

Displacement and causes of displacement in Irrawaddy Division

Documents

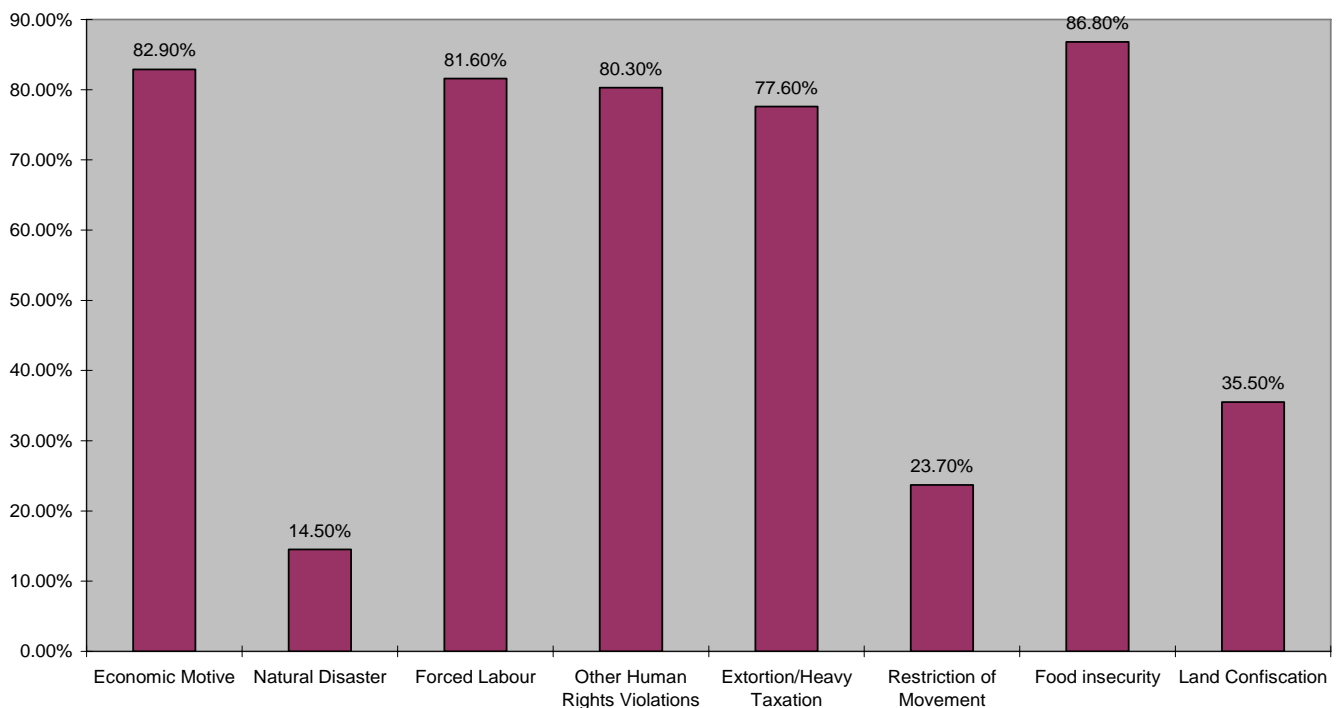
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Survey results (75 respondents)

4) Irrawaddy Division (percentage)



Forced relocations/evictions (rural)

Tourism promotion impact in Ngwe Saung, Irrawaddy Burma

-- Dr. Hlaing Tun, Members of Parliament Union (MPU), Burma; Sein Htay, Burma Fund, National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma, NCGUB. June, 2006 (extracts)

3.1. Confiscated for its Beauty

When it became well known that hotels and tourism were earning foreign exchange pretty well in neighbouring countries, SPDC tried to copy them and started finding possible beach resorts along the coast throughout Burma. Previous beaches were renovated while new ones were brought into action. Ngwe Saung beach is the newest among those in Irrawaddy Division. Starting from the first day of the year 2000, the project to build and operate hotels is now four years old and it passed a considerably enough time for a review of the changes that occurred there.

3.2. Arranged for moving

For the purpose of moving faster from assigned areas, groups of carpenters were sent into service by private companies who were looking forward to build hotels. They quickly destroyed the old houses, almost all of which were wooden and mainly two-storied. Because they were in a hurry to set up the hotels as soon as possible, the carpenters destroyed hastily without caring about the spoilage of wood, which must be reused to build similar houses in the new area that the government had granted. Neither the government nor the companies compensated the villagers for the loss of materials during the destruction and moving. They did arrangements to convey those materials to new locations. The government sold some items like sawn timber or GI roofing sheets only in a small amount. Most of owners of wooden houses got much smaller houses as the government did not replace the spoiled wood. Houses made of bamboo and thatch almost totally lost their materials and the owners had to lay out everything to build new houses again in new ward.

Seen at from above the new settlement looks like a ward of poor small houses each built inside a compound of 40' x 60' ft in dimension. The ground that they are resettling on is only the cultivatable farmland, which has not been prepared until now, 2004, in anyway for building houses and making streets. Young plants of groundnut could be seen everywhere when the people arrived there.

3.3. Review after four years of resettlement

As for the hotels in operation there, Ngwe Saung beach resorts may be working and earning quite well with nothing that can be complained about.

We need to discuss however, about the natives who were forced to move out from their residences to make room for hotels according to the "Ngwe Saung Beach Resort Project, 2000," which SPDC made.

Formerly, five little villages occupied the northern half of the sea front of Ngwe Saung cove, which is more than nine miles long in total. It can be assumed that each village occupied one mile of the sea front. It is their custom to allow only one road parallel to the coast and to build one row of houses within their gardens along the road. Therefore, each segment of road passes across the palm garden of each owner in which paddy field was included in the backyards and sand beach in front. When the sea front was considered only for hotels according to "Ngwe Saung Beach Resort Project" in 2000, all the villages were required to move away to a location that SPDC had spared for their new settlement before end of the year 1999. The new settlement assigned to was the farmland

just confiscated from villagers of Main Nga-Hsaw village without any compensation at all.

3.4. Ruined lives, dumped as rubbish

As mentioned above, people in Nga Hsaw area lived peacefully, happily and easily until development of “Ngwe Saung Beach Resort Project, 2000”. From the first day of the year 2000 on, the situations has been turned upside down.

- (1) Palm gardens, farms and any land included in the defined area for hotels were confiscated with a negligible compensation in return. It was just enough for one year’s expenditure before settling down.
- (2) All houses and families were dumped as rubbish on paddy fields confiscated without any compensation.
- (3) No facilities were provided for houses except one hand-pumped tube well for every two or three houses.
- (4) No new lands were created or allowed for cultivation and livestock breeding.
- (5) No new job opportunities were created.
- (6) Fishery (onshore fishnet hauling), the last opportunity for income, was no more allowed from the first day of 2004 on.
- (7) Alternative occupations like growing Cashew trees on hillsides, baking bricks, or sawing logs, which are deployable jobs only on a small scale, have been prohibited and sometimes prosecuted by officials of high or low ranks reciting rules and regulations or offering uncertain reasons, but almost all cases can be overcome by a large bribe.

Though tried, alternative jobs are always forbidden by officials and no income can be expected.

Fishing at deep sea (offshore) is highly risky to lives of those having not enough skill in it, and only a few people manage it.

Sometimes, hotels require labours only when ground works occur. How can it fulfil the needs of joblessness?

Low rank employees working in hotels are paid well, but they are not more than a handful in number. Can the hotels commit to employ all native applicants?

3.5. Extent of loss of land

Already mentioned in the sketch of Ngwe Saung area, confiscated lands comprise a loss of about **65% of the farmland** and **80% of the palm gardens**, which are vital to the daily life of the local people. Furthermore, the banned occupation of fishing by **on-shore fishnet hauling rendered a 100% loss of income** through it. Offshore netting was rarely done from the very beginning but some people have now taken the risk out of necessity.

Further loss of farmland in Ngwe Saung is caused by the newly introduced business, prawn breeding, which requires a flat land not too far from seafront. At the same time, they are scared of getting their ponds in touch with certain herbs toxic to prawns if

they have to prepare a new land. Then, they suggested authorities a **forced purchase to buy farmlands and it was made four years ago**. Most of farmland situated in valleys by the motorway and around Thazin and Baw-di-Gon villages were confiscated, but at a higher price in return. (Ks. 45,000 to 150,000). Loss of cultivating land may call a larger import of foodstuff and a larger expenditure.

[...]

As far as mentioned above, it is definitely sure that the whole community in Ngwe Saung village has been suffering from endless manmade disasters brought about by the mismanagement of the government in power, SPDC. The community emphasized above is not much in number, about 10,000 people dwelled in the previous five villages. Even for the genuine prosperity of an entire nation, no single person should be sacrificed to the devastation of his or her entire life without consent. Mercilessly directing such a peaceful society towards devastation actually means the violation of humanism. Moreover, exploiting governmental authority to gain profit through allied business firms definitely means oppressing the poor and demonstrates the cruelty of the government. Serious stress on all people and death of some people caused by confiscation reflects the brutality of the government who is necessarily responsible for such casualties.

More Karen villagers detained in delta Burma

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 12 August 2005

The number of villagers from Tagu-seik Village, Einme Township, Irrawaddy Division in the delta region of Burma, arrested by the Burmese authorities has gone up to between 50 to 100 and the authorities are planning to destroy and relocate the village.

When the authorities started to surround the village on 7 July, more than 30 people were detained on suspicion of having contacts with the Karen National Union (KNU) and hoarding weapons.

The village has been blocked off and surrounded by Burmese soldiers of Myaungmya-based Infantry Battalion – 93, from nearby Thayetkone Village and it has been difficult to find out the exact number of villagers detained including women.

Originally, it was rumoured that the village was raided because the villagers were hoarding weapons sent from the KNU, but it has now emerged that the arrests are connected to 7 May bomb blasts in Rangoon.

During the interrogations of villagers, one school teacher named Stanford was killed due to the heavy-handedness of the soldiers. Other political activists and local authorities are also being interrogated.

Punishment for non-compliance with orders

Two Burmese farmers from Bogale sentenced for reporting extortion

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 1 February 2006

Two Burmese farmers from Bogale Township in the delta region of Irrawaddy Division who reported the extortion of money from villagers by the local authority, were each sentenced to two years in prison.

The two, Aye Win who is also a head teacher and Win Nyunt were sentenced on 9 December 2005, local farmers told DVB.

The problem started when Kyonephar Village authority chairman San Shwe collected government support money given to each farmer since 2002, with the excuse of raising fund without giving receipts. When eight farmers including the two reported the practice to the authorities concerned, they were charged under the Act 211 on 14 October 2005 by district authority for giving false information.

The wife of Aye Win, Mar Mar Oo told DVB that the prosecution and conviction of her husband are related to his active political activities and he was also forced to resign from his position as the head teacher earlier.

Farmers arrested for airing grievances *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 22 January 2004

Five farmers were arrested in Ma-ubin Township, Irrawaddy Division in lower Burma by the country's military junta, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) for airing grievances.

Over 100 farmers from Ma-ubin Township were summoned by local authorities in December 2003 and ordered to cultivate summer paddy on the pain of confiscation of their arable land if they refuse.

But when five farmers pointed out the vast discrepancy between the junta designated cost and the actual cost, they were taken away by the Ma-ubin Township authority and no news has been heard from them since.

Similarly, local people in nearby Pantanaw Township are facing great difficulties because authorities have been collecting various taxes and 'funds' from them for meetings and other social functions held in town.

The farmers are being forced to give rice on a pro rata basis to the government and if they fail to do so for any reason, they have to compensate the quota with cash.

As export of rice was stopped for six months at the beginning of January by the junta, farmers have been facing difficulties and some were even forced to withdraw their children from schools.

To rub salt to the wound, the local authority chairman has been forcibly selling insecticides and fertilizers to the farmers and those who were not even involved in any form of cultivation because the authority could not find any use for them.

Other threats to human security

Land confiscation

Farmlands grabbed from Burmese farmers

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 8 June 2006

Military authorities at Myaungmya Township in Burma's delta region of Irrawaddy Division grabbed more than 1000 acres of farmlands from local farmers causing them untold miseries.

The lands were confiscated for cashew nut and rubber plantation projects and the affected villages are said to be Theinla, Khwaylaygyi, Moekyoepyit, Thanbyukonekyaungsu and Shiteintang.

The unfortunate farmers have to buy back their farmlands from land surveying officials, and the farmlands and orchards of those who could not afford to do so have been sold to rich Chinese living in Myaungmya.

Ancestral farmlands confiscated from farmers by Burmese prison authorities

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 26 March, 2006

The authorities of No.3, Prison Supervision Department confiscated more than 1000 acres of ancestral farmlands from local farmers in lower Burma leaving them jobless and homeless, and causing them untold miseries and difficulties.

"No.3, Prison Supervision Department in Irrawaddy Division confiscated paddy fields from the farmers," a farmer whose lands were confiscated told DVB. "They (prison authorities) are making a living out of the farms. As their lands are confiscated thus, the farmers are facing difficulties for survival."

1000 acres of farmlands were confiscated in 2004 and the township authorities promised the farmers they will 'sort them out', but no action has been taken for them so far. When

DVB contacted the authorities concerned, an official on duty refused to answer any query on the matter.

The farmers are planning to write a letter to the ruling junta, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) chairman Gen Than Shwe asking him to return the confiscated farmlands to them.

Burma's Energy Ministry confiscates paddy fields from farmers for oil exploration -
- Democratic Voice of Burma, 12 April 2006

The authority of Ma-U-Pin Township in Burma's Irrawaddy Division and the Energy Ministry of the ruling junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), jointly confiscated paddy fields from farmers for oil exploration without giving any compensation to their owners.

As the confiscation occurred at the time of harvests, the farmers are facing untold difficulties and certain ruins, and they are given neither compensations nor new paddy fields to work and make a living on.

A local farmer told DVB that the oil exploration was named Thabyeseik Oil Exploration and more than 20 acres of paddy fields were confiscated from the farmers who are facing untold miseries and difficulties.

"As those who make a living on paddy fields are unable to work anymore, there are many difficulties there. Now we can't grow beans. The rice yield is not good. Therefore, we are facing many difficulties. As we are given no compensations, we have so many difficulties."

We contacted the Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE) of the Ministry of Energy for comments on the matter, but no reply was forthcoming.

Burmese authorities grab lands from farmers [for industrial zone]
-- Democratic Voice of Burma, 8 November 2005

The local authorities at Kyapalat Village, Hinthada (Henzada) Township in Burma's delta region of Irrawaddy Division, confiscated paddy fields belonging to the villagers and sold them on to businessmen for the purpose of building an industrial zone, causing untold miseries to farmers.

The township authority chairman Saw Peter Twe and village authorities jointly confiscated 80 acres of paddy fields from the farmers without the permission from the higher authorities. The farmers are becoming porters and coolies in order to survive, a local resident told DVB.

Although the farmers know that they should report the lawless actions of the local authorities to higher authorities, they dare not do so because other people who did so had been imprisoned.

Burmese farmers arrested and their farms seized

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 17 April 2005

10 Rohingya farmers from Buthidaung Township, Arakan State in western Burma, were arrested on 24 July by local Burmese authorities who accused them of being dacoits.

The farmers who were used as 'whipping boys' were then told to pay 2 million kyat each for their freedom or they would face a 12 year prison term each if they failed to do so, according to Kaladan News.

Meanwhile, an acute shortage of rice within Arakan State is causing untold miseries to local people because of restrictions on the sale of rice within the region which cause inflation and slowdown in sale. Rice has been smuggled into the state from Bangladesh by bootleggers who make big profits.

Similarly, **local authorities at Ma-U Pin District in the delta region of Irrawaddy Division, confiscated more than 70 acres of paddy fields from farmers with the excuse that natural gas was found on them. The landless farmers received no compensation from the authorities and some of them had moved to Rangoon to be day labourers.**

Forced labour

Irrawaddy residents used for forced labour

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 19 February 2007

Residents in Ein Meh township, Irrawaddy Division have been forced by local authorities to build a road between Phyin Thalet village in Mayanpin and Shan Su village, according to local sources.

"On February 8th and 9th we were summoned and forced to build a transit road . . ." one resident told *DVB*.

But township officials denied the reports, saying they never used forced labour because they had access to the latest road-building machines.

"We only summon people when they are needed. We pay them what they deserve and make them work. There is no forced labour," a township official said.

But local residents said not only were they being forced to build roads but they were also being conscripted for work on canal development projects.

"We are pleading them not to force us into the canal digging project . . . forced labour practices which should not exist anywhere in the country are still ongoing to this day," one resident said.

Forced labour continues in delta Burma

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 6 March 2005

Local people in the delta region of Irrawaddy Division in lower Burma, have been subjected to forced labour practice perpetrated by the local authorities.

Villagers from Kyokone, Innthami, Tamang Taung, Thapyekwin, Kyondaye have been forced to “volunteer” in building a bridge over Einme – Myaungmya stream. They have to bring their own lunch boxes and dig earth and work without pay.

According to the elected representative of nearby Pantanaw Township Dr. Tin Min Htut, the “volunteering” was forced on the people by the order of Einme Township authority chairman and other villagers have to contribute 400 kyat to the costs of the bridge.

Although local authorities in other regions of Burma are being sued and imprisoned for forced labour practices, the authorities there are still ignoring the order for the cessation of the practice.

Intervention by the ILO with the SPDC dated 4 February 2005.

-- International Labour Organisation

According to the allegation, the police and village tract authorities in Mawlamyinegyun township (Ayeyawaddy Division) forced villagers to cultivate police land as part of an income-generation project for police staff welfare funds. This practice has been ongoing since 2000. Villagers are also required to provide their own tools and bring their own food, as well as contribute cash to the police funds.

Intervention by the ILO with the SPDC dated 9 July 2004

-- International Labour Organisation

According to an allegation from an alleged victim in Hinthada township (Ayeyawaddy Division), the township authorities had given instructions to the local authorities to provide round-the-clock sentries to guard an unoccupied monastery. Since then, more than one year ago, the local authorities had been requisitioning three to four villagers on a rotation basis to perform this duty.

Farmers forced to buy tools

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 5 April 2004

Farmers from Pantanaw Township, Irrawaddy Division in the delta region of Burma are being forced to buy agricultural tools by the local authorities despite the fact that the farmers are facing every kind of difficulties due to the plunging rice price.

The local authority chairman of Kyontone Village, Pantanaw Township U Myint Thein is not only forcing the villagers to buy agricultural tools, but also **forcing them to ‘volunteer’ in the building of Bassein – Rangoon Road** and those who fail to do so are ordered to pay 3000 kyats (approx. US\$430 at official exchange rate).

Similarly, farmers from villages near Rangoon have been **forced to ‘volunteer’ in the building of Hlaing Thaya – Twante Road** and each household is being told to contribute 5550 kyats.

Meanwhile, gambling syndicates and local authorities at Kamma Township, Pegu Division in central Burma have set up every type of gambling known in Burma to raise funds for the authorities at the office opening event for Union Solidarity and Development Association – while gambling remains officially illegal in the country.

Extortion, arbitrary taxation

Burmese authorities destroy paddy fields for not getting bribes

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 26 October 2006

Local authorities within Burma’s Irrawaddy Division, Bogale Township destroyed around 300 acres of paddy fields by means of flooding them with seawater, because 16 farmers who own the lands could not pay bribe money this year, according to local residents.

“At Bogale Township’s Bawathit Village group, Leikchaung and Kyeechaung Villages, there exist 300 acres of land along the (flood) barriers and balks. The Fishery Department told (the farmers) if they didn’t want salty water to enter their lands, they have to pay money. Last year, the 16 farmers paid 1m Kyat,” a local farmer told DVB. “In 2006-2007, as they could not afford to pay, village authority chairman U Shwe Win and U Thein Tan from Fishery came to break up the barriers and balks by force on 28 of this month (September?). More than 291 acres were destroyed because of the entry of salty (sea)water. Other paddy fields (around the flooded areas) are in danger of being destroyed in the thousands of acres if the salty water seeps in.”

The farmers reported the incident to township authority level and even up to the chairman of the ruling junta, the State Peace and Development (SPDC) chairman Gen Than Shwe himself. But no action has been taken against the culprits and the farmers were threatened with arrest, prompting them to go into hiding, the farmer added.

Burmese authority extorting money from local people

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 8 September 2006

The supervising officer of Irrawaddy Division, Wakhema Township fire brigade, Myo Lwin has been forcibly collecting 1000 Kyat from each household with the excuse of fire safety and imposing a 2000 Kyat fine on those who do not extinguish stove fire after cooking their meals.

“We have to extinguish fire from 5am to 11am. In the evening, from 5pm to 8pm. If guests come to our house we dare not cook rice and curry for them,” a housewife told DVB. “If caught, you are taken to the fire brigade office and fined 2000 (Kyat). If you are caught cooking rice and curry, you have to pay 2000 to fire fighters. As we are day labourers, we can’t afford to pay 2000.”

Local residents believe that the authorities are deliberately creating the rules to find a way of making money for themselves while commodity price is rising several folds and people are facing every kind of hardship.

“There are people who have to go to the paddy fields and grow rice. As we have no time, we have to cook when we get home,” the house wife said. “The whole village is not satisfied. The reason is while people have to survive with deficiency, business is not good and the commodity price keeps on rising. We can only afford to eat for a day if we work for a day. If we get caught, we get caught, we don’t care.”

Two Burmese farmers from Bogale sentenced for reporting extortion

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But when five farmers pointed out the vast discrepancy between the junta designated cost and the actual cost, they were taken away by the Ma-ubin Township authority and no news has been heard from them since.

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The farmers are being forced to give rice on a pro rata basis to the government and if they fail to do so for any reason, they have to compensate the quota with cash.

As export of rice was stopped for six months at the beginning of January by the junta, farmers have been facing difficulties and some were even forced to withdraw their children from schools.

To rub salt to the wound, the local authority chairman has been forcibly selling insecticides and fertilizers to the farmers and those who were not even involved in any form of cultivation because the authority could not find any use for them.

Food insecurity

Voice of the Hungry Nation (extracts)

-- People's Tribunal on Food Scarcity and Militarization in Burma, 15 October, 1999

Kyaw Aye, a 40 year old fisherman from Ngaputaw Township, [Irrawaddy](#) Division.

I once stayed in my wife's village and worked as a logger, but with increasing restrictions and demands by various authorities, it was becoming more and more difficult to earn a living this way. In 1994 I told my wife, "I can't stay here and do this work any more- if we don't leave, we'll starve." I left the village and went to stay in town with family members. It was better to go to an urban area. Life is easier for the people there than in rural areas. I was lucky to have family in town. If a rural person tries to move into town without having any connections, it is very difficult to get started.

Since I stayed in town, I became a fisherman. During peak season I can make about 1,000 kyat per week. During the other times of year I also repair bicycles. The income from this activity is pretty inconsistent- sometimes quite good, sometimes nothing. People simply can't support a family on one form of income- you have to try your best to find as many different ways to get money as possible.

In 1993 three children died a couple of doors down from my house. All boys, they were around 10, 8 and 6. The children had always been weak and malnourished, especially in the last couple of years. Their bellies were distended and their ribs stuck out—like starving African children we saw in magazines. Their knees were swollen and their calves were sticks. Their skin was white, their lips pale. They often had diarrhea. Their father worked cutting grass and bamboo to build houses. They all died about a week apart—I remember because I went to cut timber for a week, came back and heard one had died. I went back to the forest, came home the next week and another was gone. Just one week later the third child died. We knew the family well. I remember the family's condition and how this all came to pass.

Their father used to grow bananas, cucumbers, and watermelons on a small plot about two miles outside the village. After the 1988 uprising, the government consolidated the village, so the family had to move. Wild elephants ate all their plants, and so he turned to cutting bamboo. He earned about eighty [kyat](#) per day, which might have been enough, but he only got cash when bamboo traders came, so the family sometimes went hungry. Also, at 45 he was getting arthritis and couldn't work every day. His family of seven ate

no more than mine of five, and my children were younger. They begged for help frequently. Of course, we pitied them and helped as we could. Apart from rice, my wife gave them salt and fish paste.

When the children got diarrhea nobody suspected anything serious. They took some Burmese medicine, but that didn't stop it. Intravenous drips might have helped, but those cost 150 kyat or so, and nobody could afford them. So they passed away. The parents knew their children were dying, but there was no health care or medicine. Their father could only weep, heartbroken.

I knew this was a wrong and terrible thing. In my opinion, these children died from starvation. If they had adequate food they wouldn't have died. And they weren't the only ones, but I don't know the others' details. In nearby villages there was a minor epidemic. No matter how deep in poverty, people are never excused from demands for labor and money. This family had no alternative but to struggle for survival every day, and so the children died.

The annual inflation rate on basic food items in the last few years has been about 25%. Before 1988, we didn't see price increases like that. If my family runs short of food then I simply have to work extra-hard, and other members of my family will try to find some way of getting a little extra income, such as buying big bunches of vegetables, splitting them up and reselling them in one kyat bundles. Everybody does like this.

Every year people are called up to do labor on roads. This was another thing that seriously affected my ability to earn an income in my wife's village. Previously, I had to go twice, for an entire month. Orders came down from the township council through the village head. In my house there was but my wife and daughters and myself, so who else would go? The government was making these roads to connect with an artery from [Pathein](#) to Ngaputaw, but until now no vehicles are allowed on these roads as they are unpaved and would be destroyed in the wet season. If you chose not to go to labor then you could find somebody willing and negotiate a price for them to take your place, usually around 1000 [kyat](#). I didn't have any savings to do like this. In fact, when I went to the road works I had only about 60-70 kyat with me.

A lot of people at the construction site got headaches and fevers. As far as I see it, it should have been the responsibility of officials making us do the work to provide medicines for those who got ill, but they didn't give a thing. We also had to take all of our own tools- we got no support from the government for any of the work. We constructed huts in the fields that the road was constructed across. The farmers who lost land naturally got no compensation. One road also cut through a cemetery, but never mind about that! Women from a local village sold small quantities of food daily, but people in my group didn't have money. We mixed rice, fish paste, salt and turmeric together and just ate that. Of course, we were usually weak and sickly, as we were doing hard work but eating poor food. While I was absent, my family survived on about 900 kyat a month. My wife collected fire wood and cut bamboo which she resold to traders on the riverside, earning about 10 kyat per day.

It's a lot easier to stay in an urban area than in a small rural village. Since I've stayed in town, I've never had to go and work like the villagers are called up to do. If a young or middle aged man stays in a rural village, then any demand falls on your head, as there's few people. This was increasingly the case when I stayed in my wife's village, so I told her "let's move to the town." I remember that at that time we had little food left, and my clothes were ragged, but when you don't have enough food you don't think about buying new clothes.

In my wife's village of about 100 houses, I would say that around 90 households are living in poverty. But poverty has different levels of severity. What generally prevents people from improving their incomes is that they have no money to get some capital items to do more lucrative work. This is a big difference between people like myself who are able to survive reasonably well and those who are struggling to fill their stomachs every day. For example, nearly everybody in my wife's village had the ability to do logging work like I was, but they needed the money to buy a saw, which cost about 1500 [kyat](#) a few years ago, and they simply don't have any money. It's not that they can't do the work.

In my opinion there are definitely serious food shortages among the rural poor. I would say that 60-70% of the villagers face the threat of hunger on a daily basis. Every day the only foods that people ever eat are rice, fish paste and leaves. For a lot of them, to have their income generation interrupted for even one day means that they have no food. Some have single sets of clothes and no blankets, or only the most threadbare ones.

In the towns there's still a lot of poverty, but it's not so bad as the rural communities. I would put the urban poor at 60-70 % of the population. In town, the wealthy are traders, video hall owners, loan sharks and so on. I would say that 30 to 40% of the urban population have food problems daily. Mostly, these are farm laborers or petty traders of vegetables and so on. A lot of them are migrants from the rural areas trying to escape the same kinds of problems in their home villages. Between those who are getting by and those who are not, it's again a matter of having some materials or equipment on which to base your income. For example, a porter who carries stuff off boats can get up to 100 [kyat](#) per day, but somebody with a bicycle-sidecar can get 200-300 [kyat](#) per day.

Poverty has certainly been on a steady increase, it has never dropped. Since 1988, prices have risen to four to eight times what they were back then, which is especially shocking to our people who were previously used to stable prices. Just once around 1984-85 there was a really big increase in the cost of rice. It was prior to the new crop. Overnight the price jumped from 40 to 800 [kyat](#) for one [basket](#) and stayed like that for a couple of months until the new crop was in, when it fell back to 70-80 [kyat](#). For two or three months people were eating only one meal of rice porridge with some leaves per day. I'm not sure exactly why it happened, but I heard that the [BSPP](#) government had been taking very high quotas and this led to shortages. I don't know really what they were doing with all that rice and how they worked things out.

Poverty increases problems among people, especially in towns. In villages, people are still tight-knit and try to face their difficulties without undermining each other, but in

towns that's not so. People bring everything into their houses before nightfall, so that it won't be stolen. Chickens are often thieved. I lost a whole melon vine one time- somebody just came and ripped the whole lot up from along side the house during the night. Unfortunately, it's not so easy to bring plants in!

People lose their lives working for the army without receiving a salary and then their families get no compensation. Health is bad, but there are no decent clinics, so people die who shouldn't have to. School children lack materials and struggle amid poverty. As we are all suffering from the military government's oppression we must join hands to overthrow them. It is clear that the people have the right to take this course of action.

The following is additional material received from this source as of December 1998. It highlights the worsening food-crisis in the Irrawaddy Division.

Since last year, the cost of almost all foodstuffs and basic goods in the delta have doubled. In August 1998, I met with a corporal from [IB 93](#). I didn't ask him anything, but of his own accord he complained about the rations received by his battalion. They are still receiving 6 pyi of rice per month, but all of the surplus items- oil, salt, sugar, condensed milk, beans, fish paste- are being rationed at only half of the previous level.

To get extra money, soldiers in the delta go out on "conscription" drives. They go to the village/ward council officers, inform them they want to conscript one or two people, and tell them how much it will cost to opt out. They don't make the cash amount too high, and right now nobody wants to become a soldier, as their conditions aren't as good as before, so the soldiers know that people will pay the money. The money is split between the soldier collecting it and his superiors.

Fishing is not as good as before, as there is little water in tributaries. This in spite of good rains in 1997-98. There is heavy deforestation in the delta, and also intensive irrigation. Wells are increasingly empty too. In the past, people were happy to let neighbors share water from wells, but in this last year, families were reserving their wells for their own use only, and even then some don't have enough.

In June-July 1998, there was a lot of rain and many children died from dengue fever. Adults also suffered the disease, but didn't die. Every day children came into the town hospital and two to three per day were dying for a period of some weeks. In one case on July 26, a father paid 2000 [kyat](#) for a boat to bring his child to the hospital, and then the doctor told him it was too late, and refused to treat the child. The father told him, "Whether too late or not, give the medicine!" and was ready to pay for it. But the doctor refused, and shortly after the child died. The father in a fury swore and abused the doctor and hospital staff. For those children who survived, it took 2-3 weeks in hospital to recover, which cost parents more than 20,000 kyat. At the hospital, absolutely everything must be purchased and paid for.

Now, a large number of children are forced to drop out of school after Standard 2 or 3. A member of my family works at a school where most of the children attending are particu-

larly poor. At that school, the children who attend often come with no food for the day, no shoes, etc. The school materials are also all insufficient.

In July 1998, I met with a schoolteacher. The teacher was pushing a bicycle loaded with dried goods, basic household items, etc. He explained to me that he and his sister are both primary school teachers, and must take the main responsibility to support their family of 6. The 1200 kyat salary is not enough, but also they are not given permission to resign their positions and find other work. Therefore, to survive he goes to buy small goods in town and resells them in his village, a couple of times per week. It takes about one and a half hours traveling time on the bicycle each time. Most teachers must find extra sources of income like this to survive. While teachers, like other civil servants, continue to receive 6 pyi of discounted rice at about 30 kyat per pyi each month, it is generally poor quality, and sometimes rotten. Some resell it, some re-polish it.

In my opinion, the main issue in the last year has been the price of food- it's doubled, but wages are unchanged. As a result of this, regular people are slowly understanding more about how this government is no good for them. They see that the authorities are only working for themselves and the country. People have stronger political ideas than before, mainly rooted in the economic difficulties of the present. More and more people consciously recognize that they are poor due to the bad government. There is more cautious resistance than before, both out of the need to survive and out of resentment to the administration. For example, 5-6 years ago, farmers absolutely had to give the paddy quota that was set, whatever the case. Nowadays, they try to find ways not to give full amounts, and the government is more cautious. Traders recognize that taxes are high and there are a lot of problems for them under the regime. They think that if there was "democracy" then economic conditions would improve. In fact, most people equate democracy with better economic circumstances.

No more Livelihood

This information came from a friend of farmer U Po Gyi's family in Wakema Township, [Irrawaddy](#) Division.

Before 1991, U Po Gyi had 3 acres of land which could yield up to 30 [baskets](#) per acre. The government quota was 12 baskets per acre. U Po Gyi also had to put aside six baskets for next years crop, leaving him with a net total of approximately 48 baskets of [paddy](#) per year. He also had to hire cattle and farm implements. These expenses didn't leave him with too much, but he could net about 20 baskets of rice per year, enough to survive on.

1991 was a very dry year, although there was still enough water at U Po Gyi's farm for the crop. However due to many insects the crop was halved. In January 1992, village council officials and three police rounded him up with many other farmers who had been unable to give their quotas. They sentenced him to two years in jail, and his family had no way to get him out. In his absence, his wife worked as a subsistence laborer, but in June 1993 she sold their land out of desperation, at 8000 [kyat](#) per acre. She used 20,000

kyat to have her husband released. But he was in poor physical condition and died of a heart ailment about 2 months later. That same year, there was a big increase in demand for labor on road constructions. In the absence of his father, U Po Gyi's only son, Maung Ta Ta, who at the time was 15 years old, worked on the Wakema – Shwe Laung road for one month. During that time the boy drank unsanitary water and ate poorly. He contracted dysentery and a fever, and died at the road site.

Since that time, the remaining members of the family, U Po Gyi's wife and four daughters, have had to split up. None of the daughters is in school, and two of them have gone away to find work. Only the mother and youngest daughter are staying together doing daily wage labor to survive.

These kind of events go on all the time. I can give this example because I know the people involved. Others always just look on these situations with pity, and recognize suffering, but don't think that they can do anything about them. They become normal. In Burma, each level of society puts a little more pressure on the next one down, until by the time you get to the very bottom the greatest pressure is there- those people bear everything, that's the result.

People's Tribunal on Food Scarcity and Militarization in Burma, 15 October, 1999

AHRC has listed seven factors causing hunger outside the war zones:

1. Paddy quota
The government taxes farmers through a compulsory rice purchase system based on unrealistic crop yields. The quota is calculated according to acreage, not production, and prescribes unrealistically high contributions. Bad weather, flooding or crop failures due to flawed government projects do not exempt farmers. Many must buy rice then resell it for quota, at considerable loss. Reform has failed.
2. Agricultural development
Programs to increase yield have failed to realize food security. Not only do farmers lose money, but they must borrow money for fertilizers and farm equipment. If they do not to comply with government regulations, they risk land confiscation. Summer rice programs in Irrawaddy Division and Mon State illustrate the effects of these policies. Where crop yields do increase, the government reaps the benefit: surplus paddy is sold for export, rather than distributed to hungry farmers.
3. Land confiscation
The law empowers the government to take away people's land swiftly and efficiently ³³. Apart from land confiscation, small farmers abandon their land when rice farming is no longer economically viable. They become hired laborers whose daily wage can not guarantee food security.
4. Forced labor
As in civil war zones, the government conscripts uncompensated labor on public works. Such work includes servicing irrigation projects related to the summer paddy program. This labor impedes food security by reducing farmers' time and capital for agriculture.

5. Economic policy

The government has created rice shortages by removing paddy from the domestic market and selling it overseas. Furthermore, this rice has been purchased substantially below market rates. Rice prices have inflated and the kyat has fallen, which affects all food prices. The government has reduced wages and benefits to the army and civil service, contributing to endemic corruption by state officials.

6. Arbitrary fees

Quite apart from the rice quota system, administrative and military officials levy a range of fees, fines and arbitrary taxes. These payments are not part of an official national tax structure, but are instead an institutionalized form of corruption which uses the formal structure of the state to support a shadow economy.

7. Inadequate community health service

Malnutrition and illness are compounded by a general lack of health services and high costs for medicine and health care. Children have suffered hunger, disease and death.

Compulsory (and frequently ruinous) cropping and marketing policies

Farmers forced to grow summer paddy

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 25 January, 2007

Farmers from several states in Burma have been ordered to either plant a summer paddy crop or to pay money into an agricultural fund.

A farmer from Nanpoat village in Moe Hnyin township, Kachin State said today that all paddy growers from the surrounding area were being forced grow 15 acres of summer crops.

“It is not suitable to grow paddy in Kachin state in summer. If we grow rice in summer, the soil will be unusable to grow the crop in the rainy season. So we don’t really want to grow. But they said our farming permission would be revoked if we didn’t grow it,” the farmer told DVB.

Farmers from **Irrawaddy** and Bago division also said they were being forced to plant summer crops that would decrease the quality of their next winter harvests.

A man from Nyaung Lay Pin township, Bago division said some farmers had refused to accept the government’s orders.

“About three days ago, an order from the [Township Peace and Development Council] was issued to grow summer paddy. If the farmers grow the paddy now it will be late in the rainy season by the time it is done. So they refused the order. We don’t know what the authorities will do,” the man said on condition of anonymity.

An official from the Moe Hnyin township agricultural office in Kachin State admitted farmers had been forced to plant summer crops but said, “We asked them to grow the crop they like. Anything that’ll suit their lands.”

Burmese farmers forced to grow unproductive rice again

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 3 October 2005

Burmese authorities in Mandalay and **Irrawaddy** Divisions have been forcing local farmers to grow wetland paddies out of season at the wrong places again, causing unnecessary difficulties to the farmers and their families.

At Meikhtila District, Mandalay Division in central Burma, farmers were threatened in September with prosecutions if they do not follow the order. The district is known to be a very arid region and farmers could only grow rice during the rainy season where they could get enough water from dams and reservoirs.

A local farmer from Kokkosu Village told DVB that the costs of growing wetland paddies are very costly and the farmers only concentrate on cash crops such as tomatoes, wheat and corns. He added that the authorities are forcing farmers to destroy all these crops and grow wetland paddies when it is already the late monsoon season.

A farmer at Pantanaw Township in the Irrawaddy delta region told DVB that many farmers are still unable to recover from last year’s drop in the prices of crops and the destructions of crops by insects, and they have received no help from the state for their losses.

Kokkosu farmer suggested that the so-called experts of the government should stick to what they know and let the farmers get on with their lives by allowing them to grow whatever could be grown on suitable lands. “They just want us to eat rice without curry,” he said.

Farmers forced to grow dry season paddy

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 14 April 2004

Burmese farmers at Ein-Me Township, Irrawaddy Division are being forced to grow dry season paddy by local authorities and as a result, they are facing many kinds of problems.

The authorities are not properly supplying farmers with subsidised materials including fertilisers for the farmers and they are likely to face more difficulties due to low yields and wastage.

The costs of growing rice at the unusual time of the year are higher for farmers as they have to buy most of the necessary materials and equipments at the black market, and the farmers are only growing paddies where the authorities could visit and inspect, according to a disgruntled farmer.

At the beginning of this year, the ruling junta of Burma, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) imposed the export ban on rice and major grains for fear of political unrest caused by the shortage after promising the farmers that they could sell their produce freely. As a result, the price of rice and paddy (un-husked rice) plummeted and farmers have been unable to sell rice at normal price.

Human rights abuses and forced relocations still going on

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 9 March 2004

Local authorities of Burma's military junta, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) in Bogale Township in Irrawaddy Division are forcing farmers to grow dry season paddy and those who do not obey the order are threatened with heavy fines and imprisonment.

The local authorities led by chairman U Maung Shein siphoned off fertilisers and diesel fuel rationed for farmers, and sold them in black market. As a result, farmers are unable to grow rice.

And the farmers are 'forced to volunteer' (take part in forced labour) and military trainings regularly, and those who could not afford to do so have to pay fines.

Meanwhile, villagers in Kyaukgyi Township, Pegu Division whose villages are close to Karen National Union (KNU) operating areas were forced to relocate by Burma's army.

Those who refused were threatened with murder and destruction. Seven villagers were assaulted and one villager was beaten to death by Burmese soldiers.

Farmers forced to grow dry season rice

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 5 February 2004

While the price of paddy/rice is plunging and the sale stagnating in Burma, Burmese farmers are being forced to grow dry season paddy by the country's military junta, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC).

Farmers from lower Burma especially the delta region have been threatened by their local authorities with arrest and confiscation of their lands if they didn't obey the order.

A farmer from Kyonpyaw Township told DVB that the government only provide inefficient amount of fertiliser and fuel need for planting rice. He added that farmers also have to buy extra seedlings, fuel and fertilisers.

Modern day Burmese farmers under the rule of their own government are faring worse than their ancestors under the foreign British rule, complained the farmer.

Farmers arrested for airing grievances

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 22 January 2004

Five farmers were arrested in Ma-ubin Township, Irrawaddy Division in lower Burma by the country's military junta, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) for airing grievances.

Over 100 farmers from Ma-ubin Township were summoned by local authorities in December 2003 and ordered to cultivate summer paddy on the pain of confiscation of their arable land if they refuse.

But when five farmers pointed out the vast discrepancy between the junta designated cost and the actual cost, they were taken away by the Ma-ubin Township authority and no news has been heard from them since.

Similarly, local people in nearby Pantanaw Township are facing great difficulties because authorities have been collecting various taxes and 'funds' from them for meetings and other social functions held in town.

The farmers are being forced to give rice on a pro rata basis to the government and if they fail to do so for any reason, they have to compensate the quota with cash.

As export of rice was stopped for six months at the beginning of January by the junta, farmers have been facing difficulties and some were even forced to withdraw their children from schools.

To rub salt to the wound, the local authority chairman has been forcibly selling insecticides and fertilizers to the farmers and those who were not even involved in any form of cultivation because the authority could not find any use for them.

Burmese farmers in trouble again

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 13 December 2003

Despite the promise of the military junta of Burma's promise not to force rice farmers to sell rice to the government, both Burmese rice merchants and farmers are facing difficulties due to the junta's tampering with rice price.

The junta, the SPDC (State Peace and Development Council) has ordered local rice farmers and merchants in Irrawaddy Division, the rice bowl of Burma to halve the price of rice.

As rice merchants are unwilling to sell rice to the junta, they are stopping their business by not buying rice from farmers. The farmers are likely to face losses with the designated price as the yield of rice is only 50 'tins' (bags) per acre on average each year.

In Pegu Division, farmers are still resisting to sell rice to the regime and the government is still unable to force the price on them. Rice farmers in Mon State are also unwilling to sell their produce to rice merchants because of the lowered price and the merchants are making no effort to buy rice from farmers.

Rice merchants are saying that the farmers are likely to face losses because the yield of rice is reduced to 50% this year at 20-25 'tins' per acre.

Buy our seeds and pay in time

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 20 November, 2002

It is reported that the local authorities at Yekyi Township, Irrawaddy Division are forcibly selling corn seeds to unwilling farmers.

The local members USDA and authorities are touring around the villages and forcing the farmers to buy their seeds at the rate of a tin of seeds to an acre of marshland.

The same tin of seeds costs 350 kyats at the independent dealers but the farmers are forced to pay 4000kyats to the authorities. Those who refuse are threatened with arrest and charge of rebellion against the state and the confiscation of their farms.

A villager has already been arrested for refusing to buy the seeds. Further more, those who bought the seeds, have to pay the expense within this month. If they couldn't, interests will be charged. They also have to promise in a signed document that they will sell the resulting harvests to the USDA only.

Natural disasters, fires

Out of season rains and frosts destroy cold season crops in Burma

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 16 January, 2006

Late arriving monsoon downpours and frosts have been causing severe damages to cold season bean and lentil crops grown along River Irrawaddy in central Burma.

As it is too late to grow new crops for recuperation, the farmers are in serious danger of losing their capitals, investments and accumulating massive debts. The majority of the farms are situated along both sides of the river between Mandalay and Prome, according to local residents. The disaster is said to be the worst in 50 years.

Moreover, Burmese consumers are in danger of facing the scarcity of beans and rising inflation. The farmers are not likely to receive compensations from the authorities and all they could do now is thinking about the prospect of surrendering their livestock to moneylenders while looking at their destroyed crops with dejection.

Burmese fishermen fear to go to sea and risk starvation

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 5 January 2005

Burmese fishermen from Kha Pyat Thaung Village, Laputa Township in the delta region of **Irrawaddy** Division who were hardest hit by recent tsunamis, are still too scared to return to sea for fishing and their family members are in danger of starving as they have no other way to make a living.

According to a report by AFP, the villagers saw much of their seasonal fishing village swept away and at least 17 people, mostly children playing on the beach, were killed by the tsunamis.

47-year old Daw Mya Mya Win, a mother of four said she lost all her possessions and now she and her family have nothing to eat. A 54-year old man, U Thaung Sein said tearfully that he is praying not to face this kind of disaster again in his life.

The villagers are now resorting to asking questions to soothsayers “bedin-sayas”, warding off evil and offering candle lights. The local authorities are worried that the villagers’ bamboo lean-tos with thatched roofs might catch fire from candles which are being lit outside the frail structures.

More than 400 could be dead in Burma

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 3 January 2005

More than 400 people could be killed in Burma by the earthquake and subsequent tsunamis which struck the coasts surrounding the Indian Ocean on 26 December, according to reliable reports received by DVB.

The majority of the dead are sea-gypsies, the Salon or Moken people who mainly live and survive on the seas and fishermen from **Irrawaddy** Division. Nearly 200 people from Lampi Island, off the southwest coast of Burma, which is mainly inhabited by Salon people, are missing, according to someone who recently went to visit the region speaking on condition of anonymity.

Although the island itself has not been damaged badly, nearly 200 Salon people who were out on the sea when the disaster occurred, have not returned to the island yet. Family members of those missing assume that their loved ones are lost at sea and they said that their people could survive normal storms but they could do nothing to protect themselves from the tsunamis. Another fishing boat owner said that there have been some damages on the surrounding islands also.

Nearly 100 fishing boats from Laputa, Bogale, Mawlamyine Kyun, Pyapon, Bassein in the delta region of **Irrawaddy** Division, still haven't returned home and no contact could be made with them since the disaster struck, according to a fishing boat owner.

They are all presumed to be dead and the local authorities are still refusing to confirm the reports and have made not effort to rescue them.

Village swept away in Burma by tsunamis

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 2 January 2005

According to a report from Kharr-Pyat-Taung Village, Laputa Township, **Irrawaddy** Division in the delta region of Burma, the village with 600 people had been swept away into the sea by the tsunamis.

When the tsunamis hit the coast on 26 December, many children were playing on the beach near the village and they were unable to outrun the lethal oncoming tidal waves, according to a local fisherman Ko Myo Tun.

He said he saw 17 people swept away into the sea and it is the first eyewitness to have come forward from Burma, a country under heavy news censorship, according to AFP.

A local official from Irrawaddy Division didn't say anything about the report on Kharr-Pyat-Taung when he was contacted by DVB but insisted that there had been only a slight rise of the tides at nearby Pyin-Sa-Lu Township and Kyun-Thaung Village.

Burma junta still insists less people killed by the Tsunamis than claimed

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 1 January 2005

Although conflicting reports have appeared about the dead and missing in Burma over the recent quake and tsunamis, the country's military junta, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) insists its figures are correct.

According to the SPDC's official figures, 53 people were killed, 43 injured and 21 missing after waves engulfed 17 coastal villages, leaving 778 people homeless. As the government's official tsunami death toll has risen by almost 20 to 53, observers believed the number could rise further.

But Rangoon-based international aid agencies said the figure is likely to be as high as 86 killed while 45 were injured and 10 missing, leaving about 5,300 people homeless.

The figures are a rough estimate from the international aid agencies, with most deaths in Burma's **Irrawaddy** Delta and the toll is likely to increase especially in Coco Islands in Rangoon Division, Hainggyi Island in Arakan State, and Mergui archipelago including Mali Island in Tenasserim region, where the aid agencies are not permitted to go.

However, the SPDC rejected the claims and reported that everything is normal in Coco Islands. It noted that the underwater gas pipelines from the Yatana and Yetagun gas fields in Tenasserim Division are also all right.

The international organizations are finding it hard to believe the SPDC's one-sided reports and criticize that the junta should allow foreign journalists by granting them visas to visit the tsunami affected areas to assess the situation and learn the truth.

Since this is not a political problem but a natural disaster, granting the visas should not be a problem with the SPDC. Most journalists from the international media, including BBC and CNN, have applied for visas to cover the disaster aftermath but the SPDC has rejected all the applications.

No death in Irrawaddy Division insists Burma junta despite evidence

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 1 January 2005

More than 30 large fishing boats privately-owned by entrepreneurs from Pyapon and Bogale have been missing at sea off the **Irrawaddy** Division coast due to the severe earthquake and tsunamis which struck on 26 December.

More than 200 fishermen might have been missing since each of the fishing boats carried more than seven fishermen.

Dr Tin Min Htut, the elected representative from Pantanaw Township in Irrawaddy Division, said the disaster struck while it is the high fishing season for local villagers.

An official from the Marine Administration Department in charge of offshore fishing in the area admitted that the missing boats were registered at his department but insisted that no report on the loss or damage has been received.

“At present there is no loss or damage of fishing boats in **Irrawaddy** Division,” he said, “The situation is fine in the region concerning fishing boats”.

When DVB asked him about the casualties in that region, he replied, “Well, I'm talking about fishing boats because we are from the Marine Administration Department”.

When asked if the higher authorities inquired about the missing fishing boats, the official replied, “They asked about the loss and destruction list but since there is none we have answered in the negative”.

Although responsible officials are denying the truth, Rangoon-based International Federation of the Red Cross, IFRC, reported 47 dead and 76 fishing boats missing in Irrawaddy Division alone due to the quake and subsequent tsunamis.

Summary of latest situation in Burma after the quake

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 30 December 2004

Death : 86
People missing : 10
Injured : 45
Destroyed household : 977
Missing boats : 76
Homeless : 5300
Bridge : 3

Irrawaddy Division

Death : 47
People missing : 10
Missing boats : 76
Injured : 45
Destroyed household : 710
Homeless : 3550

Laputta Twonship (Irrawaddy)

Death : 42
Injured : 45
Missing boats : 60
Destroyed homes : 461
The most affected villages : Khi Thaung, Aung Hlaing, Htan Pin Gone, Pyin Sa Lu, War-taw Kone, Kyar Chaung and Ka Byat Thaung.

Ngaputaw Twonship (Irrawaddy)

Death : 4
People missing : 9
Missing boats : 5
Destroyed household : 249
The most affected villages : Kyauk Ka Lat, Magyi Chaung, Azin Chaung, Pyi Thaya, Veda Pin, Zee Taung, Pon Taw Phyar, Than Puya Kan and Thein Chaung.

Pyapon Township (Irrawaddy)

People missing : 1
Missing boats : 11

Bogale Township (Irrawaddy)

Death : 1

1 stadium collapsed

The situation in Burma after the quake

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 30 December 2004

Rangoon-based international aid organisations on 30 December held a second coordination meeting in their efforts to help victims of the earthquakes and tsunamis in Burma, and released statistics they have collected so far.

A Burmese official from the International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC) in Rangoon told DVB that representatives from World Vision, UN, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, ICRC and MSF attended the meeting.

He estimated that more than 5000 people could be affected, 1000 houses destroyed and between 80 & 100 killed. He added that the rural areas in the delta region of Irrawaddy Division especially Bogalay, Laputta, Pyapon and Ngaputaw Townships have been affected most.

More than 3,500 people in Irrawaddy Division and 1,800 in Tenasserim Division had been affected. Three major bridges were destroyed. There have been no reports of damages in Arakan State but 12 deaths reported.

When asked what the aid organisations have been doing to help the victims, the official replied that clothing and cooking utensils are needed and some helps have been distributed through the government organisations.

Earthquake and tsunami victims in Burma

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 29 December 2004

At least 90 people have been killed in Burma by recent quake which occurred on 26 December but the country's ruling junta, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) claimed that only 36 people have been killed. The majority of the victims are from coastal regions of Arakan State, Tenasserim and Irrawaddy Division.

The authorities refused to receive help from the international rescue organisations for the victims at Irrawaddy Division. But a local resident from Bassein told DVB that the regional military commander himself was said to have visited the famous Maw Tin Soun Pagoda which was damaged by tsunami caused by the quake.

At Sittwe (Akyab) in Arakan State, western Burma, four people were confirmed dead after their fishing boats were sunk by the tidal waves. A local Arakanese resident said the authorities made no effort to help the victims.

At the Thai coastal town of Rangong, at least 57 Burmese migrant workers were killed by the tsunamis, according to a list provided by the Thai authorities.

Several Burmese workers were also killed at the resort town of Phuket but the exact number is not known as the death toll is still increasing.

90 people killed in Burma by quake and Tsunami
-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 28 December 2004

International rescuers on 28 December said around 90 people so far are known to have been killed in Burma by the earthquake and subsequent tidal waves which occurred on 26 December.

The majority of the victims are said to be villagers living along the coastal regions of Tenasserim and Irrawaddy Divisions, according to AP news agency.

But the “New Light of Myanmar”, the mouthpiece of the country’s military junta, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), claimed that only 43 people were killed and 25 people missing. The newspaper added 17 villages were destroyed and more than 200 people are left homeless by the tidal waves.

At Sittwe (Akyab), the capital of Arakan State in western Burma, at least 10 people were killed and two fishing boats are missing.

DVB also received reports of deaths and missing people at Kalaryaung Village, Taung-gup Township. A local resident told DVB that seven people are presumed dead as only their clothing were found. He added that there have been reports of deaths and missing people on Magye Island in the Gulf of Bengal. There are also reports of new islets springing up from the sea.

In Irrawaddy Division, one person was killed in Bogalay and around 30 fishermen are still missing at Laputta and seven corpses were found.

There have also been reports of deaths and damages at Maw-Tin-Soun area near Bassein (Patheingyi). The crowing umbrella of the famous Maw-Tin-Soun Pagoda was also knocked down by the violent tsunami.

Moreover, Ma-U Bin University building was torn apart by the quake.

According to unconfirmed reports, Coco Island, , 270 miles southwest of Rangoon and located in the India Ocean was submerged under the rising sea level and the authorities came to ask for help from Rangoon University Geography and Geology Department.

Further south in Tenasserim Division, Plotoketone Village near Kawthaung bore the brunt of the quake and around 20 people were killed and some people are still missing.

According to unconfirmed reports, more than 100 people were killed and 40 homes destroyed at nearby Aungba Village.

Help to be sent to quake and tsunami victims in Burma

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 28 December 2004

Rangoon based international organisations have been sending their representatives to coastal regions of Burma such as Arakan State, Irrawaddy and Tenasserim Divisions which have been affected by recent earthquake and tidal waves.

UN organisations in Rangoon are urgently preparing to send emergency help to the victims, according to UNICEF official Jason M. Rush.

Mr. Rush told DVB that reports of casualties are still coming in and it is difficult to estimate how many people have been killed or missing due to communication difficulties, but at least 90 people confirmed dead so far.

Initial reports indicate that Irrawaddy Division is the worst affected region but he cautioned that situations at the outlying islands such as Coco Island, Salon Island and Mergui (Myeik) archipelagos could be worse when reports from there are received eventually.

Other organisations such as IFRC, ICRC, UNDP, Myanmar Red Cross and MSF are also involved in the rescue efforts in the affected regions.

At the moment, the biggest challenge for these organisations is said to be getting good information and it is also difficult for them to travel to the regions due to lack of reliable transports.

Mr. Rush also said that no international help has been requested so far as field studies are being carried out at the moment but it would be done within a couple of days once the picture becomes clearer and assessments made on the situation.

Burma affected by Tsunami: Several died and tens missing

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 27 December 2004

The coastal regions of lower and western Burma which are connected to the India Ocean have been affected by the recent earthquake and subsequent tsunamis.

According to information DVB could gather so far from the local people of the affected regions of Tenisseriam (Taninthayi), Pegu Division and Irrawaddy Divisions, at least 60 people have died and many more are still missing and unaccounted for.

Most of the damages have been inflicted in the delta region of Irrawaddy Division and Tenisseriam Division in southern Burma close to Thailand. At least 40 have died in Laputta Township of Irrawaddy Division alone. In the town of Kawhaung in Tenisseriam Division, opposite of Thai city Ranong, DVB has recorded the death of at least 20.

Local people confirm tens of people including children are still missing. Bridges and tens of houses had been destroyed in Kaung Thaung.

DVB has not been successful in contacting some affected areas. There are also rumours that the Total Gas Pipeline which supplies natural gas to Thailand from the Andaman Sea is also affected.

Flooding in lower Burma

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 19 August 2004

There has been severe flooding in the lower Burma regions of Rangoon , Pegu and Irrawaddy Divisions due to heavy monsoon rains, breaking dams and canals and causing disasters and problems local farmers.

At Htan Tapin Township in Rangoon Division, four villages had been inundated and there have been reports of death.

Moreover, at nearby Kawmu Township three wards of the town have been inundated and there is no enough place for animals to graze around the town.

More than 20,000 acres of paddy-fields with maturing crops from 54 village groups are in danger of being destroyed if the water level is not going down soon leaving farmers utterly ruined.

At Ye Kyi, Bassein (Patheingyi) and Kyonpyaw Township in nearby delta region of Irrawaddy Division, high level flood water have cut off communication lines between towns and hamlets, and the people are resorting to travelling by boats at 100 kyat per trip.

Local people especially children and old people also have to contend with poisonous snakes, dysentery, skin diseases and high shivering fevers.

But there has been no rescue effort from the authorities and both people and animals are taking refuge on high knolls.

Parts of the highway linking Rangoon with nearby Pegu in the north are also under water.

Villages and paddy fields in the surrounding areas are already under water and the people are likely to face the shortage of rice in the coming cold season.
