

Displacement and causes of displacement in Magwe Division

Documents

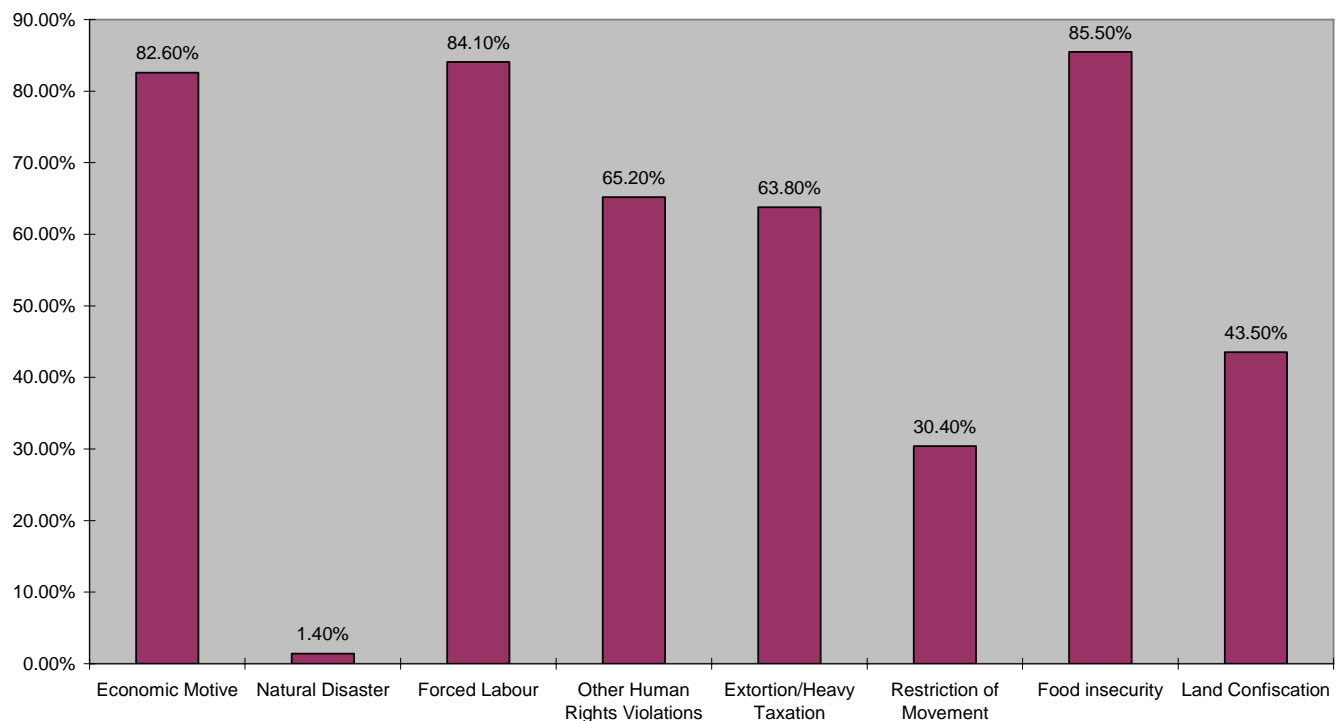
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Survey results (70 respondents)

6) Magwe Division (percentage)



Forced relocation/eviction (rural)

Magwe villages forced to move for Metta reservoir

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 6 March 2007 via *BurmaNet News*

“Four villages near the developing Metta Reservoir in Gangaw township, Magwe Division are being forced to move to Myuak district by the local authorities.

U Aye Myint, a lawyer with the Guiding Star legal aid group, told DVB yesterday the Thetnang, Yinma, Sabai and Sinmon villages were being forced to move by the Burmese military’s Infantry Battalion 50 and the local police.

“There are about 120 households . . . They are about 22 miles away from Gangaw town. They are to be transferred to a place 70 miles away,” U Aye Myint said.

But residents from the villages have said they do not want to move to the area insisted on by local officials and have asked the authorities to find a more appropriate site, according to a Buddhist monk who will also be relocated.

“They don’t want to move to Myauk district. They want to move to the hills near their villages where they can get water,” the monk said on condition of anonymity.

He said the land designated by the military for the villages was unfarmable and that water supplies in the area were scarce.

Construction work on the Metta Reservoir started in 2001 and is due for completion in 2008.”

Magwe villages ordered to make way for dam

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 20 February, 2007 via *BurmaNet News*

“Several villages in Gangaw township, Magwe Division are being forcibly relocated by the Burmese military to make way for the Pyintha dam project, residents told DVB.

The Sabai, Kha Mahn, Yinma and Khin Mon villages have all been ordered to move by March 31 as a result of military plans to confiscate more than 3500 acres of private land.

“The place we are going to be relocated to is ‘kyat’ land which is not good for cultivation. We are still unable to get drinkable water from the wells there . . . we will surely die from starvation or thirst,” one villager said on condition of anonymity.

The Pyintha dam project was launched in 2003 and is due for completion by 2008. Large amounts of inhabited land are expected to be completely flooded once the dam is finished.

But many of the villagers told to relocate have approached the issue pragmatically, saying they would not mind moving if their new land was better and they had more access to health care.

“They must give us good places. We must be given land that is fertile,” the villager said.”

Extortions and forced relocations in Burma

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 5 September 2006

“The local authority secretary of Pyinchaung Village, Taungup Township in Burma’s western Arakan State, Tin Aye has been forcibly collecting money from local farmers for his own benefits.

According to local residents, Tin Aye issued loans to some farmers for garlic growing project last year, but he is now demanding the money back from not only those who received the money from him but also from those who didn’t. He threatened to sue those who refuse to pay and confiscate their lands and properties prompting farmers to demand for his resignation.

At the same time, more than 250 homes from Okepho and Ywahaung Wards at Chauk, **Magwe Division** in central Burma have been ordered by the divisional authority chairman Phone Hmaw Shwe to move out to areas close to an army base and the authorities also confiscated the farmlands belonging to nearby Zeegyopin Village, to resettle the victims of forced relocation.”

Forcefully relocated settlers said causing trouble in Burma's Arakan

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 24 December 2005

“Local people in Buthidaung and Maungdaw Townships of Arakan State, western Burma near Bangladesh, are suffering because of bullying tactics by Border Areas Development (BAD) officials and township authorities of Burma’s military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC).

This is the result of the authorities forcefully resettling illegal squatters from Mandalay and **Magwe** Divisions in central Burma in villages of Buthidaung and Maungdaw Townships. Local people are also forced to provide cash and food for the new settlers, and the authorities are not taking any action in case of disputes between the locals and the new settlers.

“I have just received news today that the authorities have brought former convicts and squatters from Central Burma to Maungdaw and resettling them in (Nyaung Kyaung) village of Arakan State's Maungdaw Township,” said the chairman of the Human Rights and Democratic Party in exile, Hla Aung, said the authorities are violating human rights. “The local authorities collected contributions and have built some 200 homes there. Each household is required to contribute at least 5,000 kyats to the building funds and 2,000 kyats to feed the settlers. We have learned that people are already facing economic hardship in Maungdaw Township especially since rice production is not good because of bad weather this year.”

“We have been receiving information that there has been a lot of trouble because the new settlers are stealing from the local people, openly taking cattle away from them, and also threatening them. The local authorities are not taking any action at all. In other words, these are acts of human rights violations committed against the local people who are living peacefully.””

NLD MP made homeless by Burma junta

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 15 July 2004

“The elected representative (MP) of National League for Democracy (NLD) from Chauk Township, Magwe Division in central Burma has made homeless because of the unreasonable and various pressures from the local authorities.

U Myint Thein used his home as the office for the NLD and when the authorities shut down and sealed off all the NLD offices in June 2003 after the notorious Dipeyin massacre, his house was also sealed off and he has had nowhere to call home.

He then went to stay at his brother’s home which is owned by the petroleum industry and the authorities are forcing him leave his brother’s home.

At the same time, his home which has been sealed off and abandoned since mid 2004 is deteriorating and eaten away by worms and white ants but the authorities are still refusing to allow him to reoccupy and repair the house.”

Villagers forced to relocate in Burma

--*Democratic Voice of Burma*, 21 May 2004

“The authorities of Aunglan Township, Magwe Division in central Burma have ordered four villages to be relocated to make way for a dam project.

The villagers of Thit Cho, Htoo Pauk, Bwet Ngoke and Let Pan Kone are ordered by the authorities of Burma’s military junta, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) to relocate their 200 houses so that a dam could be built on Paday Stream.

The villagers are reluctant to move as the expenses for the removals are high and they are not given a proper place to move to.

Moreover, corrupt immigration officials are demanding money from villagers so that they could be re-registered.

Meanwhile, a local Burmese women organisation headed by Daw Khin Win Shwe, the wife of the junta’s Prime Minister is forcing the local women the organisation with fees. Lands belonging to the villagers have been confiscated by the authorities to build the dam to increase electricity supply but the amount of electricity supplied to the villagers has been decreasing steadily.”

Punishment for non-compliance with orders

Another detained for criticising castor oil project in Burma

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 11 March, 2005

“A Burmese villager was arrested on 8 March for ‘criticising’ the government imposed nationwide castor oil / physic nut plantation project.

30-year old Yeh Aung from Pe-kone Village, Myothit Township, Magwe Division in central Burma is still being detained at the township police station. He was arrested after he attempted to report the corrupt practices of the village authority chairman Yeh Win who misappropriated money gained from the sale of physic nuts he collected from villagers – to higher district authorities.

When Yeh Win found out about this, he told the township authority chairman Paw Kywe to arrest Yeh Aung, according to local residents.

There have been similar problems arising from the physic nut growing project in other parts of Burma. In January, two National League for Democracy (NDL) members from Kachin State were detained for two months for allegedly speaking against the project.

Burma’s military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) is trying to counter the shortage of fuel in the country by producing bio-fuel from castor oil seeds.”

Other threats to human security

Land confiscation

Farmers complain of forestry department “bully”

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 6 March 2007, via *BurmaNet News*

“A group of 16 farmers from Aunglan township, Magwe Division has sent a letter to State Peace and Development Council leader senior general Than Shwe, complaining that they have been bullied by forestry officials.

The group of farmers, led by U Pan The, sent a letter to the SPDC head On February 20, saying local Forestry Department official U Tin Ohn had tried to force them off their land and had attempted to destroy their crops.

The group claims that U Tin Ohn attempted to have their farms listed as part of the Bwetgyiyebaw conservation area - a move that would have prevented them from developing the land.

But the farmers filed a complaint against the action with Magwe Division's chairman major Phone Maw Shwe, who reportedly stepped in to stop the move.

U Min Naing, one member of the farmers group, told DVB U Tin Ohn held a grudge against them and had repeatedly tried to interfere with their crops since.

"The forestry official bore grudges against us and forcibly planted castor oil plants in the sugarcane, cotton and bean crops of the farmers," U Min Naing said.

"He told them that he would sue them if they destroyed his plants or if they were damaged . . . the farmers were then unable to plant early or late monsoon crops. The Forestry Department has been harassing us for the whole year."

The group claims U Tin Ohn's actions have cost them about 10 million kyats. Forestry Department officials were repeatedly unavailable for comment yesterday."

More than 5000 acres of paddy fields confiscated from Burmese farmers

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 3 July 2006, via *BurmaNet News*

"More than 5000 acres of paddy fields were confiscated from villagers of Thebyu, Myaukthabyepin which are situated along Pyinmana-Taungngyo highway, around 15 miles southeast of Taungdwingyi, Magwe Division in central Burma. The paddy fields were confiscated in early this year by local Pinma Arsenal Battalion so that new army bases could be built.

A local farmer told DVB that impoverished and landless farmers tried to survive by opening roadside shops outside confiscated areas of lands but they were told to dismantle their shops on the pain of arrest and imprisonment by the order of an army officer named Maj. Khin Amung Htay."

Burmese army officer grabs lands from local farmers in Yezagyo,

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 22 November 2005

"A Burmese officer, Maj Myo Than Tun from Infantry Battalion – 256, based in Yezagyo Township, Magwe Division in central Burma, has been confiscating farmlands and forests from local farmers for his own use.

According to the villagers, he grabbed 40 acres of farmlands and forested lands belonging to Hmon Nyin villagers, 20 acres from Thabyepin villagers, 30 acres from Panyinkwin villagers and 30 acres from Ywa Nge villagers.

The owners requested Myo Than Tun to return their lands which have been used since the time of their ancestors but their requests were turned down.

Moreover, Hmon Nyin Village authority chairman of Tin Maung Ko confiscated a piece of land belonging to the public near the primary school and declared it his own by fencing it.

Meanwhile, Myo Than Tun has been felling trees from the forest for sale and using the cleared lands as his own.

The villagers reported the confiscation of their lands to Northwest Command military commander, and a small faction of their lands were returned to them recently, but the majority of the lands are still in the hand of Myo Than Tun.”

Burmese authorities grab farms from farmers

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 16 September 2005:

“Local authorities at Aunglan (Allen), Magwe Division in central Burma confiscated dry land farms from farmers and destroyed their growing crops so that the farms could be turned into wetland paddy fields.

On 10 September, farms belonging to Maung Oo and San Htay from Pan Mata Village were confiscated by the order of three local authorities. Then, the agricultural authorities destroyed cotton plants and beans grown in the farms by means of ploughing with tractors.

A farmer whose farm was confiscated told DVB that the actions of the authorities would help no one as the land is only suitable for crops that need very little amount of water and the authorities are unable to supply enough water to grow wetland paddies.

Farmers have written letters to the authorities concerned to stop the brainless actions and interfering with their lives, but there has been no response so far. Farmers are facing more difficulties as they are not allowed to grow dry land crops and they threatened with arrest and imprisonment if they do not grow wetland paddies as ordered.”

Burma army grabs lands from farmers,

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 2 September 2004

“The authorities of Burma’s military junta, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) at Pwintphyu Township, Magwe Division in central Burma have been grabbing lands from local farmers for the army.

40 acres of farmlands belonging to five farmers from Nat-the-kone/Ye-phyu-twin Villages were seized by land registration department with the help of Htoo Trader Company in order to fill 5000 acres needed for the army cotton plantation project. One farmer, U Aung Shwe bore the brunt of the seizure as he was not even allowed to harvest his bean and sesame crops. No help has been given to the farmers who loss all their livelihoods by the authorities.”

Villagers forced to relocate in Burma

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 21 May 2004

The authorities of Aunglan Township, Magwe Division in central Burma have ordered four villages to be relocated to make way for a dam project.

The villagers of Thit Cho, Htoo Pauk, Bwet Ngoke and Let Pan Kone are ordered by the authorities of Burma's military junta, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) to relocate their 200 houses so that a dam could be built on Paday Stream.

The villagers are reluctant to move as the expenses for the removals are high and they are not given a proper place to move to.

Moreover, corrupt immigration officials are demanding money from villagers so that they could be re-registered.

Meanwhile, a local Burmese women organisation headed by Daw Khin Win Shwe, the wife of the junta's Prime Minister is forcing the local women the organisation with fees. Lands belonging to the villagers have been confiscated by the authorities to build the dam to increase electricity supply but the amount of electricity supplied to the villagers has been decreasing steadily.

The woes of Burmese people

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 16 May 2004

"26 farmers from Minbu Township, Magwe Division in central Burma who reported to the authorities of the attempt to confiscate their paddy fields by Yuzana Company were individually interrogated by the police on 30 April.

The farmers insisted that the fields belong to their ancestors who have been paying tax, and they produced the receipts as evidence.

The complaints of the farmers were put forward to local township authorities but there has been no response. During this time, farmers are not allowed to till their paddy fields and they are facing many kinds of difficulties to survive."

Burmese troops confiscate farmlands

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

"The troops of Burma's military junta, State Peace and Development (SPDC) had confiscated more farms from the local people at Taungdwingyi Township, Magwe Division in central Burma.

Soldiers from No.18, Defence Equipment Factory near Taungdwingyi bulldozed fields of peanuts and sugarcane plantations with crops ready to be harvested and, confiscated the farms.

The soldiers confiscated the farms because they want to expand the land of the army for its engineering corps but no compensation was paid to the farmers and they are facing uncertain future.

The same soldiers from the factory also confiscated farmlands and forest reserves from local people in recent years leaving them homeless and jobless.”

Land grabbed in Magwe Division for horses

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 7 January, 2003

“The SPDC’s supply troops are using 250 acres of plantation lands of villagers at Myitche District of Magwe Division as pasturelands for 300 army horses. They have already confiscated 800 acres of land from villagers in 1992 but the army sold off the lands in a bid.

And then, they use plantation lands of villagers for pastures for the horses. It has been going on for more than eight years and the villagers repeatedly reported and complained to the local authorities but no action is being taken.

According to a local villager, the horses are still invading the remaining farms of the villagers and destroy their crops. The villagers got no compensations for the destructions and if the horses were hurt when the villagers frightened them away, the army imposed fines on them. The villagers are said to be at the end of their tether.”

Forced labour

Widespread forced labour cases reported in Burma,

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 8 March, 2007

“In the past two days more than four reports of forced labour have emerged from Burma’s Arakan State and Irrawaddy, Magwe and Pegu divisions.

Residents from the areas said they had been forced by local authorities to work without pay and under harsh conditions. Pegu Division villagers told DVB yesterday they were being forced by officials to guard the Rangoon-Pyinmana railway.

“If we can not go, we have to pay the authorities . . . If we can’t pay, we have to work,” a source in Pegu’s Nyaunglebin township said.

Residents in Arakan State’s Thandwe town complained yesterday of being forced to act as lookouts for fires in an attempt by the authorities to curb increases in the incidences of blazes in residential homes.

Four people from every ten families in the area are reportedly being forced to be on the lookout for fires throughout the night. Household that are unable to comply are being charged 1500 kyat a day.

Residents in several areas of **Magwe** yesterday complained of being forced to plant castor oil crops and being used as porters by Forestry Department officials. Irrawaddy Division residents also reported being forced to plant castor crops.

A man from Myothit in Magwe Division said the government had failed to adequately publicise a new agreement with the International Labour Organization that allows victims of forced labour to lodge legal complaints.

“Although the government says that forced labour is no longer practiced in Burma, they have been very weak in informing the public. It is early days yet and grassroots people have not heard about it. It is also difficult for them to report them,” the man said.

After years of negotiations, the ILO and the Burmese government signed the new agreement late last month.”

Burma: More human rights defenders face jail terms; no justice or compensation for forced labour death

-- Asian Human Rights Commission, *Urgent Action* 7 February 2006

According to the information received, Ngapyin villager Ko Win Lwin was killed by an avalanche of stones while doing forced labour in central Burma on 8 December 2004. The 45-year-old science graduate was reportedly working in a stone quarry at Yathe (a.k.a.) Kyauksarit Mountain, some 20 miles south of Aunglan, when killed. The stones he was quarrying were being used to make repairs to the Rangoon-Pyi road. The medical report of Win Lwin's death indicated that his body had eight broken bones and that his lungs had filled with sand and collapsed.

Local sources identified village council chairman U Soe Maung, 100 houses head U Myint Swe and clerks U Nyunt Than and U Nyan Sein as the ones responsible for giving the orders to do the work. U Soe Maung had sent the order in October, in violation of a 1999 regulation prohibiting forced labour in Burma, instructing villagers to work or pay 500 Burmese kyat (USD 0.40) per household per day. All households were also required to contribute 5000 kyat for the construction expenses. ...

In June the representative of the ILO in Burma reported on the case to the International Labour Conference (see [C.App/D.6](#)) as follows:

"According to the allegation, labour was requisitioned by the authorities in Aunglan township (Magway Division) in November and December 2004 for the construction of a local road, and one villager was killed in an accident while being forced to quarry rocks

as part of this project. This allegation was made to the ILO by a close relative of the individual who was killed, with the support of an additional 15 villagers who indicated that they were also forced to contribute labour for the project..."

No compensation for Burmese force labour victim's family

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 15 August 2005 via *BurmaNet News*

"The Ministry of Labour of Burma 's military junta, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), officially notified the family of Win Lwin who was killed during a forced labour session that no compensation would be forthcoming for his death.

Win Lwin, from Ngapyin Village , Aunglan (Allen) Township, Magwe Division in central Burma , was killed in December 2004 while he was forced to work in the construction of Rangoon-Magwe motorway. He was crushed to death by an avalanche of stones and pebbles.

In order to stop forced labour practice in Burma , Win Lwin's family members reported the incident to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) office in Rangoon . Labour minister U Thaung himself promised to give them 'suitable' compensations and development works for the village if they withdraw the complaints to the ILO."

Intervention by the ILO with the SPDC dated 2 February 2005

-- International Labour Organisation

According to the allegation, a village-tract chairman in Myaing township (Magway Division) forced villagers to dig 350 threefoot- deep pits along the sides of a new road project in preparation for the planting of trees. This work had to be completed on the day the order was given. Any family that was unable to provide a worker was fined.

Forced labour at Aunglan in central Burma

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

"The authorities at Aunglan (Allen) Township, Magwe Division in central Burma have been forcing local people to volunteer in building canals and dykes as part of the official projects to turn dry-land farms into wetland paddy fields.

A local resident told DVB that the authorities ordered villagers from 11 villages within the township to turn their farms into paddy fields and forced them to grow rice willy-nilly.

Due to the brainless action of the authorities, the farmers are facing various kinds of difficulties as the farms are not suitable for growing rice and the yields is said to be so low that the projects neither help the farmers nor the authorities.

From time immemorial, Burmese farmers have been growing beans and other crops which thrive in the arid condition of the areas.

At the same time, farmers living around Tada-U International Airport in nearby Mandalay Division were forced to turn their farms into paddy fields with similarly disastrous consequences.”

Villagers forced to attend military trainings in central Burma

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

“Villagers within Sarlingyi Township, Magwe Division in central Burma, were forced to attend military trainings and they had to pay the expenses for themselves.

Villagers from Pyawtwinkkone, Satawgyi and Tawgyi village groups were forced to attend the trainings, by the order of the township authority chairman, during last week. The villagers had to abandon their ongoing farm works and attend the trainings lasting ten days and each household had to contribute 500 kyat.

Moreover, the authorities and police are extorting 2500 kyat for each square foot of sediment earth villagers obtained from the Irrawaddy River.”

Intervention made by the ILO with the SPDC dated 2 February 2005. According to the allegation, a village-tract

chairman in Myaing township (Magway Division) forced villagers to dig 350 threefoot-deep pits along the sides of a new road project in preparation for the planting of trees. This work had to be completed on the day the order was given. Any family that was unable to provide a worker was fined.

SPDC uses Forced Labor in Army Owned Farm

-- Interview by Chin Human Rights Organization, 1 October, 2001

“The Burmese army has been forcing the civilian to work in the army-owned farms in Kankaw township of Western Burma, according to the testimony of U Kyaw Win (Name changed for security reason). A 48 year-old village headman from XXX village, U Kyaw Win testified to the CHRO field reporter that amidst claims by Burmese junta of having eradicated forced labor in Burma, the practice continues.

According to him, the Burmese army has a large plot of farm in the vicinity of Taungkhin-yin Village of Kankaw Township, **Magwe** division, Western Burma. The farm is operated under the supervision of army North Western Command since 1996.

From the beginning, villagers were forced to clear 15,000 acres of virgin land. Since then, forced labor never ceases in our area. From 1997 to 2001 the farm was operated under the command of Major Kyaw Soe of Light Infantry Battallion LIB 269 based in Tidim.

From March 2001, Major Kyaw Soe was replaced by Major Zaw Oo from Light Infantry Battalion LIB 226, based in Haka. Civilians from around the area have to work at the army farm from the time of sowing to harvesting time. Sometimes the soldiers are unsatisfied with the human labor, and forced laborers are made to bring along their bulls and buffaloes to work at the farm

This harvesting season (2001), civilians from Taung-khin-yin village, Tha-lin village, Shwebo village, Thin-taw village, Hnan-kha village, Min-tha village, Kung-ywa village, A-lay village and Ywa-ma villagers are among those forced to work at the army farm from June to September.

U Kyaw Win added that; besides the farm works, villagers have to do manual works for the army such as building the army barracks, cutting woods for the army, carrying waters and making furniture for the army officers.”

Forced labor in Magwe Division

-- Chin Human Rights Organization, 2001

“Farmers from Kangaw township, Magwe division of Western Burma have been forced to work on the farm owned by the Burmese military North Western command, despite claims to the ILO that the practice has been eradicated in Burma.

According to U Ba Thein (name changed), 50 years old Burmese farmer from Hantha-wadi village of Kangaw township, it's been 3 months that all the villagers from Kangaw township are forced to work on the North Western command military-owned farm. The forced labour started in June and is still going on at the time CHRO interviewed U Ba Thein on August 18, 2001.

U Ba Thein was forced to work at one of the forced labour camps called " Kyu-kya " under the command of Major Thein Aung of Light Infantry Battalion LIB 309 Katha battalion. There are several forced labour camps in Kangaw township and Colonel Hla Ngwe, tactical commander of North Western Command is the supervisor of all the labour camps in Magwe division.

Despite their engagement with forced labour most of the time, villages' headmen are ordered to submit monthly report to the township Peace and Development office saying that there is no forced labour and forced porter in their village.”

Robbery, extortion, arbitrary taxation

Villagers forced to attend military trainings in central Burma

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

“Villagers within Sarlingyi Township, Magwe Division in central Burma, were forced to attend military trainings and they had to pay the expenses for themselves.

Villagers from Pyawtwinkkone, Satawgyi and Tawgyi village groups were forced to attend the trainings, by the order of the township authority chairman, during last week. The villagers had to abandon their ongoing farm works and attend the trainings lasting ten days and each household had to contribute 500 kyat.

Moreover, the authorities and police are extorting 2500 kyat for each square foot of sediment earth villagers obtained from the Irrawaddy River.”

Blazing saddles: Burmese authorities arrest bullocks,

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 10 June 2005

“The authorities at Natmauk Township, Magwe Division in central Burma arrested working bullocks from farmers and use them for personal profits, according to local residents. In some cases both the bulls and their owners have been arrested and detained.

A local resident told DVB that more than 30 bulls have been confiscated from the farmer and three have been killed because of neglect and overworking.

The farmers are facing difficulties as they have no animal to plough and rake their fields at the onset of monsoon season.”

Burmese authorities still extorting money and bullying people

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 8 February, 2005

“The Burmese authorities at Kale Township, Sagaing Division in northwest Burma have been extorting money from the local people with the excuse of building bridge between Kalaywa and Mawlight .

As the result of the extortions, the people are facing many kinds of problem as they have nothing to live on and do. Moreover, villagers have been forced to take part in the construction projects without pay.

Meanwhile, at Nat Mauk Township, Magwe Division, the local authorities led by U Tin Saung have been extorting money from farmers and enriching themselves with the proceeds gained from their illegal and unfair activities.

At the same time, local authorities throughout the country are forcing people to attend rallies and public demonstrations in support of the upcoming resumption of the junta-sponsored, constitution drafting “National Convention” at Nyaung-Hnapin Kwin near Rangoon.”

Extortions and forced labour practices continue in Burma

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 2 December 2004

“Despite its promise to clean up unfair acts and lawlessness within the country, the local authorities of Burma’s military junta, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) are continuing to bully the people.

Local people especially businessmen at 17 townships of Magwe Division in central Burma, have been forced to buy festival tickets in an attempt to raise funds for the police forces. The Internal Affairs Ministry sent out a directive ordering respective police forces to raise 1.5 million kyat from each township and the policemen themselves are said to be puzzled by the order.

At Kantbalu Township in Sagaing Division, the local people are subjected to forced labour by the order of the township authority chairman. Villagers at Zigon and Ma-le villages have been forced to work in sugarcane fields for the consumption of a privately owned sugar mill. The owner of the mill gave the chairman 8 million kyat to construct a road between the two villages but he pocketed the money and forced the locals to build the road for free.”

Farmers forced to buy useless fertilisers in central Burma,

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 30 December, 2003

“Farmers from villages in Yenangyaung Township, Magwe Division in central Burma were forced to buy ineffective fertilisers because they were manufactured by a company owned by the son of General Khin Nyunt, the ‘Prime Minister’ of Burma’s military junta, the SPDC (State Peace and Development Council).

Each farmer was forced to buy two bags of ‘fertilisers’ manufactured by the company owned by Ye Win Naing, the powerful businessman son of the general. The junta-sponsored thugs, collectively known as USDA (Union Solidarity and Development Association) pushed the sales through, according to the farmers. The fertilisers are said to be not only ineffective but also more expensive than the normal ones.

At the same time, the army is grabbing all the best annual silted farms left behind by the receding River Irrawaddy and only the worst ones are sold off to local farmers at exorbitant prices. The money accumulated from the farms is being used for recruiting soldiers including under-aged boys for the army.”

Farmers in trouble

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 18 March, 2003

“Farmers in Pwintphyu Township, Magwe Division, Upper Burma are facing many difficulties due to the corruptions perpetrated by local authorities. Now is the season for the farmers to reclaim silted lands on the banks of local rivers, Irrawaddy, Mone and Mann.

Traditionally, the villagers divide the lands with allotment system and grow vegetables. But the chairmen of local authorities U Khin Maung Toe and U Myint Swe have bought 16 acres of silted land near Madare village and the farmers are facing losses, according to local villagers. Similarly, some silted lands near Zeegone were sold by the local authority chairman, U Win Myint with the excuse of repairing local primary school.

The villagers have reported the matters to higher authorities, but there have been no actions from them. And farmers who are unable to sell rice quotas (at the lowest rate) to the government buying centres are forced to pay 3,000 kyats to the local authorities as bribes.

The chairman of the local authority, U Kyaw Tint also seized some acres of land on the 25th of last month from a farmer, U Than Tun who was unable to fulfil the demand. Moreover, they have been forcing local rice mills to be closed since February because the farmers are still unable to fulfil the sales of rice quotas and the people are facing rice shortage, according to the local people.”

Forced donations in Namauk, Magwe Division

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 1 January 2003

“It is reported that the farmers in Namauk Township are ordered to contribute 100 kyats per acre by the chairman of the local authorities to repair the Aung Zeya Pagoda of Taungdwingyi. There are nearly 200,000 acres in the township.

But because of the heavy rains and the decrease of rice productions, some farmers are said to be refusing to contribute to the donations. The authorities are threatening to confiscate lands from people who refuse to do so. The same order is being issued in other townships in Magwe Division, according to the local people.”

Compulsory (and frequently ruinous) cropping and marketing policies

Nuts: Government agriculture projects ruin lives of Burmese farmers

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 10 April 2006

“Burma’s military government, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) authorities again have been forcing farmers to grow unprofitable summer paddy and physic nut/castor oil seed plants, causing untold miseries and difficulties to them.

Burmese farmers who live on the western side of Pegu Division have been ordered to grow the paddy but the authorities are not selling them enough subsidised fertilisers at the official rate, 4,000 Kyats per 110lb bag. The local officials have been siphoning off the fertilisers and selling them on to black market traders who sell them back to the farmers at the ‘outside’ rate, around 20,000 Kyats per bag.

At the same time, the authorities at Magwe Division, Kachin State and northern Shan State have been forcing local people to grow physic nuts and extorting money from them at every turn, residents complained.

“By the order of the ma-ya-ka (township authority), each household (in the towns) must grow 300 physic nut in their compounds. Moreover, the villages must have nurseries for the seedlings/saplings of physic nut, by the order of ma-ya-ka. There they have to erect two signboards. They collect (extort) 20000 Kayt from each village, by the order of the ma-ya-ka,” a local resident told DVB. Moreover, the people also have to take the responsibility of watering the plants in turn.

Oil extracted from the nuts are reportedly used as the main ingredient of a type of bio-fuel in attempts to solve acute fuel shortages in Burma while the SPDC is selling off the majority of the vast offshore natural gas reserves to foreign countries.

The people insisted that these government projects are economically unviable and that if the junta wants to help the people and itself, it should stop its authorities from meddling in the affairs which they neither understand nor try to understand.”

Farmers forced to harvest rice crops which are not ready

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 23 April 2006

“Farmers at Magwe Division in central Burma are facing untold difficulties and miseries because the divisional authority secretary, an army officer, ordered them to grow monsoon rice not long after they were forced to grow summer rice.

Maj Zaw Thein told farmers to grow monsoon rice by forcing them to reap the summer crops situated on both sides of Saku-Pyintbyu motorway in Saku Township, which are not yet ready for harvesting. Although the farmers pleaded with him not force them to

harvest the crops before they are ready as they will be ruined, Zaw Thein, nevertheless, went on insisting that his order be obeyed.

The semi-arid region of upper Burma is not suitable for growing rice, and traditionally, farmers have grown sesame seeds, beans and other pulses which do not need much rainfall, but the military authorities have recently forced them to grow rice which is less productive.

At the same time, the authorities have been detaining rice merchants in an effort to control the ever rising rice price.”

Farmers and forced labour news

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 14 June, 2006

“Farmers and their children, young and old, in Lashio Township in northern Shan State, have been forced to work in the castor oil/physic nut plantation project owned by the army of Burma’s military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC).

Local Shan villagers told DVB that they have been unable to concentrate on their own works as they often have to go to the plantation and plant castor oil saplings for the army. “It (the plantation) is very far. It takes two and half hours to three. That far,” a villager told DVB. “The work starts at 11am. We have to plant the trees. Then clear the grass/weeds in the surrounding areas. We have to work until 5.30pm. They not only do not pay us money, they do not even give us water. We have to bring our own lunch. If you don’t go, they admonish you and the like. It is impossible not to go. There are 45 houses in (our) village. One person per household (has to go). There are many people, more than 1000 people.”

The Burmese generals ordered the plantation of castor oil plants nationwide in order to extract bio fuel from the seeds, in an attempt to solve energy shortage in the country while selling all gas fields to foreign countries.

At the same time, the authorities at Yezagyo Township within **Magwe Division** in central Burma have been forcing local farmers to grow wetland rice causing them unnecessary difficulties including heavy losses. The region is said to be arid and has no irrigation system and the farmers have traditionally been growing assorted beans, peas and wheat that don’t need much water.”

Forced labour at Aunglan in central Burma

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

“The authorities at Aunglan (Allen) Township, Magwe Division in central Burma have been forcing local people to volunteer in building canals and dykes as part of the official projects to turn dry-land farms into wetland paddy fields.

A local resident told DVB that the authorities ordered villagers from 11 villages within the township to turn their farms into paddy fields and forced them to grow rice willy-nilly.

Due to the brainless action of the authorities, the farmers are facing various kinds of difficulties as the farms are not suitable for growing rice and the yields is said to be so low that the projects neither help the farmers nor the authorities.

From time immemorial, Burmese farmers have been growing beans and other crops which thrive in the arid condition of the areas.

At the same time, farmers living around Tada-U International Airport in nearby **Mandalay** Division were forced to turn their farms into paddy fields with similarly disastrous consequences.”

Burmese farmers forced to grow rice in central Burma

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

“Burmese farmers living around Tada-U International Airport, **Mandalay** Division in central Burma have been forced to turn their dry-land farms into wetland paddy fields by the local authorities.

Farmers from 10 villages including Sagaing-ywa, Thinbawkan, Ngazinyaing, Zeechaung were ordered by the township authorities to start the useless project in June but they provided neither fertilisers nor water to the farmers and their farms, and all the young paddy plants were destroyed completely in July, a farmer told DVB.

From time immemorial, the local farmers have been growing wheat and yellow beans which thrive in the arid conditions of the region, but the authorities are still forcing them to grow rice again.

Similarly, the authorities at nearby Magwe Division, Allen Township have also been forcing local farmers to turn their farms into wetland paddy fields with similarly disastrous consequences.”

Burmese farmers still bullied by local authorities

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 11 May, 2005

“Farmers at Aunglan (Allen), Magwe Division in central Burma have forced to turn their vegetable farms into paddy fields causing them many kinds of unnecessary difficulties.

“The authorities told us not to tell them what cannot be done. Just do what we tell you, they said,” a farmer from Inn-kone Village told DVB. “If you don’t do as what we say, we will confiscate your lands, they said.”

The authorities who understand nothing about farming told farmers to grow rice which needs plenty of water, in an arid part of Burma and destroyed all the existing vegetable farms.”

Another detained for criticising castor oil project in Burma

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 11 March, 2005

“A Burmese villager was arrested on 8 March for ‘criticising’ the government imposed nationwide castor oil / physic nut plantation project.

30-year old Yeh Aung from Pe-kone Village, Myothit Township, Magwe Division in central Burma is still being detained at the township police station. He was arrested after he attempted to report the corrupt practices of the village authority chairman Yeh Win who misappropriated money gained from the sale of physic nuts he collected from villagers – to higher district authorities.

When Yeh Win found out about this, he told the township authority chairman Paw Kywe to arrest Yeh Aung, according to local residents.

There have been similar problems arising from the physic nut growing project in other parts of Burma. In January, two National League for Democracy (NDL) members from Kachin State were detained for two months for allegedly speaking against the project. Burma’s military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) is trying to counter the shortage of fuel in the country by producing bio-fuel from castor oil seeds.”

Farmers are forced to sell rice

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 28 January, 2003

“It is reported that farmers in Burma are facing hardships because they are forced to sell their rice to the SPDC despite the destructions of their harvests by the late monsoon. A ‘tin’ (bag) of rice fetches 2500 kyats in the market but the farmers are forced to sell it to the SPDC at 350 kyats.

Because of inflations and the rocketing commodity prices, the farmers are facing new hardships and on top of these woes, they are forcing them to sell the non-existent rice and some farmers have to pawn their fields and sell their essential bulls.

A farmer in Mandalay told the DVB about the hardships farmers are facing as follows:

A farmer in Mandalay : We have to sell rice quotas to them. They are forcing us to do this. We have to sell 12 ‘tins’ per acre whatever the situation is. We have to sign a contract. They are forcing us.

DVB : What is the difference between the government’s rate and the outside market rate?

A farmer in Mandalay : The government pays only 350 kyats per ‘tin’ on average. The same amount of rice fetches 2500 kyats in the black market. The difference is so vast that farmers are in utter trouble. Local people are also facing difficulties. Rice is very expensive. Cooking oil and everything is expensive. The weather is not constant and the government is forcing us to sell rice to them and some people are able to do so and some could not. Some people have to sell their working bulls to be able to sell rice to the government. They have to buy rice at the rate of 2500-2600 kyats [per tin] from black market and sell it to the government [at 350 kyats per tin].

DVB : What kinds of supports does the SPDC give to farmers? For example, fertiliser ration?

A farmer in Mandalay : The farmers get nothing in terms of supports to this day. [A bag of] fertiliser costs 12,000 kyats in the black market. We have to buy from the outside. They don't support us. Even under the BSPP, we got some supports. They only take from us and they support us with nothing.

DVB : What is the average cost of rice grown per acre?

A farmer in Mandalay : It costs over 100,000 kyats per acre. This year's yield is quite low, about 25 'tins' per acre on average. It's impossible to do anything from what we are facing in reality and what it is costing us in the black market. The buying centres are also taking advantage on farmers and it's all messed up.

DVB : If farmers don't have to sell their rice to the government but to the black market, would it be better?

A farmer in Mandalay : It wouldn't be that bad if you do that... if you sell rice to the government, you will make loss and you can do nothing.

According to the latest news, farmers in Taungdwingyi Township are forced to sell 10 'tins' of rice per acre to the government. But it cost 50,000 kyats per acre to grow rice and they are unable to oblige the SPDC's demand. Those who are not able to do so are forced to pay up to 7000 kyats to local officials. The farmers in Pwintbyu Township, Magwe Division are being arrested for not able to sell rice to the government. They are only released when they could show the vouchers of sales to the government. While a 'tin' of rice fetches 2500 kyats in the black market, farmers are forced to sell their rice at 400 kyats per acre."

Food insecurity

Myanmar must do more to help its hungry millions, says WFP

-- World Food Programme Press Release, 5 August 2005

5 August 2005 - BANGKOK - A senior United Nations official today urged the Myanmar government to review and reform policies that impede humanitarian efforts to combat growing hunger and poverty.

"Our operations have expanded over the past two years, and we must do more. But Myanmar's severe and wide-ranging hunger issues cannot be solved without fundamental changes that promote the socioeconomic well-being of the population, which is the preserve of the government," James Morris, Executive Director of the World Food Programme said in Bangkok.

He was speaking after a four-day mission to Myanmar that included visits to WFP hunger alleviation projects in central Magway Division and meetings with Prime Minister Soe Win, representatives of the opposition National League for Democracy and leaders of minority ethnic groups.

"The humanitarian issues are serious, and getting worse. I made very clear that the primary responsibility for making things better rests squarely with the government," Morris said.

He called for a significant relaxation of controls on the procurement and distribution of food commodities, including aid, and on access to them for the most vulnerable, not least in hard-hit, ethnic minority border areas.

"Current agricultural and marketing policies, and restrictions on the movement of people, make it very difficult for many of those at risk to merely subsist," Morris said.

One out of every three young children in Myanmar is chronically malnourished, or physically stunted, and 15 per cent of the population of 53 million is food-insecure.

The UN agency seeks to assist 760,000 of Myanmar's most vulnerable, including poverty-stricken returned refugees from neighbouring Bangladesh, former opium poppy growers and their families, and an expanding population of HIV/AIDS sufferers.

Most of the assistance is provided via food-for-work, food-for-training and food-for-education projects that help recipients through a 5-7 month agricultural lean season and encourage self-reliance.

Morris said he was deeply saddened by the suffering he witnessed, including that of a 31-year old mother of two in Magway whose husband had died of AIDS. "She had so little, and was desperately worried about what would happen to her children."

WFP feeds 220,000 primary school children, dramatically increasing enrolment and attendance rates.

The agency also assists people affected by natural disasters, such as flooding and drought, and helped to feed 15,000 survivors of last December's Indian Ocean tsunami.

Morris also called for improvements in operating conditions for aid agencies, noting that bureaucratic, fiscal and other constraints hamper the timely local purchase and distribution of urgently needed food assistance, and the free movement of humanitarian workers.

"The ability to provide assistance when and where it is required and to assess needs are key humanitarian principles, and they need to be supported in Myanmar," he said. All those seeking to help, locals as well as foreigners, must be assured the freedoms and security they require to work effectively."

Morris urged the international community to step up support for the country's hungry poor. Midway through a two-year programme to support returnees and other vulnerable groups in North Rakhine State and Magway, the agency still needs to raise 40 per cent of the projected US\$12 million cost.

Just 20 per cent of the US\$8 million required for a 12-month operation to feed former opium poppy growers and their families in northeastern Shan State has been secured.

Nutrition Survey in WFP Project Areas in Magway, Lashio, Kokang and Wa,
-- World Food Programme, April-June 2005 (extract)

“Magwe was the subject (with Lashio, Kokang and Wa) of a WFP nutrition survey carried out April-June 2005. Magwe, along with the other survey areas, was identified as “food insecure”.

“In Magway, where the food assistance is still at the beginning phase, situation of current energy deficit is reflected by high level of *wasting* among both under five years and primary school age children and high level of thinness among women of reproductive age. The situation reveals serious public health problem and indicates the presence of food inadequacy or the catabolic consequences of widespread infectious diseases or both. The children population from infant to school age and women population in reproductive age in Magway are at risk of mortality in short term...”

Discrimination

Freedom of worship by Christian's under threat in Burma

-- *Khonumthung News*, 30 March 2007 via [*Burma News International*](#)

“In a blatant instance of religious persecution, the Burmese military regime is forcing Christian pastors to sign a vow to stop worshipping in churches in Gangaw, Magwey Division in Burma

It is learnt that the authorities called all the pastors in Gangaw Township to sign up in January.

"They told them that even if you sign the document you can still continue to worship. The main thing is to sign this vow. We only need your signature," said an elder in a church in Gangaw.

The reality is that the authorities are pushing them to sign on a blank paper. After which they will write what they want to about stopping worship by Christians.

There are nine congregations and about 30 to 500 members in Gangaw. Some of the church elders signed given that they are afraid of the authorities but some have not, yet.

A Christian church pastor who refused to sign the paper presented by the Gangaw army unit 50 led by a commander, told Khonumthung, "I understood their plan, so I refused to sign and decided to face the consequences if they take action against me."

Till now the authorities have not initiated any action on those who either signed or refused.

But they are still afraid not sure what the future holds in store. A Gangaw Christian church leader said, "We are continuing to worship. But we are afraid that they will tell us since we have signed we are not to worship."

A majority of the Christians reside in the western part of Gangaw while Buddhists are generally settled in the eastern side where six monasteries have been constructed by the authorities.

In the last few years also the authorities forced Christian church leaders to sign on blank papers. After that they wrote on it "No Worshiping" and then closed some churches."

Natural disasters, fires

Fire victims at Magwe Pwintbyu still homeless

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 13 April, 2006

"The victims who were left homeless by the recent major fire at Pwintbyu, Magwe Division in central Burma, still have no proper home to take shelter under during the searing Burmese summer, as the township authority chairman hasn't granted them the permission to build their homes.

A major fire broke out at Ashayphetpine (East Side) Ward on 16 March and more than 40 homes were destroyed. Therefore, around 60 families have been temporarily taking refuge in a nearby monastery. Some refugees told DVB that some of their prized properties fell victim to looters and thieves due to lack of protection and safety.

At the same time, the township authority secretary Soe Tint insisted that the authorities are surveying the lands properly so as to avoid disputes in the future and they will be handed over to the owners legally as soon as possible after the Burmese New Year, 17 April. He added that the victims are well provided with necessary materials from the state, private donors, the UNICEF and the Red Cross.

But those affected said that they were only given a bag of rice and 10000 Kyat (around US\$ 5) for each family so far and they do not know where all other donations had gone as they never received them."

Fire break out in central Burma

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 7 February, 2005

“There has been an increase in fire breaking out in central Burma. On 6 February, a major fire broke out at Mandalay Southwest Township destroying more than 70 homes and leaving over 200 families homeless.

According to local residents, there was no casualty but estimated 200 million kyat worth of properties were destroyed. 60 fire engines tried to extinguish the fire but their efforts were hampered by shortage of water and narrow streets.

On 5 February, a major fire broke out at Mindat Village, Mindon Township in nearby Magwe Division, destroying 56 homes and leaving 200 people homeless. On 1 February, a school was burnt down at Kyaw Taing Sin Village in Pauk Township.” (emphasis added)

Fire Devastates Yenanchaung

-- Win Htein, *The Irrawaddy*, 26 February 2002

“An explosion has left over 10,000 people homeless after a fire ripped through Yenanchaung city in central Burma last Wednesday. Despite the immense number of displaced persons, no casualties have been reported, according to a fire department official.

"It began around 2:30 in the afternoon and blasted over 1,000 houses," an official from Yenanchaung fire department told the Democratic Voice of Burma. "But there were no casualties."

The cause of the fire is still unknown, however, it is believed to be related to the petroleum industry in Yenanchaung, which is located some 400 kilometers north of Rangoon. According to fire officials, a total of 2,000 houses were destroyed before the blaze was finally brought under control by firefighters who battled the fire for nearly ten hours.

Burma's military government has not made any official announcement regarding the fire, although a local military commander has ordered emergency donations from nearby towns and villages for those left homeless by the blaze.”
