



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Incident report

June 28th, 2019 / KHRG Log #19-29-I3

Hpapun District: Unpaid wages by the Min Bagan Company in Bu Tho Township, March 2018

In Bu Tho Township, 18 day labourers did not receive their wages in full after the road construction project they were working on for the Min Bagan Company¹ was halted in March 2018. As a result, they faced livelihood difficulties and had to go in debt to buy food. The company still owes them 1,612,000 kyats (USD 1,060).²

Part 1 – Incident Details

Type of Incident	Unpaid wages
Date of Incident(s)	March 2018
Incident Location (Village, Township and District)	K--- village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District

Victim Information	
Name	U ³ L---
Age	41
Sex	Male
Family	Married
Occupation	Driver
Religion	Islam
Position	Villager
Village	Section No. ---, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, Hpapun district

¹ Min Bagan Company Limited (မင်းပုဂံ ကုမ္ပဏီ လီမိတက်), Registration Number: 105342497 – See more information about this company [here](#).

² The present document is based on information received in May 2019. It was provided by a community member in Hpapun District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions on the ground. The names of the victims, their photos and the exact locations are censored for security reasons.

³ U is a Burmese title used for elder men, used before their name.

Perpetrator Information				
Name(s)	Position	Company Name	Location	Supervisor
U Thein Zaw	Engineer	Min Bagan Company	Yangon	U Min Aung Zaw Lat (Owner of Min Bagan Company)

Part 2 - Information Quality

1. Explain in detail how you collected this information.

I have received this information from U L---, one of the day labourers who did not receive his wages.

2. Explain how the source verified this information.

The source experienced this situation first-hand.

Part 3 – Complete Description of the Incident

Describe the Incident(s) in complete detail.

The incident took place in March 2018 in K--- village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, Mutraw (Hpapun) District. U L--- and other people from K--- village were working as informal day labourers on a road construction project between Mah Htaw and Htee Tha Bluh Hta village tracts for the Min Bagan Company. The company started the project in January 2018 and hired local people to work on the road and bridge construction. The operation was part of a community development project planned by the government.

The Min Bagan company ran out of funds for the road construction and halted the project in March 2018. After that, U Thein Zaw, a Min Bagan Company engineer, did not pay the day labourers in full. Instead, he kept the money for himself and repeatedly postponed the payment.

The day labourers should have received between 5,500 kyats (USD 3.62)⁴ and 6,000 kyats (USD 3.95) per day for men and between 4,000 kyats (USD 2.63) and 5,000 kyats (USD 3.29) for women, but eighteen of them are still waiting for their wages to be paid in full. Even though the company promised to pay them, it has not done so yet. In total, U Thein Zaw still owes 1,612,000 kyats (USD 1,060) to U L--- and the other day labourers.

The day labourers depend on their wages to secure their livelihoods and provide for their family, as they do not own enough lands to live off subsistence farming. As a result of non-payment, they went into debt to buy food, which caused them economic difficulties and anxiety. Ma E---,

⁴ All conversion estimates for the kyat in this report are based on the 31 May 2019 official market rate of 1,520.03 kyats to US \$1.

one of the day labourers, expressed his feelings to KHRG: *"I felt really angry because we didn't have money to buy goods."*

As they still had not received their money, the day labourers discussed with K--- village leaders possible ways of taking action. They drafted and signed a complaint letter to reclaim the rest of their wages from the company, which they sent to the Chief Minister of Kayin State, Nan Khin Htway Myint, on August 13th 2018.

After the road construction project was halted, people from K--- village were only able to engage in intermittent, informal work. Since January 2019, they have been working as day labourers on a road construction project for the Sein Sin Kyel Company. They now receive their wages on time, which has allowed them to pay back their debts. The project they are working on should be completed in July 2019.

In June 2019, when a KHRG researcher followed up with U L---, he explained that he could not even contact U Thein Zaw anymore. In addition, he said that the complaint letter they submitted to the Chief Minister of Kayin State remained unanswered.



These photos were taken on July 15th 2018. They show people from K--- village signing a complaint letter to the Chief Minister of Kayin State, Nan Khin Htway Myint. [Photos: KHRG]

Part 4 - Permission for Using the Details

Did the victim(s) provide permission to use this information? Explain how that permission was provided.

U L--- gave KHRG permission to use this information.

Further background reading on human rights abuses committed by private companies in Southeast Myanmar can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- ["Mergui-Tavoy District: Land Confiscation by the A Lin Yaung Company in Ler Muh Lah Township, December 2018"](#), (June 2019).
- ["Thaton District: Land Confiscation by the Super World Company in Bilin Township, October 2018"](#), (May 2019).
- ["Mergui-Tavoy Situation Update: Extortion and Land Confiscations in Tanintharyi Township, November 2017 to January 2018"](#), (December 2018).

About KHRG

Founded in 1992, the Karen Human Rights Group is an independent local organisation committed to improving the human rights situation in Southeast Myanmar. KHRG trains local people to document and gather evidence of human rights abuses, and publishes this information to project the voices, experiences and perspectives of local communities. More examples of our work can be seen online at www.khrq.org.