



Karen Human Rights Group
Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Situation Update
September 28 / KHRG #17-64-S1

Mergui-Tavoy Situation Update: K'Ser Doh Township, March to May 2017

This Situation Update describes events occurring in K'Ser Doh Township, Mergui-Tavoy District during the period between March and May 2017.

- *Since February 2017, gold mining in Paw Hkloe has contaminated streams and waterways, upon which the local population depends on for their drinking water.*
 - *The road construction between Hkay Tu Toe and Hpaw Taw The Weh Pa Meh area has caused damage to local plantations. The company contracted to build this road did not provide compensation to local villagers because they argued that the road is being built for the benefit of civilian populations.*
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Situation Update | K'Ser Doh Township, Mergui-Tavoy District (March to May 2017)

The following Situation Update was received by KHRG in June 2017. It was written by a community member in Mergui-Tavoy 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

Village Situation

There were many different perspectives on development projects in different areas of K'Hser Doh Township. There was hatred between people in different areas when their perspectives would not match. Some villagers did not obey and refused the guidance of their leaders.

The problem of drug use has continued to grow. However, some village heads were not motivated to deal with the issue.

Business

Since February 2017, gold mining has occurred in Dy--- village, Paw Hkloe area. A group founded by four people approached the village head of Dy--- and the villagers asked for permission to conduct gold mining. However, their request was denied.

They just carried on with their plans to mine gold regardless. The local District and Township leaders were not consulted. The village head felt disappointed with their actions and wanted to resign from his position.

¹ KHRG trains community members in southeast Burma/Myanmar 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.

A Community-based Organization (CBO) that is working in this area envisioned to protect the environment and streams for the villages along Paw Hkloe river bank. It has been working to support the community enhance natural sustainability, health, and the well-being of villagers. However, we noticed that due to gold mining the streams have become polluted and are carrying less water. We know that they were using restricted substances and chemicals for gold extraction that has caused the water pollution.

Companies

Currently, gold mining, logging, and coal mining businesses are negatively impacting the community. The business projects have created biases, misunderstandings and lack of unity among the Karen. Companies do not comply with their codes of conduct. They usually cooperate with the Myanmar government in order to implement their business activities.

Asia Company Road Construction

The Myanmar government cooperated with the Asia Company and built a road in K'Hser Doh Township. From November 2016 to May 2017, the company started constructing a 40 mile-long road from Hkay Tu Toe area to the crossroads of Thaw Kheh river bank and Hpaw Taw Teh Weh Pa Meh area. The road that was built between Hpaw Taw and the Taw Kheh river source is 50 feet wide. The road construction damaged villagers' coconut, betel nut, and rubber trees. However, the company did not compensate for any of these damages. Instead, they said that the road was constructed for civilian use. This road leads to Kyaw Zin Hpya area, the location of the Asian Highway.

Myanmar Government Activity

Some local people proposed to teach Karen language and culture at schools once a week. However, this proposal has not yet been considered, as the Karen leaders did not yet meet with the Union Government in Nay Pyi Taw to negotiate and discuss this request.

Further background reading on the situation in Mergui-Tavoy District can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- "Mergui-Tavoy Field Report: Growing concerns about land confiscations and development-related abuses, January 2016 to December 2017", (July 2018)
- "Mergui-Tavoy Situation Update: Ler Doh Soh Township, October 2016 to October 2017", (June 2018)
- "Mergui-Tavoy Situation Update: Dawei Township, February to May 2015", (June 2017)
- "Mergui-Tavoy Interview: Naw M---, October 2015", (October 2016)
- "Mergui-Tavoy Situation Update: Ler Muh Lah Township, November 2015 to January 2016", (August 2016)

Mergui/Tavoy (Thanintharyi) District



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