed from Kha Maung Zeik so the Army always recruits a large number of porters in our area. In March I worked 2 days as a porter for the Army and was lucky that I was not also grabbed in the market or from the road.

Forced labour for the village authorities

In addition to the NaSaKa and the Army, village authorities also use forced labour every day. There are 7 hamlets in our village tract and each hamlet has to send one person every day to work without pay in the village office – to act as a courier between the office and the NaSaKa or Army camps, serve tea, clean the office and also to maintain their rubber plantation.

Sentry duty

Sentry duty has also increased. My younger brother often does this duty. Last month he worked as a sentry for 8 nights -- two nights a week. Before the elections, sentry duty was 2 nights a month but afterwards it dramatically increased to 8 nights a month. The NaSaKa often impose fines on sentries. They usually demand gasoline for their generator as a fine.

We are certainly no better off than before the national elections; rather the contrary!

• **Interview #05**

Ethnicity/Religion: Rohingya, Muslim
Age/Sex: 55, male
Marital status: Married with 10 children
Occupation: Farmer
Village: The Chaung Village Tract, Maungdaw Township (North)
Date of interview: 29 July 2011
Ref: #11/40

What is forced labour and what isn't? We are so used to working for the authorities as if this is our duty. We are like beasts of burden – even worse because of the way they treat us. A cow is treated well so that she won't die. But the Burmese authorities don't care if a Rohingya dies of hunger.

Every day we are victims of forced labour, directly or indirectly. Paying arbitrary taxes, fines and bribes also involve my labour and time. I am confused. Is this forced labour too? Life for us is a big burden and forced labour is a major part of our agony.

We have to work for 3 NaSaKa camps situated within a radius of 3 to 5 km from our village: NaSaKa Sector 3 camp, Naicha Daung NaSaKa camp and Medai NaSaKa camp – the last 2 under NaSaKa Sector 3. The NaSaKa Sector 3 main camp demands the largest number of labourers because they have many buildings in their camp as well as large areas of paddy land and several rubber plantations and they also oversee bridge construction, road construction and repair of the border fence embankment. I have to work 4 to 5 days a month for them. The Naicha Daung NaSaKa camp situated in Kun Thee Pin Village Tract is also a large camp and they are also involved in road repair. Every day they collect 15 labourers in our village and I work 3 days a month for them. For the Medai camp I must send someone 4 days a month for camp labour but mainly for the construction of a bridge. In the past, I only had to work 2 days a month for this camp instead of 4. In addition, the Army in Medai also require one day of forced labour a month in their outpost.

In total, during this dry season, my sons or I have had to do 12 to 13 days of forced labour a month, almost exclusively for the NaSaKa for the purpose of maintaining their camps, constructing roads and bridges and repairing the border fence. Despite this, there is less

forced labour this year than last year when our family had to work 20 to 22 days a month to build the border fence embankment and NaSaKa outposts at the mouth of rivers.

Bridge construction

There are 9 bridges and culverts under construction in NaSaKa Sector 3. The biggest bridge crosses the Medai River and its construction started after the Water Festival in April this year. I had to send 4 labourers a month to the Medai camp for this bridge construction site, mainly to excavate earth and dig holes for the pillars. We also had to supply stones as well as long wooden poles. Although the GE (Garrison Engineers) has allocated a budget for this bridge, the NaSaKa still use forced labour for excavation as well as to supply and carry building materials.

The NaSaKa Sector 3 also requisitioned labourers for the construction of a bridge over the river between Taung Pyo Let We and Taung Pyo Let Ya, which is one of the largest bridges in our area. All the stones, sand, wooden posts and planks were supplied and carried to the site by people from different villages and the earthwork was also done by forced labourers.

Road construction and repair

Construction of a new road of about 4 km between our village and the NaSaKa Sector 4 office in Lake Ya started in January this year. The NaSaKa use both paid and unpaid labourers for this work. An excavator has been moving soil and 50 labourers from our village tract also work there. Only some have received wages and the majority are forced labourers.

The NaSaKa from Naicha Daung camp also repaired several roads but for these they used labourers they had called in to work in their camp.

Border fence repair

The embankment of the border fence was damaged during the past monsoon. Repair work in our area started in December 2010 and lasted until the end of April. My family had to send someone 5 to 6 days a month to repair the embankment. During that time, the NaSaKa used fewer labourers in their camps as they needed them for the border fence.

Camp labour

I routinely had to work in these 3 NaSaKa camps to clean them as well as to repair fences and trenches. However, sometimes they called me for camp labour but then sent me instead to other worksites such as the border fence or road construction.

Rubber planting

The NaSaKa Sector 3 own several rubber plantations and collect many people every day to look after them. We have to clean the plantations and take out weeds and dead plants as well as to dig holes and plant new seedlings.

Paddy cultivation

The NaSaKa Sector 3 also have large paddy fields. They used to rent out most of them but this year they kept about 45 *kanis* [about 18 acres] to cultivate themselves with forced labour. Monsoon cultivation has now begun. I have already worked 2 days in the NaSaKa paddy fields to prepare seedbeds. Ploughing and planting will start very soon.

Sentry duty

In addition, I had to do 5 nights a month of sentry duty. NaSaKa patrols always accuse sentries of not doing their duty properly and demand chicken or gasoline as fines. Sentry duty has increased as compared to last year and, apart from duties in the sentry posts, the NaSaKa also order villagers to patrol the village at night.

Three days ago, I was working on my paddy field at about 8 a.m. when our *sehgaung* (*leader of 10 houses*) ordered me to accompany him to the Naicha Daung NaSaKa camp. I complained that he should have informed me the previous night so that I could hire someone else to work on my land. We had an argument and he left but soon he returned with two NaSaKa men. The two NaSaKa men beat me without asking any questions, fined me 10,000 Kyat and forced me to work in their camp for the rest of the day.

B. BUTHIDAUNG TOWNSHIP

- **Interview #06**

Ethnicity/Religion: Rohingya, Muslim
Age/Sex: 20, Male
Marital status: Single
Occupation: Farmer
Village: Nga Yant Chaung Village Tract, Buthidaung Township (North)
Date of interview: 12 July 2011
Ref: #11/36

In our village, the NaSaKa is the main user of forced labour but the Thin Ga Net Army camp also takes us as porters, to maintain their camp and to cultivate their paddy and vegetables.

Portering

Every month during the dry season, we have to carry food rations to 3 Army camps deep in the jungle in Wa Net Yone near the Bangladesh border, including extra food for the monsoon. This year I have carried goods to Wa Net Yone twice - once in February and once in April - and it takes 2 days to go and one day to return.

Apart from this, troops often grab passers-by or people from markets to carry their loads when on patrol or moving around for other reasons. This year, I was picked up twice as a porter from the road on my way back home from Taung Bazar. They also caught other people to carry their loads up to Sin Daung.

Road construction

This year, large numbers of forced labourers were recruited for an extended period of time for road construction to widen and upgrade roads linking various Army camps in North Buthidaung. This road starts from Taung Bazar to the Thin Ga Net Army camp, then continues to Da Buy Chaung Army camp via the Maghbil [Pale Taung under Krin Ta Mar Village Tract] Army Camp. All village tracts along this road or close to it had to supply labourers. This is for the Army since this road belongs to them. The Army never say they need 'labourers'; they call for 'volunteers'. They send orders to village heads to provide volunteers to renovate the road. This work started in December 2010. I worked 6 days a month covering the road surface with soil between Taung Bazar to Thin Ga Net and sometimes on the section from Thin Ga Net to Magh Bil.

This road will be extended to the north, from Taung Bazar up to Ba Da Gar Army camp. We heard that the northern section will be built by GE and that workers will be paid. At the moment, they use an earth excavator but they will still need manual labourers. I have not worked on this road so far.

On the west side of the Mayu River there is another road, an old road built in the early 1990s between Nga Yant Chaung and Buthidaung town. In May 2011 the NaSaKa and the Army repaired this road. Twice, they demanded 10 labourers from every hamlet to repair damaged sections and I worked there for 2 days.

A new road is now being built across the hills east of Taung Bazar to Wa Net Yone. Since this area is very hilly and forested, it is necessary to cut and clear the jungle. The Army also

use forced labour for this new road but so far not much. I only worked there for one day in June to clear the jungle.

Paddy cultivation and camp maintenance for the NaSaKa

The NaSaKa regularly send orders for labourers to work in their camp and in their large paddy fields near their camp. Every year, people from various villages have to cultivate the NaSaKa's paddy over 3 periods of 7 to 10 days: first for planting, then to clear weeds during the monsoon and finally for harvest in late November/early December. Within their camp, we have to do maintenance work on their houses and in the camp compound: a routine duty that I have to do 4 days a month, sometimes more around the end or at the beginning of the monsoon because we then have to collect repair materials from the forest. 4 days a month is compulsory: if we cannot go, we must send someone on our behalf or else pay a fine.

Bamboo collection

I supplied 500 bamboo poles to the Thin Ga Net Army camp and new orders have just been issued to supply more. However, the Army pays some money for these poles but this is far below the market price – about one third of the selling price.

Sentry duty

I also have to be a sentry 3 to 4 nights a month in the village sentry posts. My father is too old to do this. Sentry duty is a trap used by the NaSaKa to extort money and chickens from the sentries.

Forced labour has increased in our area over the last year and so has extortion. For example, when Army patrols found our cows grazing in the hills, they captured them, brought them to their camp and demanded 50,000 Kyat to release them.

• Interview #07

Ethnicity/Religion: Rohingya, Muslim
Age/Sex: 40, Male
Marital status: Married, 7 children
Occupation: Day labourer
Village: Thin Ga Net Village Tract, Buthidaung Township (North)
Date of interview: 18 July 2011
Ref: #11/38

In North Buthidaung we have to do forced labour for the Army and for the NaSaKa all year round. Since my village is close to the Pirkhali Army camp, I always have to work for the Army, but villages between the NaSaKa and Army camps have to work for both.

The Pirkhali Army camp is situated on the slope of a big hill and covers a large area. It has about 60 big and small buildings such as offices, stores, detention cells, barracks, officer's bungalows, kitchen, cattle sheds, etc., and 3 brick houses are now under construction. This camp has about 42 *kanis* [17 acres] of paddy land and vegetable plantations. In the past the Army used to rent out their paddy fields for share-cropping but, over the last 3 years, they decided to cultivate them with forced labour.

Paddy cultivation

Last year, I had to work 5 days cultivating the Army land during the monsoon, then another 5 days in October weeding the paddy plants and finally 6 days harvesting and storing the paddy in November and December. They used about 200 to 250 workers for this duty.

Although the Army own cows and bullocks, they ordered famers to plough the paddy fields with their own animals. This year seedbeds have already been prepared and soon ploughing will start at the end of July or beginning of August.

Vegetable cultivation

In early May this army camp also prepared hill slopes for growing monsoon vegetables and I worked there for 3 days.

Physic nut planting

At the end of May, the Army ordered us to plant physic nut on both sides of the road around their camp and the hills. Since their camp is huge, the road is also long. They used 60 labourers for 5 days and I worked there for 2 days.

Mango tree planting

This year the Army also confiscated a hill with a mango orchard owned by a Rohingya in Ta Ya Gu area and, in April, they forcibly collected 30 labourers from Ya Ma Khyantaung hamlet and from our hamlet to plant more mango trees. In April I worked 3 days in this orchard.

Bamboo seed planting

Over the last two years, bamboos on many hills died after flowering and the Army used forced labour to collect bamboo seeds and planted them last year. The plants have now grown and we had to weed the area around the bamboo clumps.

Brickyard work

There is a brickyard near the Army camp and each family had to supply a total of 40 logs for this brickyard. Each log had to be 7 feet long with a diameter of 12 inches. We could hardly carry 2 logs at a time. At the most, we could collect 4 such logs in a day and carry them in two trips. It took me 16 days to supply the 40 logs. A new order was just sent to supply another 15 logs per family during the monsoon. We observed that the Army sell them to businessmen from Buthidaung and Maungdaw.

Unexpectedly it started raining heavily at the end of May and the Army collected labourers at random to save unbaked bricks from the rains by putting plastic sheets over them and carrying them to another brickyard.

Bamboo collection

For the last couple of years the Pirkhali Army camp has ordered villages in our area to supply them with 300,000 bamboo poles each. Last year, the Army paid 5,000 Kyat for 100 pieces, when the market price was between 18,000 and 25,000 Kyat depending on size and quality. My family had to supply 600 poles. Finding bamboo in the hills was not easy because few were left after the flowering and rat infestation. During the dry season there was no water in the stream so I had to carry them on my shoulders. It took 14 days to collect 600 bamboo poles, cut them and carry them and I finally received 30,000 Kyat [about US\$40]. The Army

claim that they need logs and bamboo poles for their own use but they use only a few and sell huge quantities to traders. This is one of their businesses.

This year they again ordered another 300,000 bamboo poles. We do not know where we will find them as not many are left in the hills. However, they increased the price slightly and promised to pay 6,000 Kyat for 100 pieces.

Sungrass supply

I have a sungrass field on the hill away from my house. I have to give 30% of the sungrass I produce to the Army camp and carry the bundles myself. This also involves time and labour.

Portering

In February this year we had to carry army supplies from Pirkhali to Wa Net Yone camp near the border. They ordered us to go their camp in Pirkhali in the evening and at 4 a.m. they gave us the loads. There were 80 porters from our village alone. It took 2 ½ days to reach Wa Net Yone and 1 ½ days to return. Going there was really tough because it meant walking uphill with a 30 to 40 kg load. Once I fell down and hit a bamboo stump. I still have a wound on my hip. I had to carry goods there twice during this dry season but the Army send supplies there every month because it is impossible to reach Wa Net Yone area during the monsoon.

Road construction/repair

The Army also elevated and widened the road between Thin Ga Net and Taung Bazar during this dry season. I worked there for 4 days. They mostly use forced labourers from Taung Bazar area and not so many from our village. However, we will soon have to work more on this road because many stones were brought from Buthidaung by boat to cover the road surface. People from Pun Daw Prang village had to carry them with their own bullock-carts from the jetty to various sections of the road between Thin Ga Net and Maghbil and between Thin Ga Net and Taung Bazar. They did so until May but the stones have not been laid on the road yet.

Camp labour

This Army camp recruits 50 labourers daily to maintain their camp area, clean their offices and houses, chop firewood, wash clothes and utensils, carry water and fill the tanks in the bathrooms, repair fences, trim plants in their garden, carry messages to other Army camps and outposts, carry food rations, etc. They collect these 50 labourers from our area and from Yin Ma Kyung Taung village.

Sentry duty

In addition, I have to work as a village sentry for at least 4 nights a month.

So far, I have never received any wages for all this work for the Army. I worked for them for a minimum of 6 days a month, sometimes more for road construction.

Child forced labour

Every time I work for the Army, lots of children also work together with us. Children do forced labour because their fathers are sick or need to work to support the family. Children mostly work inside the Army camp, carrying water, filling up the tanks, trimming grass, etc.

The poor live hand-to-mouth. When we cannot work for ourselves, we cannot feed our families. That is why many parents send their children to do forced labour while they work to purchase food. Sometimes I also send my son to replace me inside the Army camp.

The same situation occurs in all villages of North Buthidaung. There are more and more NaSaKa camps and outposts - in Kyun Pauk, in Kyaung Taung, in Goat Pi and in Bagali in addition to Army camps. The largest Army camp is in Atta Bagali in the north of Ba Da Gar. A road is now under construction up to the north of Ba Da Gar. Many labourers have been working there but road construction has now stopped due to the monsoon. Every camp uses forced labour and is involved in the bamboo business.

- **Interview #08**

Ethnicity/Religion: Rohingya, Muslim
Age/Sex: 55, Male
Marital status: Married, 5 children
Occupation: Farmer
Village: Mee Chaung Zay Village Tract, Buthidaung Township (North)
Date of interview: 7 April 2011
Ref: #11/05

Before the elections we hoped that some changes would soon take place and that our lives would become easier. But nothing has changed. Massive use of forced labour stopped in November [2010] but soon restarted in December.

Road construction and repair

After the 2010 monsoon, the authorities mainly used forced labour for road construction and repair. Since December I have been working 2 to 3 days a week on the road from Taung Bazar to Maghbil. This work is almost finished. Stones were brought by boat from Central Buthidaung and piled up on the river bank. The Army will now order us to put these stones on the road surface. Up to 700 labourers were recruited to work on various sections of this road and, at this moment, 200 to 300 people still work there. My eldest son aged 14 sometimes replaces me when I am sick or busy with my own work. He is a 7th Standard student in Taung Bazar High School.

In March [2011], the Army started building a new road from Taung Bazar to Wa Net Yone. An earth excavator is in use but labourers are still recruited to clear the jungle, root out tree stumps and cut trees, which the excavator cannot do. So far, I have been spared from this work but, who knows, they may call us in coming months.

Supply of logs for brick baking

Although there is no brickyard in my village, we have to supply logs for the brickyard of the Thin Ga Net Army camp. This season I supplied 30 logs in three deliveries. I could hardly carry 2 logs at a time.

Portering

This year the Army requisitioned many porters to carry rations to Wa Net Yone camp in the jungle near the border. They collected porters from 7 village tracts between Taung Bazar and Krin Tha Mar through the village heads. I had to go twice. The last time I had to carry a

sack of rice along with 50 porters from my village. It takes 2 days to go and 1 ½ days to return. We cannot carry more than 25 kg as it is uphill all the way to Wa Net Yone.

Camp labour

About 2 days a month I have to do camp maintenance duty for the Army base in Thin Ga Net to clean the camp, clear bushes and also clean roads and paths within the camp.

Sentry duty

I have to do sentry duty at least 1 night a week. We are ordered to guard our village against robbers during the night. But I have never heard or seen any robbers. This is just humiliation to keep us busy.

- **Interview #09**

Ethnicity/Religion: Rohingya, Muslim
Age/Sex: 21, Male
Marital status: Single
Occupation: Farmer
Village: Mee Chaung Zay Village Tract, Buthidaung Township (North)
Date of interview: 11 July 2011
Ref: #11/35

Forced labour has not stopped in our area for the NaSaKa and the Army camp of Thin Ga Net. To give an account of all my days of forced labour in the village would be a long story. I will only tell you about what I did for the authorities over the last month, even though that month was more relaxed than previous months.

I worked for 11 days for the Thin Ga Net Army camp together with about 45 people to do whatever they ordered. The first 2 days were routine work within the Army camp such as fetching water and filling in water tanks, cleaning their house yards and the roads inside the camp. The last 2 days I had to collect pebbles from the hills together with other labourers and put them on paths where they walk. During the other 7 days they took us on trucks filled with stones to different sections of the road between Taung Bazar and Maghbil. We had to put stones on sections of the road damaged by the pre-monsoon rains.

Apart from this I had to work as a village sentry for 4 nights. So, during the last month, I worked 11 days for the Army and 4 nights as a sentry to fulfil the NaSaKa's order.

Forced labour has increased since last December. First we had to repair the road between Taung Bazar and Maghbil for many days between December and March, and then we had to work in an Army bamboo plantation. Last year, the Army planted bamboo seeds on every hill. As the bamboo plants grew, we had to weed and clear the area around them. I worked for 8 days on different hills. Then, I had to supply 15 logs for their brickyards, which took another 4 days. Finally, I spent 3 days as a porter to carry Army rations deep into the hills near the Bangladesh border.

In May this year, I was sent with another 16 villagers for 10 days in the hills near the Maungdaw-Buthidaung road in order to collect stones and pile them up in one place. We had to carry our own food for 10 days. These stones will be for the Maungdaw-Buthidaung road. Many people from different villages also did the same work.

- **Interview #10**

Ethnicity/Religion: Rohingya, Muslim
Age/Sex: 45, Male
Marital status: Married, 10 children
Occupation: Day labourer and firewood seller
Village: Maung Gyi Daunt Village Tract, Buthidaung Township (North)
Date of interview: 11 March 2011
Ref: #11/03

My only income is from casual labour or from collecting firewood with my 2 sons aged 8 and 9. All the money I earn is for buying rice as nothing is left for other essentials. Due to forced labour demands I cannot work and my family remains half-fed or completely hungry. This occurs regularly, at least twice a month, and we survive on leaves or banana stems.

Road construction

There are many Army camps and outposts in South Buthidaung. These camps are connected to each other by a road. We often have to repair these roads after the monsoon, sometimes even during the monsoon. In December and January I worked on road repair for 8 days. Sometimes the Army send us to other areas when there is a shortage of labour.

Cultivation work for the Village Chairman

Our village Chairman rents land from the Army and uses us as forced labour to cultivate it. He said it is Army land but we know very well that this is for his own profit. However, we can't complain for fear that he will cause us more troubles. This dry season he grew winter crops with forced labour and I had to work there for a total of 8 days.

Supplying logs for brickyards

There is a large brickyard with 5 kilns in our village but other Army camps also bake bricks in our area. Every family of our village had to supply 15 logs at least 5 feet long for each kiln. This year I have already supplied a total of 75 logs to 5 brick kilns.

Digging a well

My most recent forced labour was to dig a pit for a ring-well. 4 people and I worked there for 2 days. The well is not completed yet; others are still working there in groups of five.

Camp labour

There are always odd jobs to do inside the camp area. Every day the Army recruit 25 to 30 labourers to clean their camp compound, repair houses, fetch water, collect firewood, wash their clothes and carry their food rations from one camp to another. Since I have a large family, I face troubles whenever I have to work for the Army. Therefore, I sometimes send my 9 year-old son to replace me but often the Army and our Chairman do not accept him because he is too young to do heavy work.

Sentry duty

I also have to do sentry duty 2 nights a week. I cannot send my son for this as he cannot stay awake the whole night. So I have to do this myself.

In total, I have to work 8 days a month for the Army as routine forced labour plus sentry duty and occasional emergency work. Moreover, we have to do cultivation for our chairman.

- **Interview #11**

Ethnicity/Religion: Rohingya, Muslim
Age/Sex: 30, Male
Marital status: Married, 3 children
Occupation: Day labourer
Village: Tat Min Chaung Village Tract, Buthidaung Township (Central)
Date of interview: 16 July 2011
Ref: #11/37

People in Buthidaung suffer more from forced labour than people in Maungdaw. There are many army bases in our area such as in Let We Det and Tat Min Chaung. There are also brick kilns in these camps and stones are available in the nearby hills. Our villagers have to collect logs for the kilns and stones for road construction and repair. This year has been particularly bad for us: from the end of 2010 till now, we have received constant orders to do forced labour for the Army in Tat Min Chaung and Let We Det camps.

Pagoda building

In January 2011, a pagoda and brick houses were built on the top of a high hill in the nearby hamlet of Pun Zun Chaung and we had to carry building materials such as bricks, sand and bags of cement all the way up this hill. I worked there for 10 days carrying bricks and bags of cement. Many other villagers did the same, including many children.

Construction of an Army camp

Apart from this, a new army camp was built in Nga Kyin Tauk village near Tat Min Chaung. Earlier, it was just a small outpost with a few houses but this year the Army enlarged it and built many houses, stores and garages for armoured vehicles, artillery guns, arms and ammunitions.

For this camp extension, we had to clear new areas, construct many new houses, dig drains around them, build fences and trenches, as well as build paths linking the houses and roads connecting this outpost to other camps. I had to work on this camp construction for 15 days in February. This time my family and I went hungry for 3 days and my children survived on leaves and cooked banana stems. I wanted to plead with the Army officers to release me from this work but I dared not. A fellow worker was slapped by an Army officer simply because he was so weak that he had sat on the ground for a short rest.

Road construction

Many roads and paths have been widened and upgraded by filling the edges of the road with earth and covering the road surface with stones. The road from Army camp #345 to the old jetty of Buthidaung town was made higher and wider as was another road from Da Buy Chaung Army camp to the Phone Nya Lake Army camp. The Army use a lot of forced labourers from various villages along these roads to renovate them. Our villagers even had to work more than others because stones for road construction were collected from our area. I worked on these road construction sites together with many other labourers for a total of 16 days in March and April, including gathering stones.

Work on brickyards

Almost all army camps in our area have brick kilns and I had to supply 10 logs 3 times – the last time was in April this year.

Work on a pig farm

There is a pig farm in Army camp #234 and twice a month, 15 to 20 labourers per village are requisitioned to look after the pigs and clean their sheds. I worked 2 days in the pig farm.

Vegetable planting

The Army used to rent out a lot of its paddy fields to locals and as a result there was not much forced labour for paddy cultivation. However, the Army has now started planting vegetables for the monsoon this year in a huge area around their camps. Planting vegetables started in April and I worked 4 days on this at the end of April and early May.

Rubber and black pepper planting

Large quantities of rubber plants and black pepper seedlings were supplied by the Army to all villages in our area. This time, we did not have to buy them but we had to plant them in designated areas. I spent 3 days planting them at the end of June.

Sentry duty

I always have to work as a village sentry at least 4 nights a month, which means spending sleepless nights in a sentry post. As a result I cannot work properly the next day. In our area, finding work is difficult and, after a night of sentry duty, I need to sleep a bit in the morning but it is impossible to find work for half a day. So my only option is to collect firewood in the hills or to catch fish in the river and sell them to the market in exchange for rice to eat.

Forced labour demands decreased at the end of May. In June, I only worked 3 days planting rubber and black pepper seedlings and 3 days preparing seedbeds for the monsoon paddy, in addition to routine labour in the Army camp and in the pig farm. But, from December 2010 to mid-May 2011, we had no rest and I worked an average of 12 to 15 days a month for the Army as well as 4 nights for sentry duty.

• Interview #12 (a child)

Ethnicity/Religion: Rohingya, Muslim
Age/Sex: 11, Male
Marital status: Single
Occupation: Farmer
Village: xxx Village Tract, Buthidaung Township (North)
Date of interview: 10 April 2011
Ref: #11/04

Note: The full interview with this 11-year old child was included in our submission to the Committee on the Rights of the Child which will review Myanmar in January 2012.

I am the youngest of 4 siblings. I am a student at my village primary school. I am in 4th Standard.

To the west of our village there is a big army camp. The battalion number is #234. It is situated between the hills and all the land around it belongs to them, as well as all the paddy fields.

I have to go to school 5 days a week, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. from Monday to Friday. After school I used to play with other children from late afternoon till dusk and the weekend was free time when I had fun with my friends.

But this changed completely about 1 ½ years ago. My father was getting weaker day by day. He often fell sick and could not go to work. Those days we ran out of food because his main income was from his work in the blacksmith's workshop. My mother then took me to the village Chairman and asked him if I could replace my father to do sentry duty and labour in the Army camp. The Chairman agreed and said that it did not matter who performed the labour duties as long as someone from our family fulfilled the quota. He also said that he would try to schedule our labour duties on Saturday and Sunday and sentry duties on Friday night and Saturday night so that I could continue to attend school from Monday to Friday.

So, I started taking over the forced labour duties to help my family just before I turned 10. For the last year and a half, I have been doing sentry duty one night a week and work for the Army camp one day a week. Soon I took on more responsibilities such as gathering firewood for my house and sometimes catching fish for my family in the late afternoon after my school hours.

Missing school because of forced labour

I started missing classes. I could not go to school when there were emergency labour duties such as urgent road repairs or the visit of high army officials. On these occasions, I had to work as many as 3 days a week. Just before an Army official visited the camp, we had to cut the grass around the courtyards of the officers' houses and the barracks, put up flags on both sides of the road, clean the whole camp area and its surroundings, repair the road and paths inside the camp, clear the bushes and trim trees along the road and in the camp, etc.

Sometimes I have to do sentry duty on weekdays and cannot attend school the following day because I have to stay awake all night with the other sentries and I feel too sleepy the next day. I miss my classes but my teachers are kind and understanding.

At the sentry post, however, there is no sympathy from the 6 sentries. I often fell asleep but the others immediately woke me up. They forced me to stay awake along with them and would not allow me to drowse. At first, they let me sleep after 9 p.m. but now they don't give me this chance anymore.

My usual work for the Army is watering their garden and vegetable plants, collecting firewood for their cooking needs, trimming the grass in their recreation ground, cleaning their pig shed and collecting pebbles from the stream. This kind of work is not very difficult for me and I can do this easily. But I also have to carry rocks and this is extremely tough.

Once I had to carry sand, bricks and gravel downhill and then again uphill, because the Army was building a house on top of a hill. Many people had to work for many months for this new building on the hill. The hill was very high and climbing it carrying a load was too difficult for me. I will never forget this as long as I live. I could hardly carry 5 bricks at a time to the top of that hill. I felt sick and got a fever because this work was too hard and my whole body ached.

Last month [*March 2011*], I had to work for 4 days in a large rubber plant nursery near Buthidaung town. I heard that the authorities were going to create rubber plantations in the hills during the monsoon and saplings would be supplied from that nursery. Over these 4

days I had to carry lunch from my house, because the Army does not give any food and wages to the labourers.

The last time I worked for the Army was on 30 March. We were a total of 15 in one group and 3 of them were children of my age. We had to cut the grass in the football field inside the Army camp. Other boys like me also work for the Army, but the difference between me and them is that they do not go to school at all, but I do.

This is very hard for me but I have no choice. If I don't do it then my father would have to do it and he would die soon. Despite all this, I am continuing my studies and I attend school as much as possible because I want to become a teacher.

- **Interview #13**

Ethnicity/Religion: Rohingya, Muslim
Age/Sex: 40, Male
Marital status: Married, 5 children
Occupation: Farmer
Village: Let We Det Pu Zun Chaung Village Tract, Buthidaung (Central)
Date of interview: 10 July 2011
Ref: #11/34

After the monsoon started, forced labour for road construction and for supplying stones and logs has decreased but, this past dry season, we were so busy fulfilling excessive forced labour demands for the Army that we could never stand still for a moment as we were constantly running from one duty to another.

Army Battalion #234 mostly recruit forced labourers from our village. At the moment they are requisitioning labourers to maintain their camp and surrounding areas. But, soon, Army Camp #345 will start monsoon cultivation and, by the end of July, we will again be busy with paddy cultivation work. Our villagers and I have already planted paddy seeds which are now growing.

In November 2010, at the beginning of last year's dry season, the Army did not use much forced labour because of the National Elections. But, by December, they once again recruited labourers on a large scale and my family again had to go hungry as we had no time to work to earn our living. Sentry duty also increased after the elections.

Supply of logs for brickyards

There are many Army camps in our area and these camps needed a lot of bricks to replace wooden and bamboo buildings in their camp with brick walls. There are brickyards in Army Camps #234, #345, #352, #225 and #546, to the northwest of Tat Min Chaung. Last December I had to supply 5 logs and in March and April this year I had again to supply 20 logs for Army Camp #345 - each log to be at least 5 feet long with a diameter of 12 inches. Apart from Army brickyards, there is another large brickyard under Buthidaung jail where they use prisoners in shackles to collect logs and to work in the yard.

Stone collection

However, this year, the most time-consuming forced labour was collecting stones from the hills and carrying them to the roadside so that trucks from the Army could transport them to

the riverside. I collected rocks between the end of February and the beginning of May on average 2 to 3 days a week. 200 or more people worked together for this. They also use people for loading and unloading the stones, which are mostly used for road building.

Road construction

In December 2010, the Army ordered all Village Chairmen to provide at least 15 labourers from each hamlet under their respective villages on a daily basis in order to widen the road from Army camp #345 to the old jetty of Buthidaung town. I had to work there too for a total of 12 days in December, January and again in March. This work has now been completed.

New Army camp construction

The Army is currently building a new camp in Nga Kyin Tauk, specifically to keep Army vehicles, arms and ammunitions. I worked there for 12 days in February and for another 6 days in March. We had to make tracks for vehicles inside the camp as well as build drains, trenches, houses and fences. In April and May I also worked in this camp for 8 days. This work continued until the beginning of June.

Rubber and black pepper planting

This year the Army also ordered villagers to plant rubber saplings and black-pepper seedlings on selected land on hill slopes and on barren land, which we used for cattle grazing.

Interestingly, this time, villagers did not have to purchase them. The Army provided them for free but we heard that some NGOs had paid for them. We only had to plant them. However, villagers had to create the nursery and then carry the saplings and seedlings from the nursery to the selected planting sites and plant them with forced labour. I had to work for 2 days in the nursery in December and January and again 2 days planting the saplings and seedlings in early July.

Vegetable cultivation

The Army have used lots of forced labourers this year for vegetable cultivation. Almost all the army bases have been growing monsoon vegetables in and around their camps this year. It started in April. Some of these vegetables are for their own needs but most of them are to be sold to wholesalers. Labourers maintaining their camps had to cultivate them but the Army also requisitioned additional labourers especially for this purpose. I worked for 2 days along with 15 labourers to prepare everything in late April and later another 4 days in May/June to water the vegetable plants. Cultivating vegetables involves different kinds of work such as erecting bamboo trellises for creeping vines, watering, etc.

Sentry duty

Sentry duty increased slightly after the elections. 5 people now have to stay in one sentry post and I work one night every week as a sentry. Each family has to send one man as a sentry every week.

We had hoped that, after the elections, we would finally get some relief from forced labour and sentry duties but nothing has changed so far. Rather, forced labour has become more intensive in some cases. Whenever I do forced labour for a couple of days without a break, my family goes hungry. Often I work without any food for the entire day and go back home empty-handed. So I can't even eat at night. It happened many times this year.