

Displacement and causes of displacement in Sagaing Division

Documents

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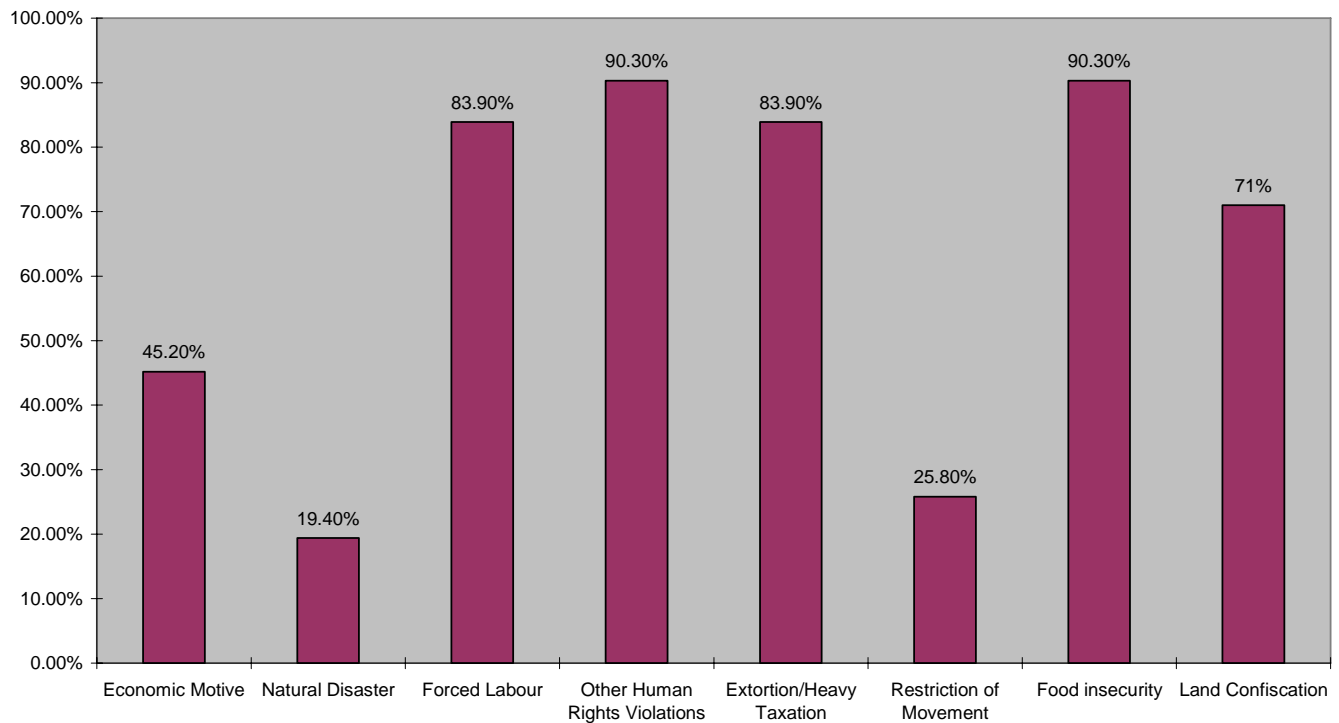
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Survey results (30 respondents)

10) Sagaing Division (percentage)



Forced relocation/eviction (rural)

Over 380 houses compelled to relocate for Tamanthi dam

-- *Mizzima News*, 5 March 2007

Several hundred villagers have been coerced to evacuate in upper Sagaing division, Northwestern Burma, with the military junta starting construction of the proposed Tamanthi Dam project on the Chindwin River.

About 380 households from Leivomjang and Tazong villages, located between Tamanthi and Homalin towns in Chindwin basin, have been forced to leave their homes and

relocate to new places, said an ethnic Kuki woman, whose family members were compelled to relocate from Leivomjang village.

Speaking to Mizzima, the Kuki woman, on condition of anonymity for the safety of her family in Burma, said the Burmese Army had started destroying houses in the two villages and forced the villagers to relocate to a new village named 'Laung Min' on the eastern bank of Chindwin River.

However, as the new village site is barren and is situated in a remote area away from the communication network, villagers have refused to stay in the new place, she said.

"Most of them refused to go to the new site and some went into the jungle to hide. Some are temporarily staying in farm huts. No one dares to remain in their village," she added.

Calling it a 'development project', the Burmese junta with the help of India's National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC), is building a hydroelectric project on the Chindwin River, which flows from the Hukawn valley of Kachin state in northern Burma and runs through Sagaing Division to join the Irrawaddy river.

The proposed hydroelectric project will generate 1,200 megawatts of electricity. Campaigners said while about 20 percent of the electricity will be used locally, mainly by Burmese junta officials, 80 percent will be transmitted to India.

Anti-Tamanthi Dam Campaign Committee, a group of activists campaigning against the junta's project, said the junta had forcibly seized about 17,000 acres of agricultural land from villagers for the proposed dam site.

Campaigners said the Tamanthi dam project, which is under construction without an iota of environmental assessment, will adversely affect the existing biodiversity, ecological balance and climatic conditions in the region.

"There has been accelerated human rights violation such as forced labour and forced relocation for the dam project," said Lu Lun, coordinator of the ATDCC in New Delhi adding that over 61 Kuki inhabitant villages will be forced to relocate as these villages are in the junta's target area for the dam project.

The Chindwin River basin in upper Sagaing, which is famous for gold and jade mining, is home to several ethnic nationalities including the Kuki, Naga and Shan.

However, with the junta's 'development projects' many villagers in the basin will have to find new habitat, Lu Lun said.

Forced relocation for Asia highway construction in Tamu

-- Network Media Group, March 19 2004, via *Burma News International*

Burmese authorities have issued an order to relocate thousands of houses that are blocking construction of the Asia Highway in Tamu township on the Indo-Burma border, a local resident said. Local residents said they were ordered to relocate their houses because the upgrading of the Indo-Burma road (BRTF) to become the Asia Highway connecting Thailand, Burma and India will necessitate use of their land. "They (authorities) are measuring the width of the existing BRTF road to upgrade it to a 200 ft-wide highway. We were told to destroy everything by the end of this month - whether it is a home or local livestock farm - within a range of 100 ft from the middle of the road. Local people have yet to find out where their homes will be relocated to, though the

relocation order has already been issued by the authorities. As the number of homes that are going to be relocated is large, people are disappointed in the authorities. Some people are planning to submit a petition signed by several victims, though it is hardly likely that it will arouse the sympathy of the authorities. "The appeal is just to express our disappointment. In the letter, people signed their names and national identification number. Even though we submit this appeal, they (the authorities) will eventually destroy our homes. The authorities will not give up their plan despite the people's wishes," one local resident said. The existing eighty-two mile long and 36 ft wide Tamu-Kalay road has been in use since 1997 and is known as the Indo-Burma Friendship Road and it was constructed with the help of the Border Roads Task Force (BRTF). The Asia Highway that is going to be built will stretch over eight hundred and fifty miles and will connect three countries starting from Manipur State in India, then passing through Monywa, Pagan, Pegu and Myawaddy in Burma and will reach Mae Sod in Thailand. The decision to construct this highway within 18 months was taken after a meeting of the foreign ministers from Thailand, Burma and India in April 2002. While the total estimated cost for the highway is USD 700 million, the Indian government will provide USD 100 million, Thailand will provide USD 90 million and Burma will have to spend USD 62 million. Several houses in the villages on the highway, namely Net-Myin-Han, Man-Maw, Htan-Ta-Pin, Pan-Thar, Nan-Mon-Tar, Yan-Lin-Phai, Wi-Tote, Teddim-Yan, Bote-Kan, Htan-Zin, Kanma-Gyi, Kanan, Kan-Pat, Nan-Katate, Nan-Khauk-Khaukm Ye-Tote, Kyuntaw-Ye-Shin, Phayar-Ye-Shin, Sawbwar-Ye-Shin, 55-Miles, Khone-Thar, Kan-Oo, Nan-Han-Nwe, Sakan-Gyi, Indine-Lay and Kyee-Kon will also have to be relocated.

Eviction order served to residents of Tamu-Kalay Highway

-- Kuki International Forum, 14 March 2004

Tamu (Burma), March 14: In yet another unwelcoming development in Tamu Township of Upper Sagaing Division in Burma (Myanmar), the local authority of the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) issued an order to residents of Tamu-Kalay Highway to vacate their buildings within the month of March. The order was intimated in the first week of March on the pretext of extending the highway to an area of 100 feet on both sides. An extension of 50 feet was already implemented 3 years ago.

"It is planned intentionally to hurt the populace sentiments and is a direct encroachment to our legitimate land by the authority," said a resident over the phone to Kukiform News Service. The move is an attempt to evict us who have owned the plots for years, said another resident on condition of anonymity. The authority neither makes an alternative arrangement to rehabilitate the residents nor offer any kind of compensation in this regard. However, neither the informant nor the Kukiform confirm whether the plan is initiated from Rangoon or is a discretionary order of the local authority.

If the order is carried out as served, millions worth of properties will be demolished without any compensation. Among others, it will include Seventh-Day Adventist Church building, Kuki Chin Baptist Association (KCBA) and Kabaw Valley Thadou

Baptist Association (KVTBA) run Bible institution, and other highly priced buildings. It is an area dominated by the Kuki ethnic population and the authority is planning to wipe out the well-to-do families of the Kukis, lamented a resident.

It may be recalled that during the time of the Revolutionary Council government in 1967, the so-called infamous "Khadawmi Operation" was launched to evict thousands of Kukis from Kangmang Phaicham (Kabaw Valley). Tamu is a parliamentary constituency in which U Thong Kho Thang, a Kuki MP from United Nationalities League for Democracy (UNLD) and who is a spokesperson for the party, was elected during the 1990 general elections in Burma.

Situation in Sagaing Division

-- *Human Rights Yearbook – Burma 2002-03* (para 13.6, extract) Human Rights Documentation Unit of the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma

"...In Sagaing Division, the designated administrative boundaries of the division conceal the ethnic diversity within its borders and the internal displacement which has occurred. Many Naga people, estimated to be around 100,000 strong in total, populate the four northern townships of the division, near the town of Khamti and the Patkai mountain range [...]. Fighting for an independent Nagaland in both India and Burma, and facing increased internal divisions, the Naga have suffered significant conflict-related displacement.....It is estimated that up to 1,300 villagers have been displaced ...The construction of the Kalay-Gangaw railway line in Sagaing Division illustrates clearly that the problems of forced displacement are not only confined to the war-affected zones. The line crosses mostly flat farmland and paddy fields; these were destroyed without any compensation being paid by the national government." (BERG, September 2000)

Zomi Chin Village destroyed

-- National League for Democracy via *Human Rights Yearbook, Burma 2000* (para 14.6)

On June 2, 2000 the Kha La Ya battalion commander, 17 soldiers, and 22 members of the USDA, invaded Auk-sa-tan village, the dwelling place of the Auk-stan Zomi Chin people containing 80 households, located in a long narrow row of hills between the townships of Kalemyo and Minkin, Sagaing Division. They pulled down the houses in the village claiming that this area was within the demarcated Kya-bin forest land. When the villagers cried and begged them not to destroy their houses the soldiers responded by setting fire to the broken down houses and property of the villagers. The villagers ran away with whatever could be saved, dragging and carrying the young and the old and took shelter in the church. The Zomi Chin people lost three churches, 63 houses and about 600 livestock (chicken and pigs). A total of about 300 became destitute. Prior to the incident, on January 10, 2000, the authorities burnt down the Ah-ma-ka village school which had a staff of 4 teachers and a student population of 67. As of August 2000 the children still had no school to attend.

Before the destruction of the village, in March 2000, the Minkin authorities gave notice that the village was to be vacated by June 2, 2000 at the latest. Other Burmese villages existing in this demarcated area have not been moved. It is suspected that this was a deliberate move against the Zomi village because they belong to the Chin ethnic group and are Christians. As of August 2000, these people could not grow any crops and had to take shelter in neighboring villages or go deeper into the forest and live in temporary huts made with branches exposed to wind and rain. Children had no food and many were sick.

IDPs in the Naga Hill Land area

-- *Mizzima News* via *Human Rights Yearbook, Burma 2000* (para 14.6)

In December 2000, the Naga People's Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR) released a statement that said Naga villagers living in Burma have been subjected to hardships meted out by the Burmese army recently. The release further said that there is an increase of Internally Displaced People in the Naga Hill areas in Burma and the displaced people are living without food and clothing.

Forced relocation/eviction (urban)

Forced Relocation and Forced Labor For The Re-construction of Tamu-Nanphalong Road

-- *Burma News International*, 7 December 2003

After a while of recess, reports say that forced re-locations and forced labor have re-started to enable the construction of a road in Tamu township of Sagaing division.

Force laborers were summoned according to respective wards, quarters, and houses. On December 6th, all the residents of quarter no.(5) in Tamu were said to have been called for free labor to re-construct the road connecting the Than bridge and the Thaman bridge that was destroyed by the flood last year.

According to a resident of Tamu, residents are required to work from 7:00 am to 11:00 am with their own tools and rations and absconders are fined 500 kyats.

Moreover, residents of Sandarku quarter were also said to have been called twice in the previous week, for free labor to construct the same road. The road that is being re-constructed is connected to the Tamu-Nanphalong road,

which is a strategic road for Indo-Burma border trade.

The flood of Pahe river last year, apart from destroying (20) houses along with Than bridge of Autkyin quarter and numerous paddy fields, destroyed the main bridge connecting India and Burma. The bridge has been repaired by the Indian authorities.

Tamu township authorities **re-located six houses from Sandarku quarter no.(3)** to make room from the road site opposite the river near Inn Daw quarter. The residents, however, refused to stay in the allocated area as the area was previously used as cemetery to bury prisoners.

A resident of Tamu said: "We refuse to stay there because the place is used as an old cemetery. When we dug the ground for constructing our houses, we found human skeletons. As for the people who are out of the road site, they continue to stay in the same place in spite of the danger of flood".

It is also reported that another seven more houses in Sandarku quarter that are on the road site that were ordered to be re-located by Township Peace and Development Council (TPDC).

Forced Relocation in Tamu Town

-- Sein Win, *Mizzima News*, September 14, 2002, via *Human Rights Yearbook, Burma, 2002-2003*.

According to recent reports, U Maung Maung Myint, Chairman of Division Peace and Development Council, ordered people living in in the thirty-eight houses of Block No. 5 in Tamu town (Sagaing division) to vacate their houses before a deadline set for October 2002 in line with a government project started on 15 June.

The Tamu residents could expect to be relocated to Natmyin village. The authorities will disburse no compensation or reimbursement for the expenses incurred during relocation.

U Maung Maung Myint furthermore warned locals that "whoever appries the BBC or the RFA of the forced relocation planned will be punished severely", said a local who refused to identify himself.

The houses meant for relocation measure 60 inches in length and 80 inches in width. One of those facing forced relocation said that he would defy the order and stay at his place.

Punishment for non-compliance with orders

Burmese farmers forced to grow summer paddy

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 2 January 2006

Regional authorities of Tamu District, Sagaing Division in northwest Burma, have been forcing local farmers to grow the unproductive dry season paddy, causing untold difficulties and miseries to the latter.

Tamu district is neither a 'dam-water-consuming' region nor a flatland area where water is easily available, and farmers have been finding it hard to grow rice plants even during the rainy seasons.

A local farmer told DVB that the authorities have been pressurising the residents to grow summer paddy despite obvious defects, and farmers are reluctant to follow the authorities' order because of the losses incurred on them by the useless forced labour.

"Currently, they (the authorities) are collecting the identity cards of the farmers. **They are threatening to confiscate their paddy fields if they do not grow summer paddy, and take actions on them,**" [emphasis added] said the farmer.

The farmers tried to explain that it would be futile and wasteful to grow summer paddy on the land, which is very poor nutrient-wise, without sufficient supplies of water and fertilisers, but the authorities would not listen to their reasoning.

Burmese farmers detained for not growing summer rice

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 30 May 2005

Four farmers from Kalembo Township in Sagaing Division near the Indian border were arrested and detained by the local Burmese authorities for refusing to grow summer paddy.

They are U Than Win, U Tin Win and two other unknown farmers from Ashaysee Village and another farmer called Ko Nyan Win has gone into hiding to evade the arrest. The authorities ordered villagers from Ashaysee, Htoma, Letpanchaung and Htaukkyant to grow more than 1000 acres of summer paddy. The villagers from Ashaysee Villagers told the authorities that they would do so after reaping their yellow bean harvests. But the chairman of local authority U Aung Cho rejected their request and ordered them to destroy their harvests and grow the summer paddy.

The farmers were arrested on 22 March while preparing to grow the summer paddy after harvesting the bean harvests and they are being detained at Kalembo Prison, according to local residents.

Farmers forced to sell cotton

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

Five farmers of Pale Township, Sagaing Division were arrested by township authorities last week for not able to sell cotton harvests to the government on time. According to the government's quota, the farmers have to sell 50 'visses' per acre.

If they could not do so the authorities are threatening them with fines of 5000 kyats per acre. But, this year, the yield is very poor and some crops were destroyed by the late monsoon downpours and the gap between the government's price and the black market price is so vast that many farmers complained that they would be unable to fulfil their quotas.

Then the five farmers were arrested and they were released three days later when their families paid the money to the authorities.

Forced sale of sugar cane and paddy to the army in Bahmo District

-- National League for Democracy via *Human Rights Yearbook, Burma, 2000* (para 5. 11)

The authorities ordered farmers and cultivators of sugarcane in the townships of Bahmo, Shwegu, Moemaik, and Mansi in the Bahmo district, Sagaing division, to supply two million viss of boiled sugar cane juice to the sugar factory owned and installed by the north military command in the town of Bahmo. Sugar manufactured at this mill is for the annual consumption of the army. Orders were issued by the military commander through the township authorities that every cultivator of sugarcane must (without fail) supply 4 barrels (holding 100 viss each) of this cooked sugar cane juice. In Shwegu township, the authorities issued orders that if the full quota of six hundred thousand viss was not fulfilled severe action would be taken by way of example to others. The threat was that unauthorized disposal of boiled sugarcane juice would result in confiscation of the transporting vehicles and the juice. The current price of this product was kyats 102 per viss but the cultivators received much less according to the arbitrary decision of the military authorities and the losses they suffered were great. For every acre of paddy cultivated land in the year 2000, the cultivator was required to sell 12 baskets to the Agriculture Trade Department, 1 basket to the PDC and 3 baskets to the army. A total of 16 baskets for every acre cultivated is defined as "service paddy". **The authorities threatened severe penalties for failure to fulfil this service.** [emphasis added] The total acres under cultivation in the township is approximately 40 thousand. Payment for "service paddy" was only kyats 350/- while the open market price was kyats 800/-. The cultivator therefore lost kyats 450/- per basket. In Shwegu township, the "service paddy" totaled 40000 x 16 which resulted in a total loss of about kyats 288 lakhs. (Source: NLD

Other threats to human security

Land confiscation

Thousand acres of land may be confiscated for road construction

-- *Khonumthung News*, 17 October 2006

Thousands of acres of land belonging to the people may be confiscated for a new highway, a project of the authorities from Kalemmyo, Sagaing Division. A local said that the authorities would take away all land owned by civilians on the stretch between Kalemmyo and Thuma.

He told *Khonumthung News*, "The people would face problems if their land is confiscated for the construction of the new highway. But this government will do it and the people will be victimized again."

Although there is no information about how the new road will be constructed, but the project will start in the last week of this month or the first week of next month.

It is learnt that the authorities have not yet informed the people about this new road but some information came from the concerned department.

The road will link a nine mile stretch between Kalay University and Government Institute of Technology in Thuma. It will be processed as soon as possible, sources said.

The road across Kalemmyo and Natchaung where land belongs to people is one of the highest rice producing areas.

Land Confiscation for the Mandalay-Myitkyina Highway

-- National League for Democracy via *Human Rights Yearbook, Burma, 1999-2000*

Lt.-Col Than Han (Chairman of District Administrative body) has visited the villages in Kant-ba-lu Township, Saigaing division 5 times in order to threaten and persuade people to sign over their land for the construction of the highway. The authorities have plans to acquire by force approximately 6300 acres of land in the villages of Pay-gyi, Kha-ohn-bar, Nge-pyaw-taing, Phoke-kone, Htauk-sha-ain in Kant-ba-lu Township.

Implantation of settlers

Racially selective settlement and relocation being implemented in Kalay-Tamu Area

– Reports on Forced Labour, Chin Human Rights Organization, 2001

The State peace and Development Council in Sagaing Division has established three new villages between Kalay and Tamu town since March 2001. In the new three villages, only Burmese Buddhists are allowed to settle, although the surrounding areas have been co-inhabited by ethnic Chin and Shan-Bama decent.

The names of the three villages are Yanmyo-Aung, Yantaing-Aung, and Yanngein-Aung. The meaning of the villages name literally translates "conquest of the enemy". These names are reported to have been dubbed based on superstitious astronomical readings consulted by SPDC.

The area is mostly inhabited by Chin and Shan-bamas and there are many virgin lands and forest in the surrounding areas. The inhabitants in the area are prohibited to extend their farm or plough the virgin land. Only the Burmese Buddhists are allowed to settle in the new villages.

The SPDC persuades (Burman) people from Minkin township of Magwe division to settle in the new villages promising them that they would be sufficiently provided with whatever they need.

Since January 2001, the SPDC authority strictly collects or seizes goods and commodities, such as rice, cooking oil, bicycles, medicines and farm animals from traders and villagers. The goods they seized were provided to the new settlers from the three villages.

According to U Than Aung (name changed), 60 years old Burmese farmer from Tamu township, all the nearby villages have been working in the new three villages since March 2001 till today. The villagers have to build school, houses, digging the well, cutting wood and ploughing in the farm for the new settlers.

(Date of interview with U Than Aung, 11 August 2001).

The Kabaw region development programme *All Quiet on the Western Front?*

-- *Images Asia*, Karen Human Rights Group, Open Society Inst. (Burma Project), January 1998

The Kabaw Valley is a long strip of fertile lowland squeezed between two mountain ranges along the Indo-Burma border. In the more remote parts of the valley, the military regime is carrying out the Kabaw Region Development Program ("Kabaw Deitha Phont Phyho Hmu See Man Geing" in Burmese) as part of what is commonly known as the "Border Areas Development Program" (BADP).

Prior to 1988, SLORC's predecessors, the BSPP, regarded border areas as peripheral zones. However, since 1988, in a switch from the previous policy of 'socialist' economic autarky to open-market economy, the SLORC has been looking at the border areas in an integrated and centralised way.

According to Martin Smith:

"In what appeared to be a major departure from the policy of the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP), the BADP was announced in May 1989, following the SLORC's first cease-fires with the ethnic breakaway armies. Subsequently, a new Ministry for the Development of Border Areas and the National Races was also established. Minority leaders, however, point out that the make-up of the BADP's board is distinctly military. The seven-man central committee, under the SLORC Chairman, includes the heads of the army, navy, air-force and military intelligence, none of whom are trained economists or have any experience in aid and development matters. Both the BADP and the Ministry for the Development of Border Areas and the National Races are run entirely by SLORC officers, nearly all of whom are ethnic Burmans and, in the top ranks, military men.... In its first two years of operation the BADP claimed to have spent over 228 million Kyats (US\$38 million) on projects as various as road-building, health-care, schools, and extending state television into the border areas. For the years 1992-96, a further 727 million Kyats (US\$121 million) was projected." (Martin Smith, *Ethnic Groups in Burma: Development, Democracy and Human Rights*, London, UK: Anti-Slavery International, 1994, p. 100 - 101.)

In August 1993, SLORC promulgated the Development of Border Areas and National Races Law, and in January 1994, the ministry was reorganised as the Ministry for Progress of Border Areas and National Races and Development Affairs. Under the master plan that was developed, the Kabaw Valley was one of the project areas, along with 13 others that started in 1993.

The Kabaw Region Development Programme, also referred to as the "New Kabaw Valley Project" and "Kabaw New Life Project", is supervised by the army office of the North-western Regional Command, based in Thein Kyi Ton, Kalay Township. The stated aim of this project is to enhance and develop the Kabaw region, seen to have major long term economic potential, as it offers an unique trade route with India. The project, much publicised in the state-controlled media and press, promoted the resettlement of landless

families from Central Burma to enable them to grow rice. Other activities undertaken for this program as of 31 December 1995 in Kabaw Valley included 93 miles of roads, 55 bridges, seven schools, three rural health centre, one hospital, one agricultural office, three farms, 11 dams, and one telecommunications installation. Observers and many local villagers, however, believe that the three real motives of the military in implementing the project are: political propaganda, to secure and maintain control over the border area, and to counter armed groups based in the area. (The Kuki National Army and the NSCN (K) are still active in some areas of the Division.)

Since 1990, the SLORC had already initiated activities in the area. Initially, groups of prisoners from Mandalay Prison were sent in turn for five to six months to clear the land for resettlement and paddy fields, as well as to build roads. The first labour camp established for the inmates was called Wet Su. The government also at this time began developing new areas for resettlement. Some long-term prisoners were even offered opportunities to settle with their families in the Kabaw Valley. On June 17th 1993, Lt. Gen. Myo Nyunt, at a coordinating meeting on paddy cultivation, as reported in the *New Light of Myanmar*, stated that squatter populations from Yangon and elsewhere who did not want to move to new urban relocation sites ran the risk of being moved to Kabaw Valley in Sagaing Division among other places.

At the commencement of the project the authorities lured landless farmers from the central plains to settle the sites with promises of land, and other incentives. The resettlement sites were located near three existing Kuki villages, Sati, Tone Kyaw, and Naung Kum. The resettlement areas near these villages, all named after military heroes of Burman history, are called Aung Zeya, Bandoola and Saya San, respectively. Initially a number of farmers agreed to the deal. Since 1991, prior to the arrival of the settlers, the local Kuki villagers were forced to clear the land for the newcomers and build a monastery, a school and a clinic. Because of this, the Kuki villagers, mostly Christian, have harboured enmity for the settlers from the initiation of the projects. They see the programme as part of the military's strategy of Burmanisation.

The newcomers chosen by the government were from Shwebo, Monywa, and other parts of Central Burma and were almost all Burman Buddhists, except for those from Zayawaddy, who were largely Hindu. Each family was promised five hectares of land, two cows, one bullock cart, some farming implements, housing materials, and in some cases as much as 10,000 Kyats. The first group of resettlers arrived on the 30th of June 1992 in Aung Zeya, a site prepared for 200 families. In May 1993, approximately 100 families were shifted to Bandoola, while another hundred households were moved to Saya San in March 1994. None of these families have ever received what they were promised, and they were only allocated one and a half acres of land per family. In some cases, bullock carts and cows which had been confiscated by the army from the surrounding Kuki villages were distributed. When the settlers arrived, they had to stay in temporary shelters until they could build their houses. No food was supplied, so they had to find their own ways to survive until their first harvest. Some of them are not used to growing paddy. No health care has been provided, though malaria is endemic in the region.

Due to the hardships of life there, within a short time, those families who could afford it returned to the places from which they had come. In 1997, five years after the resettlement programme was initiated, it was reported that populations in the resettlement camps had declined dramatically. At last count, in Aung Zeya resettlement site only 120 out of 200 households remained; in Bandoola, 60 households out of 100 were left; while Saya San contained approximately 80 households out of about 100. (Interviews ABSDF-WB, May 1997 and FTUB, October 1997; ABSL, 1 May 1997, in "A Chin Compendium", Project Maje, September 1997; Images Asia and KHRG, December 1997)

Forced labour

Forced labour continues in central Burma

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

The local authority members at Burma's Sagaing Division Ayadaw Township, are continuing to impose forced labour practices on the local residents.

On 6 November, Minthabin Village authority chairman Tin Ngwe summoned one member from each household and forced them to clear paddy fields, by the township authority chairman Mya Ngwe, according to local residents. Those who could not come were each forced to pay 1000 kyat.

To make the situation worse, villagers were forced to carry out the order at night causing them untold miseries, the residents told DVB. Moreover, Tin Ngwe has been extorting money from the villager regularly.

In August, the same Tin Ngwe dragged farmers out of their beds and forced them to plough their paddy fields in the middle of the night. His crony, a land surveyor, Win Htut has also been confiscating paddy fields from farmers who refused to grow rice as demanded by the authorities.

Naga people forced to work for Burma junta

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

Naga people living on mountains along the Indo-Burmese border regions of Sagaing Division, have been subjected to various kinds of human rights abuses including forced labour practices.

A Naga villager told DVB that villagers have been forced to work in stone quarries for road building projects and carry army supplies without being paid a single 'pya'. He added that villagers are not only forced to work for the Burmese army, they are forced to volunteer in the building of Buddhist pagodas in Leshee Township. The majority of Naga are either Christians or animists or both.

Local Naga farmers also lost hundreds of their working water buffaloes during the raining season due to the outbreak of an ‘unknown’ disease. They went down to lowland regions to buy new buffaloes and when they took the animals back to their villages, Burmese soldiers seized them from them on they way. Only who afford to pay 300,000 kyat could reclaim their animals.

At the same time, the local authorities of Leshee Township, led by a man named Hla Tun, have been misappropriating money reserved for the salaries of local school teachers. The children are unable to continue to resume their education as some of their teachers haven’t received their salaries more than six months.

Intervention by the ILO to the SPDC dated 10 December 2004

-- International Labour Organisation, 10 December 2004

According to the allegation from individuals concerned, the township chairman and police chief of Tabayin township (Sagaing Division) requisitioned residents of the town to repair an irrigation canal and plant trees along the approach road to the town. These instructions were given in the evening by loudspeaker. Anyone who failed to take part was fined.

Intervention by the ILO to the SPDC dated 7 December 2004

-- International Labour Organisation, 7 December 2004

The intervention concerned four allegations of forced labour that were received from individuals from different townships in Sagaing Division. In the first case, it was alleged that Tamu district Forestry Department had ordered the heads of two village tracts to provide villagers to work on a teak plantation project. One person from each household in the villages concerned was requisitioned to carry out this work (a total of more than 200 people), and anyone who refused was fined. In the second case, according to the information received from a number of alleged victims, several hundred villagers in Kalewa township were forced to do work on the road from Kalewa to Mawlaik, and several people who did not participate were detained and fined. In the third case, it was alleged that a number of people in Tamu town were ordered by a police officer to perform all-night sentry duty for several consecutive nights. Any person who was unable to perform this duty was required to hire a substitute at their own expense. In the fourth case, it was alleged that several hundred villagers from a number of villages in Homalin township were requisitioned by the township chairman, through their village heads, to work on the repair of a number of bridges on the road from Homalin to Hkamti. Villagers received no payment and had to provide their own food. Any person who failed to take part was liable to a fine.

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...

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.

Forced labor at Kalay airport Burma

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 25 September 2004

The local residents in Kalay, Sagaing Division said they were forced to work for cleaning airport on July 15 and August 31 by the authorities.

Every family in the town has to send one person and if they cannot, they were fined 500 Kyat. Some of the people in a town called Saedaw Oo were forced to work for building USDA office, civilian wing of the military regime.

The local authorities told the people that the order came from the divisional military commander. The local residents at Saedaw Oo village at Kalay Township also forced to contribute 200 Kyat for opening of the USDA office. One local resident told DVB that although government officials claimed that there is no more forced labor in Burma, they are still being forced to work for various government projects.

Forced labour continues in upper Burma

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

Troops of Burma's military junta stationed at Kale and Gangaw Townships in upper Sagaing Division near Indian border are still forcing the local people to 'volunteer' for the army.

Villagers from Taung Khayan and Shwebolay and nearby villages have been forced to take part in the harvesting of 300 acres of paddy crops 'owned' by the army.

One person from each household has been forced to do the work in the fields without pay and with their own lunch boxes for four days a week and those who could not, are forced to pay 1000 Kyat.

In order to make the forced labour appear voluntary, the villagers have been given a small amount of kerosene.

Forced Relocation and Forced Labor For The Re-construction of Tamu-Nanphalong Road

-- *Burma News International*, 7 December 2003:

After a while of recess, reports say that forced re-locations and forced labor have re-started to enable the construction of a road in Tamu township of Sagaing division.

Force laborers were summoned according to respective wards, quarters, and houses. On December 6th, all the residents of quarter no.(5) in Tamu were said to have been called for free labor to re-construct the road connecting the Than bridge and the Thaman bridge that was destroyed by the flood last year.

According to a resident of Tamu, residents are required to work from 7:00 am to 11:00 am with their own tools and rations and absconders are fined 500 kyats.

Moreover, residents of Sandarku quarter were also said to have been called twice in the previous week, for free labor to construct the same road. The road that is being re-constructed is connected to the Tamu-Nanphalong road, which is a strategic road for Indo-Burma border trade.

The flood of Pahe river last year, apart from destroying (20) houses along with Than bridge of Autkyin quarter and numerous paddy fields, destroyed the main bridge connecting India and Burma. The bridge has been repaired by the Indian authorities.

Tamu township authorities re-located six houses from Sandarku quarter no.(3) to make room from the road site opposite the river near Inn Daw quarter. The residents, however, refused to stay in the allocated area as the area was previously used as cemetery to bury prisoners.

A resident of Tamu said: "We refuse to stay there because the place is used as an old cemetery. When we dug the ground for constructing our houses, we found human skeletons. As for the people who are out of the road site, they continue to stay in the same place in spite of the danger of flood".

It is also reported that another seven more houses in Sandarku quarter that are on the road site that were ordered to be re-located by Township Peace

and Development Council (TPDC).

Forced labour in Sagaing Division

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 25 February, 2003

The local authorities in Sagaing Division are forcing people to work without pay and the people are said to be reporting it to the higher authorities. Local villagers of Homalin and Leshi Townships are ordered to contribute stones by the Northwest Military Command's commander General Soe Win since October 2001 for the building of Htamanbi Leshi motorway.

But in order to make the practise look voluntary, he guaranteed them 200 kyats for each ten cubic feet of stones provided, to be paid by government construction contractors. At the time, the same amount of stones fetched 2000 kyats and some poor people were forced to do the job for them.

After more than a year, more than 400,000 kyats are still to be paid to the workers and some villagers in Homlin Township have asked the authorities to pay their wages, according to the local people.

Forced labor, forced porter still rife in Naga Hills

-- *Mizzima News* 2 October, 2001

Imphal, Oct. 2 2001: The three-week long visit of International Labor Organization (ILO)'s team investigating the Burmese government's efforts to eradicate forced labor in the country is coming to its end this week.

In this context, it needs mentioning that there are reports of the continued use of forced labor coming out of the country, particularly from the remote areas and border areas inhabited by ethnic nationalities. The Naga Hills, situated in the Sagaing Division of Burma (which borders on India), is one of the areas here the use of forced labor in road constructions and forced porter by the Burmese army units are rife.

According to the local people of Layshi township in the Naga Hills, the Burmese authorities continue to use forced labor for the construction and maintenance of the sixty mile-long Htamanthi-Layshi motor road. In the last week of August, the Township Peace and Development Council (TPDC) instructed the village authorities to complete the task of road repair and construction by the end of November this year.

Naga villagers told Mizzima News that road works are currently under way between Yan Nwe Village and Kyoe Tadar (the Suspension Bridge) near Layshi town involving villagers being forced to "voluntarily" contribute their labor.

The villagers said that the Burmese authorities do not provide any assistance to the forced laborers and that the villagers themselves have to bring their own equipments, food and medicines.

Moreover, the villagers are made to work at farms of army units in upper Sagaing Division and pay regular tax for army rations. The villagers are also being used as porters by army units moving from one base to another and in patrolling. Army units recruit up to 50 villagers to carry their loads during patrolling or transfer. Seven Burmese army battalions are stationed in the Naga Hills with each battalion being stationed in an area for the duration of two to four months.

During the ILO's first time visit to the military-run Burma, the four-member highlevel ILO team, led by former Australian governor general Sir Ninian Stephen, having arrived in Burma in the third week of September, met with opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and government ministers. The ILO team has reportedly been given access to every minister concerned and visited some of the states predominantly inhabited by ethnic nationalities, including Arakan State and Taninthayi Division, in order to make an assessment of the local situation at grassroots level. The delegation also met with international and national non-government organizations and UN agencies' representatives in Burma.

The Geneva-based International Labor Organization last year took unprecedented action against the Burmese junta and threatened to impose more sanctions if the junta failed to end forced labor in the country. In November, the Burmese military government - in a bid to prevent further adverse international reactions - officially declared forced labor illegal. Despite this declaration, the continued use of forced labor is reported in various parts of the country, particularly in remote areas. The army continues to depend heavily on the unpaid and forced employment of local villagers for its mobility. Some observers say that the Burmese authorities are, however, now eager to convince the ILO that they are sincere in their efforts to wipe out the practice.

All Quiet on the Western Front?

-- Extracts on forced labour and various infrastructure projects. *Images Asia*, Karen Human Rights Group, Open Society Inst. (Burma Project), January 1998

Forced Labour

As in Chin State, forced labour is used extensively in Sagaing Division, and some villagers claim that up to half of their work hours every month are consumed by it. In addition to the railway project, labourers have been widely conscripted for work on irrigation dams and roads construction. They have also been used to construct army bases, and to do other work, such as logging, supervised by the army for military profit. Apart from the Kalay-Gangaw-Pakkoku railway, the most notorious forced labour project in Sagaing division is the "Kabaw Region Development Program" (sometimes referred to by residents as the "New Kabaw Valley Project"), with extensive use of prison labour, and where the appalling conditions have resulted in hundreds of deaths.

Kalay-Gangaw-Pakkoku railway construction

The largest forced labour project in Sagaing division is the Kalaymyo - Gangaw - Pakkoku - Chaung U railway which stretches from Sagaing Division in the north to Magwe Division in the south. It is 312 miles long and every mile of it has been built with the forced labour of villagers and convicts. As it nears completion, the SLORC has begun discussing extending it 75 miles further north to Tamu. Chaung U is 50 miles west of Mandalay and linked to Mandalay by rail, so this line would establish a rail link between Mandalay and the Indian border. As of late 1997, only the Chaung U - Pale and Kalaymyo - Nat Chaung sections were in operation.

After the UN Special Rapporteur's report in November 1995 criticised the SLORC for using forced labour on this project, the SLORC claimed to have paid the workers as follows: "Chaung U - Ma Gyi Boke sector and Pakokku - Monywa sector: 8.29 million Kyats; Pakokku - Gangaw - Kalay sector: 30 million Kyats". (*The SLORC's response to the Preliminary Report by the Special Rapporteur on Myanmar, Yozo Yokota, to the United Nations General Assembly*, November 1995). However, as of late 1997, labourers interviewed reported that none of the workers along the entire stretch of railway had ever been paid. Most families living in the area have been forced to work 6 or 7 times on the railway over the past seven years, each time taking 2 or 3 weeks to finish their assignment. In addition, villagers were ordered to prepare gravel for the track bed. (See the following New Light of Myanmar article entitled *Minister Inspects Kyaw-Zibya section of Chaung U-Pakokku-Gangaw-Kalay Railroad*, April 9, 1997)

[...]

Dam construction

The Chindwin River flows along almost the entire western side of Sagaing Division, while the Irrawaddy River runs down through the south-eastern part of the division. The SLORC has been developing irrigation projects to boost rice and crop production particularly in the southern region. Several dams and irrigation canals have been built over the past four years, all with forced labour. However, according to local people, most of these projects have failed, due to engineering miscalculations and lack of technical expertise.

Thazi Dam

In 1994, SLORC started a large irrigation development project approximately 10 miles north-east of Monywa, extending from Thei Gyi Gon village to Thazi village, implemented primarily with forced labour. To make way for the dam site, ancient pagodas in the area were destroyed. Thereafter, the project included the building of the dam wall, the digging of a network of irrigation canals, and the repair of the Monywa-Thazi road. The project was supervised by Captain Soe Win, commander of the #20 Artillery battalion based in Monywa. The opening ceremony took place in October 1995. After completion, villagers were still called to plant trees, clear weeds on the canal network and build a new pagoda near the dam wall.

In the twelve months preceding the opening ceremony, it is estimated that between 3,000 to 5,000 villagers were forced to contribute their labour on the project. At least one person per family had to work there for several consecutive days from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. and in some cases up to 11 p.m. If a family member could not come to work, he or she had to pay 100 Kyats per day to the army.

Although no relocation took place for this project, a number of ancient pagodas were standing in the dam area, and 23 of them had to be demolished. Villagers were forced to provide labour to pull them down as well as to build one new pagoda at the dam site. It is widely reported that the battalion took this opportunity to steal precious sacramental objects including relics and gems enshrined in the pagodas when they were constructed. Villagers were greatly upset not only by the desecration of their ancestral sites, but also by their fears that their involvement will negatively affect their karma. (ABSDF-WB, May 1997 and FTUB, October 1997)

Myo Myint, a Burman from Kan Phya village, Monywa township, explained:

"There was a group of more than 20 pagodas near the Thazi dam. They were built hundreds of years ago by the ancient villagers of Thazi. Thazi used to be a rich village in the old times. According to the villagers, they took the 'htabanah' [treasures and relics enshrined in the pagoda]. Artillery Battalion #20 ordered the villagers to pull them down with some tools. My sister worked there. Two villagers had to guard the pagodas at night. When they reached the 'htabanah', nobody could touch or see it. They put the jewels into one pagoda and prevented the villagers from coming near. Then the soldiers took them away.

"We, villagers, we feel so sad about all this. They shouldn't destroy these ancient pagodas. We are all Buddhists. Even the government [is Buddhist]. Our religion has been insulted." (Interview, May 1997)

Zaw Htun, a Burman from Bu Bin village near the dam, also knew about the destruction of the pagodas: *"At the beginning of the dam project, they destroyed the pagodas, took the treasures and then the army carried these jewels away by helicopter."*

He and his brother worked in turns on the dam site and he described the working conditions:

"The people were working there for 4 or 5 months, in the winter of 1995. My brother and I went there in turns. Soldiers were guarding us. They scolded the people and even beat them. On the worksite, the soldiers were always drunk. They always tried to fool around with the girls. The people were so angry with the soldiers but they couldn't do anything.

"The workers had to bring along their tools and their food. They received no salary. Those who owned a car or a scooter were also requested to provide them for the construction work. They were guarded by soldiers during the work, and some villagers

were beaten. There were also several work accidents on the construction site, but no compensation was paid." (Interview, May 1997)

Myo Myint also described how his family members were ordered to go and work everyday on the irrigation canals. *"Four members of my family had to participate, one in each group for each day. It took more than three months to complete. We had to make a new branch canal, 7 feet deep and 13 feet wide. There were three villages involved, each with 75 people. Each village had to complete a length of 30 feet. This was for the irrigation of paddy fields. But these fields are not ours. They belong to other villages. There is no benefit at all for our village."*

It has been reported that seven people died in work accidents, including two women, during the construction.

When Myo Myint was asked why he thought the SLORC had ordered the building of the irrigation canals, he replied, *"Because our region is dry and there is not enough rain. They couldn't collect enough produce from the villagers. I think they want us to produce more crops for their rations."*

However, soon after the inauguration of the Thazi dam, engineering flaws became apparent. The water flow could not be controlled properly, and the Thazi villagers, who are living at the foot of the dam and are growing cotton, beans and corn, got even less water than previously to irrigate their fields. Moreover, the dam was built solely with mud, ground and stones, and a leak was observed in the dam wall. (FTUB, July 1997) The Thazi villagers now live in fear that the dam could burst at any time. Following the massive floods of the 1997 rainy season and unconfirmed reports that many dams in the country burst, there are grave fears for the safety of these villagers.

Kyauk Ka Dam

After the Thazi canal was finished, villagers from Aya Daw and Monywa townships had to work on another dam project at Kyauk Ka village, located about 12 miles from Monywa. The Kyauk Ka dam, also called Htan Ta Lop dam, is smaller than the Thazi dam. Construction was started at the end of 1995 and was supervised by the same battalion that oversaw the Thazi dam construction, Artillery Battalion #20. One monastery and a pagoda were destroyed for the construction, and 40 houses were forcibly relocated without compensation. Safety precautions on the project have been lax: two adults as well as one child drowned during the construction. (FTUB, October 1997) As of late 1997, the dam has not yet been completed, and the use of forced labour continues.

Tant Sae Dam

Likewise, many villagers had to work on the Tant Sae dam in 1995 and 1996 and claimed that they received no benefit from the project. The Tant Sae dam is located in Sa Lin Gyi township, Monywa district, but people from as far as Shwebo were called to contribute their labour. Aung Moe, a Burman from Shwebo explained that, *"In our area, everyone had to go and work near Tant Sae, including the widows. They had to work for 5 days,*

sometimes 7 days. They had to bring their own food. This project had no benefit for us, since Tant Sae is not even in Shwebo area." (Interview, May 1997)

Phalan Kyin Dam

When dams are built, villagers lose their land and are not compensated by the government. This is the case at the dam being built on the Phalan Kyin river in Taung Talone village tract, 15 miles from Monywa. Zaw Htun, from a nearby village, explained:

"When they build this dam, the eastern part of Phalan Kyin village will be flooded and the villagers will have to move. Many paddy fields of Phalan Kyin will be lost, as well as some forest with many ironwood trees. When I was in my village, I heard that the forest and some paddy fields between Phalan Kyin and Taung Talone had already been seized by the government." (Interview, May 1997)

Zee Chaung Hydro-Project

The SLORC ordered the construction of the Zee Chaung hydro-electric power project near Kalay to provide electricity to the Kalay region. This medium-sized project, built at an estimated cost of 70 million Kyat, started in 1990 and was completed in 1996. Villagers, including Chins and Burmans, and about 500 prisoners were used for labour in the construction. Villagers had to contribute large sums of money as well as labour. However, when the hydro power plant began operation in 1996, the villagers had no access to the electricity. Electrification was reserved for the many army camps based in Kalay and selected townspeople who could afford to pay 100,000 Kyats for an electricity meter box. Most ordinary people can only afford to use one light bulb, at approximately 200 Kyats per month. At the time of writing, a reported 50 prisoners were still being used for maintenance of the dam. (CHRO & NLD-LA, October 1995; KHRG report #96-06, "The Situation in North Western Burma," January 30th, 1996; FTUB, October 1997)

Robbery, extortion, arbitrary taxation

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.

Civilians from Kalay City Are Miserable Due to Extortion by the Authorities

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 8 December 2005, via *Human Rights Yearbook, Burma, 2005*, Human Rights Documentation Unit of the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma, (para 5.14)

In September 2005, local authorities in Kalay city, Sagaing Division charged residents 300,000 kyat each to apply for a home telephone line. After paying the charge, the local authorities announced in October that the number of applications exceeded the availability of lines. The process was relegated to a lottery that was determined by applicants’ relationship to the authorities or bribes of 500,000 kyat. By December 2005, however, only those applicants related to the authorities received the telephone line while those who had paid the 500,000 kyat bribe had still not received the telephone line.

Farmers forced to sell cotton

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

Five farmers of Pale Township, Sagaing Division were arrested by township authorities last week for not able to sell cotton harvests to the government on time. According to the government’s quota, the farmers have to sell 50 ‘visses’ per acre.

If they could not do so the authorities are threatening them with fines of 5000 kyats per acre. But, this year, the yield is very poor and some crops were destroyed by the late monsoon downpours and the gap between the government’s price and the black market price is so vast that many farmers complained that they would be unable to fulfil their quotas.

Then the five farmers were arrested and they were released three days later when their families paid the money to the authorities.

Farmers forced to sell rice in Tamu, Sagaing Division

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 14 January 2003

The local authorities at Tamu, Sagaing Division are forcing local farmers to sell rice to government rice buying centres on the 7th of this month even though most of the farmers

have lost their crops in floods last year. The farmers now have to find a way to sell rice to the government. DVB's Khin Maung Soe Minn reports:

Khin Maung Soe Minn : The farmers of the flooded paddy fields of Tamu Myoma A Kwin have to sell what they have in order to be able to sell rice quota, 12 'tins' (bags) per acre to the government. Some farmers have to sell their essential bulls and carts to buy rice from outside market and sell it to the government centre. It costs each farmer 1000 kyats per 'tin' and the government centres buy them at 400 kyats. Some farmers are even cheated by the government buyers by finding faults with the farmers' rice. There were some disputes between the farmers and the buyers and the farmers took back their rice, according to a local farmer.

Brick Tax for Pagoda in Wuntho Township

-- National League for Democracy via *Human Rights Yearbook, Burma, 2000* (para 5. 11)

In January 2000, a pagoda measuring 408 feet in height was to be built under the supervision of the District PDC on the hill near Taw-Shaw village, Wuntho township, Sagaing Division. The townships of Katha, Htechain, Pin-le-bu, Wuntho, Indaw, Banmauk and Kawlin in the district of Katha were ordered to make and sell 500,000 bricks each at 2 kyats per brick. (The market price is 6 kyats per brick) Each township suffers a loss of kyats 2,000,000 and the loss for the whole district (7 townships) is kyats 14,000,000.

In the township of Kawlin there are 2 large, 6 medium and 6 small brick-baking kilns. These kilns were forced to hire U Tin Nyein to act on behalf of all the owners of the brick baking kilns and to pay him:

2 Large kilns - kyats 200,000 (kyats 100,000 per kiln)

6 medium kilns- kyats 180,000 (kyats 30,000 per kiln)

6 small kilns - kyats 90,000 (kyats 15,000 per kiln)

See Appendix #3, #4

Registration fees for registered farmers in De-pe-yin Township

-- National League for Democracy via *Human Rights Yearbook, Burma, 2000* (para 5. 11)

As of June 2000, under instructions from the township authorities of Sagaing Division, the village authorities in De-pe-yin township demanded registration fees of 200 kyats per acre from the farmers in the entire township. These farmers are already registered as tenant-farmers having inherited the right from their ancestors who were "first-come" farmers and farming is a family business. Of the 200 kyats collected, 100 kyats was for

the Divisional authorities, 50 kyats for the township authorities, and the balance 50 kyats was for the Township Land Records Department. Some village authorities demanded 250 kyats to 500 kyats per acre from the farmers. In the De-pe-yin township there are five buying centers for agricultural products. Each center has an average of 50 thousand acres within its jurisdiction. The money for the entire township amounted to about five hundred lakhs calculated at one hundred lakhs per buying center. Other townships in the division made similar demands.

SPDC Taxes in Naga Hill land area

-- *Inside Burma via Human Rights Yearbook, Burma, 2000* (para 5. 11)

In 2000, SPDC forcibly collected various tax in Na Ga hill land, Sagaing Division. They taxed 5000 kyats per buffalo and cow, 2000 kyats per pig, 200 kyats per dog, 200 kyats for radio and cassette, 100 kyats for rice mill and 300 kyats for one acre land. In addition any villager from villages in the Na Ga hill land area must get a pass from SPDC troops of IB 50 before they can leave their village. The fee for the pass for one person is 1000 kyats. (Source: Inside Burma) See **Appendix #5**

Extortion for a Fire Engine in Wuntho Township

-- National League for Democracy via *Human Rights Yearbook, Burma, 1999-2000* (para 6.13)

In early 1999 U Than Tun, the previous Chairman of the PDC in Wuntho Township, Sagaing division, demanded 300 *kyat* from about ten thousand households to purchase a fire engine. However, the fire engine was never bought, nor the money accounted for. The new chairman, U Khin Maung Swe then claimed that money collected from the people was in fact not collected, as there was no fire engine or evidence of the collected money. He then proceeded to collect 100 *kyat* from each household in order to repair an old fire engine that was donated from Katha Township.

Extortion in Myaung Township

-- National League for Democracy via *Human Rights Yearbook, Burma, 1999-2000* (para 6.13)

The authorities have collected by force a total of approximately 5 million *kyat* at the rate of *kyat* 50 per acre from 50,000 acres of 85 villages in 52 village tracts in the Township. What they have done with the money no one knows. Those who do not own any land, and those who are in service have to pay an average of 100 *kyat* per household,

and traders or brokers have to pay 200 *kyat*. The Township authorities have issued orders threatening action against those who fail to make payment within the prescribed period.

Villagers in Haikhaw village, Sagaing Division Pay to get their Confiscated Land Back

-- Chin Human Rights Organization via *Human Rights Yearbook, Burma, 1999-2000* (para 6.13)

In 1999, Chin villagers, consisting of over 200 households from Haikhawl village, Sagaing Division, had to pay 50,000 *kyat* per household to make a request to the Falam District PDC to cultivate their land again. 6000 acres was confiscated by the military in 1997. The military tried to cultivate the land by using convicts labourers and soldiers, but due to their inexperience, the hardship, and malaria, they were not successful, and the land had been lying unused.

Compulsory (and frequently ruinous) cropping and marketing policies

Burmese farmers forced to grow summer paddy

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 2 January 2006

Regional authorities of Tamu District, Sagaing Division in northwest Burma, have been forcing local farmers to grow the unproductive dry season paddy, causing untold difficulties and miseries to the latter.

Tamu district is neither a 'dam-water-consuming' region nor a flatland area where water is easily available, and farmers have been finding it hard to grow rice plants even during the rainy seasons.

A local farmer told DVB that the authorities have been pressurising the residents to grow summer paddy despite obvious defects, and farmers are reluctant to follow the authorities' order because of the losses incurred on them by the useless forced labour.

"Currently, they (the authorities) are collecting the identity cards of the farmers. They are threatening to confiscate their paddy fields if they do not grow summer paddy, and take actions on them," said the farmer.

The farmers tried to explain that it would be futile and wasteful to grow summer paddy on the land, which is very poor nutrient-wise, without sufficient supplies of water and fertilisers, but the authorities would not listen to their reasoning.

Burmese farmers detained for not growing summer rice

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 30 May 2005

Four farmers from Kalemmyo Township in Sagaing Division near the Indian border were arrested and detained by the local Burmese authorities for refusing to grow summer paddy.

They are U Than Win, U Tin Win and two other unknown farmers from Ashaysee Village and another farmer called Ko Nyan Win has gone into hiding to evade the arrest. The authorities ordered villagers from Ashaysee, Htoma, Letpanchaung and Htaukkyant to grow more than 1000 acres of summer paddy. The villagers from Ashaysee Villagers told the authorities that they would do so after reaping their yellow bean harvests. But the chairman of local authority U Aung Cho rejected their request and ordered them to destroy their harvests and grow the summer paddy.

The farmers were arrested on 22 March while preparing to grow the summer paddy after harvesting the bean harvests and they are being detained at Kalemmyo Prison, according to local residents.

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.

At nearby Sagaing Division, farmers have been forced to grow summer paddy which has low yield and the farmers have to grow them at a loss. The authorities are not providing them with basic needs such as fertilisers and they have to buy them in the black market. Traditionally farmers, grow sesame and beans during the dry season in their farms which provide them with extra cash to grow the wetland rice in the rainy season.

Farmers forced to sell cotton

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

Five farmers of Pale Township, Sagaing Division were arrested by township authorities last week for not able to sell cotton harvests to the government on time. According to the government's quota, the farmers have to sell 50 'visses' per acre.

If they could not do so the authorities are threatening them with fines of 5000 kyats per acre. But, this year, the yield is very poor and some crops were destroyed by the late monsoon downpours and the gap between the government's price and the black market price is so vast that many farmers complained that they would be unable to fulfil their quotas.

Then the five farmers were arrested and they were released three days later when their families paid the money to the authorities.

Farmers forced to sell rice in Tamu, Sagaing Division

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 14 January 2003

The local authorities at Tamu, Sagaing Division are forcing local farmers to sell rice to government rice buying centres on the 7th of this month even though most of the farmers have lost their crops in floods last year. The farmers now have to find a way to sell rice to the government. DVB's Khin Maung Soe Minn reports:

Khin Maung Soe Minn : The farmers of the flooded paddy fields of Tamu Myoma A Kwin have to sell what they have in order to be able to sell rice quota, 12 'tins' (bags) per acre to the government. Some farmers have to sell their essential bulls and carts to buy rice from outside market and sell it to the government centre. It costs each farmer 1000 kyats per 'tin' and the government centres buy them at 400 kyats. Some farmers are even cheated by the government buyers by finding faults with the farmers' rice. There were some disputes between the farmers and the buyers and the farmers took back their rice, according to a local farmer.

Forced Sale of Paddy in Pin-le-bu Township

-- National League for Democracy via *Human Rights Yearbook, Burma, 2000* Human Rights Documentation Unit of the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (para 5. 11)

In Pin-le-bu township, Sagaing Division, each cultivator has to sell 10 baskets of paddy per acre at the paddy buying centers where two condensed milk tin containers full of paddy is collected free from each of the sellers for the village administrative authorities in accordance with written instructions from U Aye Swe, chairman of the township authority. This adds up to about two and a half "pyi" per acre for which the cultivator is not paid.

At the No. 9 Paddy Purchasing Centre in Htan-taw-gyi administrative unit in Pin-le-bu township, the farmers were required to sell 12 to 13 baskets per acre as instructed, to donate 4 pyis per acre for the Divisional PDC, and to "donate" kyats per acre for the (alleged) construction of a road to connect the purchasing center to the town. In addition, deductions for dampness were 4 per 100 baskets. (Opposed to the usual 2 baskets per 100 baskets) The paddy canter officials consistently judged the grain as inferior and further reductions were made for dust and stones. Nga Sein farmers group lost 1 and ½ baskets per 100 in this way and Eimahta group lost 3 per 100. Only after the required full amount was supplied and the above reductions and deductions made was the stamp of approval affixed. Due to heavy rains at the time of harvest this year, the cultivators were very stressed out in fulfilling the required products for sale. They did not receive full payment for the produce they were forced to sell and had to accept lying down all the exploitations by the authorities.

Forced sale of sugar cane and paddy to the army in Bahmo District

-- National League for Democracy via *Human Rights Yearbook, Burma, 2000* (para 5. 11)

The authorities ordered farmers and cultivators of sugarcane in the townships of Bahmo, Shwegu, Moemaik, and Mansi in the Bahmo district, Sagaing division, to supply two million viss of boiled sugar cane juice to the sugar factory owned and installed by the north military command in the town of Bahmo. Sugar manufactured at this mill is for the annual consumption of the army. Orders were issued by the military commander through the township authorities that every cultivator of sugarcane must (without fail) supply 4 barrels (holding 100 viss each) of this cooked sugar cane juice. In Shwegu township, the authorities issued orders that if the full quota of six hundred thousand viss was not fulfilled severe action would be taken by way of example to others. The threat was that unauthorized disposal of boiled sugarcane juice would result in confiscation of the transporting vehicles and the juice. The current price of this product was kyats 102 per viss but the cultivators received much less according to the arbitrary decision of the military authorities and the losses they suffered were great. For every acre of paddy cultivated land in the year 2000, the cultivator was required to sell 12 baskets to the Agriculture Trade Department, 1 basket to the PDC and 3 baskets to the army. A total of 16 baskets for every acre cultivated is defined as "service paddy". The authorities threatened severe penalties for failure to fulfil this service. The total acres under cultivation in the township is approximately 40 thousand. Payment for "service paddy" was only kyats 350/- while the open market price was kyats 800/-. The cultivator therefore lost kyats 450/- per basket. In Shwegu township, the "service paddy" totaled 40000 x 16 which resulted in a total loss of about kyats 288 lakhs. (Source: NLD

Situation for Rice Cultivators in Kawlin Township

-- National League for Democracy via *Human Rights Yearbook, Burma, 1999-2000* (para

6.13)

The 1999 paddy crop in Kawlin Township, Sagaing Division had to be sold at *kyat* 350 per basket calculated at 10 baskets per acre. An additional cupful (measured in one condensed milk tin) had to be given free for every basket. Kawlin Township harvested 60,000 acres, so over 600,000 baskets of paddy had to be sold and a total of 4600 baskets had to be supplied gratuitously. Calculated at *kyat* 600 per basket (open market rate), the loss totals over *kyat* 2,760,000.

Situation for Wheat Farmers in Myaung, Sagaing Division

-- National League for Democracy via *Human Rights Yearbook, Burma, 1999-2000* (para 6.13)

In 1999, wheat farmers in Myaung, Sagaing Division were ordered (by authorities who claimed that they were acting under instructions of the area military commander) for the 3rd year in a row to cultivate 5000 acres of cotton instead of wheat. This crop is significantly less productive than wheat, with losses of up to 40,000 *kyat* per acre.

Discrimination

Religious discrimination against Nagas

-- *Carrying the Cross* (extract), Christian Solidarity Worldwide, February 2007

The majority of Naga people are Christian, and are in Sagaing Division. They are estimated to number at least 20,000. Like the Chin, they face serious religious persecution because of their faith as well as their ethnicity.

In 2003, over 1,000 Christian Nagas fled Burma into India. They claimed they had faced persecution by the military regime and Buddhist monks. The Nagas, who mostly came from eight villages in Sagaing Division, crossed into Nagaland in north-east India. The Reverend Zhabu Terhaja, General Secretary of the Nagaland Baptist Church Council, said:

*"Buddhist monks aided by Myanmar soldiers have been forcing the Christian Nagas residing in that country to convert to Buddhism."*p142

A 21-year-old Naga woman who fled to India described being taken for forced labour by the Burma Army, and being forced to convert to Buddhism as well:

"The imposition of Buddhism upon the Naga villagers went like this: the Burmese Army, when occupying a village, would bring a few Buddhist monks along. Those monks,

heavily armed under their saffron robes, would stay behind after the military left and would convert our churches into Buddhist monasteries. The villagers would then be required to report everything to them, especially when strangers or visitors from another village or tribe would visit.” p38

Forced Conversion on Naga Nationals by the Soldiers of Lord Buddha?

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 11 January 2003

The Naga ethnic nationals in Leshi Township, Upper Sagaing Division who are traditionally animists are forced to convert to Buddhism by the order of the SPDC's IB 228. During last month, more than 100 Nagas were forced to become Buddhists during a ceremony. DVB's Khin Maung Soe Minn reports:

Khin Maung Soe Minn : On the 20th of December, a conversion ceremony organised by soldiers of IB 228 was held at Khunthet Village's Buddhist Monastery for some Naga villagers who were rounded up from several villages. U Saw Ra, the exiled leader of the Naga NLD expressed his views on the forced conversion as follows: "Don't we regard the spirit worshippers as one of the religious groups? They practise what they believe and now they are forcing them to become Buddhists and Christians and the like. They are just using the religion for their own gains and it has no meaning in it. It is one thing to convert to another religion if you believe in it and if you force them to convert, they will have no faith in it either."

Pagoda being built with funds from Christian community

-- *Khonumthung News*, 12 May, 2006

A Buddhist pagoda is under construction by the town authority in Kalay Myo with funds collected from the Christian community.

According to reports, Buddhists are building a pagoda in Chikhung hills in Sagaing division. Construction of the pagoda started since August 2005 following the order of the divisional officer of State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), Lieutenant Colonel Aung Moo Myint.

The pagoda in Chikhung hills is located about six miles from Kalay Myo of Sagaing division, upper Burma. The estimated cost of construction is Kyat 600 lakhs, which is to be collected from the Christian community.

The Kalay Myo Township Peace and Development Council (TPDC) Chairman, Social Development Society Ministry (SDSM) has opposed the move of the township authority.

The township authority suspended its collection in the town area, as the opposition from SDSM was rather strong. However, collection of funds for the construction of the pagoda is still in full swing in the villages.

Report also suggest that the Kalay TPDC's Chairman asked church leaders to a meeting in the township hall on January 21, 2006 which was attended by 210 church leaders.

Church authorities and Christians were requested again to pay the money for the construction of the pagoda. The churches leaders opposed the demand outright and threatened to report the matter to the Central State Peace and Development Council.

"Matters pertaining to religion should not be through collection but donation" was the stand of the church leaders.

Another report said that Lt. Colonel Aung Moo Myint issued an order to obtain permission from the divisional authority for construction of Christian, Muslim and Hindu shrines. The order was issued on 16 October 2005.

Religions restriction and persecution is often reported from Sagaing Division. Government restriction and termination of the construction of EC- Bethel Church, Tahan, Immanuel Baptist Church, Pinlong Baptist Church, Agape Assembly of God Church in Kalay Myo and Hmunlai Baptist Church of Hmunlai had been reported over the past years.

Food insecurity

Severe droughts in Burma leave people and animals at risk of hunger

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

Due to an unusually long spell of dry weather in central Burma Sagaing Division, local farmers are facing various difficulties, as they are unable to plough their fields or grow seedlings, and their animals are in danger of starving as traditional grazing pastures have shrunk.

In desperation, some farmers are scrambling for and fighting over animal feeds. At lower Sagaing Division, in Shwebo, Wetlet, Sagaing Monywa, Ayadaw, Butalin and surrounding townships, areas which usually receive regular rainfalls during the monsoon seasons, not many paddy fields have been cultivated due to the shortage of rains.

A local farmer from Shwebo Township told DVB that the weather is unusually hot this year and farmers have to feed their extremely thin animals with almost inedible tree leaves and branches.

Corns or maize grown for the purpose of making animal feeds did not survive the dry spell and died young. Other crops grown prior to the rainy season in expectation of the

rainfalls have also been destroyed and farmers are unable to make preparations for the cold season plantations.

At some areas, the local authorities have been forcing the farmers to grow wetland paddies on farms traditionally used for crops which only thrive on arid conditions. The brainless interfering of the authorities not only caused the harvests to fail, it leaves the farmers with nothing extra to survive on.

Meanwhile, in other regions of Burma, heavy monsoon downpours caused severe floods which destroyed crops and spawned diseases such as typhoid and dengue fever which killed mostly very young and old victims.

Nagas facing food shortages

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 8 September 2003

There have been shortages of food for more than a month in the villages of Layshee Township, Upper Sagaing Division which is mostly populated by the Naga people. The poor communication condition in the township and the meagre yield of rice during the raining season has caused the shortages, according to a villager who fled to the Indian border.

About 2000 villagers from more than 20 villages are facing starvation and most of them are said to be living on roots and fruits of the jungles.

Although the area is known to be harsh and barren, the local people have never faced such severe shortages of food before, added the villager. The local and military authorities and their members are also facing acute rice shortages.

Meanwhile, the villagers are trying to supply rice from Htamanthee village near Chindwin River to their villages.
