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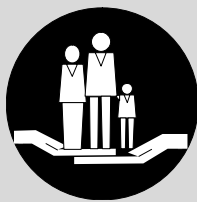
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**BURMA
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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE COMMITTEE FOR INTERNALLY DISPLACED KAREN PEOPLE (CIDKP)



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UN Security Council – act now!

The international watchdog, International Landmine Monitor has found in its latest report (2008) that the number of deaths caused by landmines in Burma has doubled. This is more than likely a conservative estimate as the report only counted those deaths that have been documented. It can be assumed, many more landmine victims - villagers and soldiers - have gone unrecorded.

Opposition armed groups in Burma also use landmines – this is a double-edged sword. If they don't use mines, it makes it easy for Burmese army soldiers to attack villages without warning, and if they do, international groups criticize them. Considering all the facts, no body in the right mind would want to destroy Burma with landmines, except it seems the military regime.

Most people are aware landmines have no friends. The impact they have on communities is long-term and destructive. Families lose members, and if victims survive, they are unable to work as before, placing a huge burden on villages.

Land that has been sown with mines is deadly. Villagers cannot use it for their crops; animals are at risk. Furthermore, if it is not de-mined, the land is left as a time bomb for future generations to reap.

Each year international groups and organizations compile hundreds of reports that document the crimes and atrocities committed by the Burmese military government against its own people. Forced labor, landmines, internally displaced people, poor health care, trafficking of drugs and people, institutional corruption, jailing of journalists, civilians and political opponents, environmental destruction, human rights abuses – the list is endless.

The US, EU and UN knows the Burmese regime is one of the worst dictatorships in the world. In spite of the documented crimes, the military government continues to ignore calls for change. It is obvious the Burmese generals think they are above the law, both Burmese and international. Unless the international courts at least try to bring the generals to justice, they will continue to flaunt their illegal power and to abuse the people of Burma.

The future effects landmines have on communities can be witnessed in Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia where people are still being killed or maimed long after the conflicts are over. To allow Burma's military government to continue its war on the people is unacceptable. The Burmese people need strong action now from the United Nations Security Council. Anything less is unforgivable and unacceptable.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

If you want to find out how you can help internally displaced Karen people: email kidpc@cscoms.com, blacktownhacket@hotmail.com or write to CIDKP, PO Box 22, Mae Sot, Tak 63110, Thailand.



Understand us...

Newly elected Karen National Union general secretary, Zipporah Sein, says that the international community needs to understand that how the Karen army uses landmines is vastly different from the way the Burmese military regime uses them.

“It is necessary for us to use them as we are not strong enough to defend Karen villagers from Burmese army attacks. As many as 200,000, of our people have been forced from their homes in recent years. We cannot stand back and do nothing.”

Zipporah Sein says the international community needs to do more to stop the regime ransacking villages and killing.

“The United Nation’s record in effecting change in Burma is woeful. They [the international community] need to understand we only use landmines to protect and defend our people.”

Meanwhile, Zipporah Sein says the KNU has taken responsibility by informing villagers where mines are laid.

“We run education programs to warn villagers of the risks and our soldiers de-mine areas where the Burmese army have planted mines and booby traps. We try to prevent villagers getting caught in

the middle. Our homemade mines are only useable for a short time - the materials we make them with becomes harmless in time.”

Zipporah Sein listed the KNU’s six- point landmine policy for *Inside News* (see box).

Zipporah Sein told *Inside News* it is crucial that the international community increases pressure on the military regime to stop using landmines, release all political prisoners and stop their campaigns of terror on civilians.

“We don’t target civilians, but they do. Our people are forced from their homes, they can’t go back because of Burmese mines. They can’t farm their lands because of mines, their children can’t use villages paths because of mines. The international community should take into consideration that the Burmese have factories producing hundreds of thousands of mines – we don’t.”

Zipporah Sein is pleased she is the KNU’s first woman leader.

“It’s a big challenge. Especially when the [Burmese] regime is positioning itself for elections in 2010. It’s no coincidence that they [the regime] are now jailing more political activists and opponents.”

Zipporah Sein says it is important that all political opposition groups prepare themselves to fight a coordinated campaign against the regime.

“We all suffer the same and fight for the same goals, we need to work together. The KNU supports an ethnic alliance and now its more important than ever before that we are united.”

KNU LANDMINE POLICY

1. We use landmines to defend our people, our land and our base camps.
2. Our landmines are small, handmade of plastic pipe or bamboo, they only have a six- month lifespan.
3. If the enemy attack, we use, when they retreat we remove them.
4. If we put landmines in, we inform villagers where they are.
5. Our landmines are small, they are designed to wound, slow the enemy and to delay their troop movements.
6. We don’t want to use mines, but because of our situation - our army is small - we use them with restriction.’



Photo:BPHWT

Mine incidents rise

While the rest of the world has seen a sharp decrease in landmine injuries and deaths, the situation in Burma is getting worse. According to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), the amount of people injured and killed from landmines in Burma has doubled from 2006 to 2007. In addition, the Free Burma Rangers say the Burmese SPDC has introduced a new type of landmine in order to control more and more of Karen State. Bee Jay, a Danish consultant for the Committee of Internally Displaced Karen People's (CIDKP) Mine Risk Education program, says that CIDKP has recently completed a detailed mine victims survey in Karen State. "While our database does not show as strong an increase in mine accidents as the ICBL data, it

definitely tells us that the mine problems are not decreasing."

Bee Jay says the majority of mine victims in Karen State, are civilians, not soldiers. "Accidents happen when hungry Karen IDP's are struggling to find food."

Bee Jay says that each of the 230 mine victims registered in Karen State and Tenasserim Division by CIDKP and the Karen Department for Health and Welfare (KDHW) have had their accident documented.

"Only 16 percent of the recent victims were people involved in military activity when the explosion happened. The most dangerous activity, relayed by 36 percent of the victims, was their effort to get food – either by collecting food, hunting, farming or fishing. The data also shows that if you include housework, which

is often connected to food preparation, almost half of the victims were involved in this kind of activity.

The survey says the second most dangerous activity was traveling. Portering – including forced portering - for long distances, in areas that people did not know - was the cause of 22 percent of the victims' accidents.

Bee Jay says that in the past, it has been countries like Cambodia, Angola, Sudan and Mozambique that were the most affected by landmines.

"These all had very severe civil wars, but, with peace, demining has occurred and this has produced positive results in these countries. It is the brutal war within Burma that has put it in the list of top countries around the world impacted by landmines."

According to ICBL, only Afghanistan and Colombia have had more mine accidents than Burma.

Bee Jay, says "IDP's have to struggle not only to avoid the mines that the Burmese army increasingly use to control civilian populations in Karen State, they also have to avoid the mines that are laid out to protect IDP camps and villages from invasion by the Karen army.

"Mine Risk Education is one of the methods being used to reduce both kinds of accidents. Today, 16 Mine MRE teams work in four different states in Burma, and are trained by a Danish NGO. They definitely save lives and limbs with their voluntary education programs in their home areas. Without their efforts, the statistics would look even grimmer".

Landmine deaths double

Landmine Monitor's 2008 report found recorded deaths in Burma from landmines more than doubled in a year, as both the military regime and opposition groups continue to use the lethal weapons.

The report found that 47 people in Burma were killed by mines in 2007, compared to 20 deaths in 2006, while 338 people were injured — 115 more than a year earlier.

Yeshua Moser-Puangsuwan, research coordinator with the international watchdog Landmine Monitor said Burma was one of the only countries in the world where the state was consistently “using them on a widespread basis.”

“Globally there are very few governments using this weapon any longer — that is not the case in Myanmar,”.

Moser-Puangsuwan stressed that the hike in deaths could be the result of better reporting rather than increased use of mines, but said the figure did not

cover military casualties.

“This is basically a civilian figure. The figure is certainly higher,” he said, speaking to journalists in Bangkok. According to reports by human rights groups, Burma's military regime has increased its offensives against villagers in conflict areas. The human rights groups have documented widespread abuses against civilians by the Burmese army including torture, forced labour, killings, arbitrary arrest and the burning of villages.

New York based Human Rights Watch accused the Burmese army of planting mines around rice fields and paths in and out of villages in an attempt to restrict the harvesting of crops, effectively starving civilians off their land.

Moser-Puangsuwan said Landmine Monitor had also received disturbing reports of prisoners being forced to clear landmines.



You might wonder how the combination of a pizza-oven, a huge supply of women's stockings, some fine beach sand and a vacuum-sucking machine delivered to a bamboo hut in the middle of the jungle may help Karen mine victims to walk.

However, this is how a Karen state prosthetic clinic will develop in 2009 by using a method called CIR. This workshop will be more advanced than any other NGO prosthetic workshop in and around Burma. The funding will come from the Spanish government's department for development (AECID) and will provide three months training for staff to make it possible.

What will this mean for the future?

A mine victim with a healed leg stump can arrive in the morning and ask for a prosthesis - and on the same afternoon will walk away with the a finished artificial leg.

The CIR system uses the material polypropylene, which makes it possible for the mine victim, a month after they return to their village, to adjust their prosthesis if the leg stump changes in texture – which most leg stumps do.

The CIR sand casting method was invented in the US. It was developed especially for third world countries where methods must be simple, cheap, fast but still up-to-date. The CIR has already had success in Africa and India. The idea is to make a precise copy of the mine victim's leg stump in sand, and then mold the prosthesis on to it.

It can it be copied in sand? skeptics may ask, judging sand to be too flowing to mold anything on to. Yet, if you take very fine sand, put it in a plastic bag and

Pizza-oven helps mine victims walk

then suck the air out of it, it will be as hard as concrete.

The pizza-oven is not for food, but to soften the polypropylene material, that will mold the prosthesis on the vacuum-hard sand. While the women's stocking will never be used to look smart, but rather to isolate the sand-copy from “gluing” together during production of the prosthesis.

If the first clinic succeeds in northern Karen State, there is a plan to form one more, further south in Karen State, still in KNU controlled areas.

Sadly, Karen mine victims seem to have less and less possibilities

to get prosthesis, when they leave Karen State. Thailand is today more restrictive, and is reluctant to accept more refugees. Also, according to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, it has become more difficult for mine victims to get assistance from the few prosthetic clinics in SPDC areas.

The solution is therefore to make the prosthesis clinic right there in the jungle, where the mine victims are living in Karen State. And if at the same time you can get a clinic that uses the most modern method – why not?



Worried about mines, but who will feed us?

Karen villagers driven from their homes by the Burmese army are caught in a hard place. Classified by international aid groups as internally displaced people, they are refugees in their own country. There's not much relief coming their way. Shelter against the harsh elements is often basic, the food that they gather comes from the jungles and rivers, and education is rudimentary, as children and teachers make do with what they can.

People outside of Burma try to get aid and help to these people, and often it comes in the form of education. Recently, CIDKP sent Mine Risk Education teams into Burma to help villagers assess the dangers of hunting and foraging for food. It's all done with good and worthy intentions, but villagers can't be blamed when they ask the team 'if we can't hunt, who will feed us?'.

Lah Soe, a MRE team member told *Inside News* a villager didn't pull punches when he said.

"Yes, it is very nice you come and teach us how to avoid accidents in your talk [Mine Risk Education], but we are hungry! Can't you help us first to get food?" This particular villager was suffering and the CIDKP's Emergency Relief Assistance fund had little money to help deliver food.

Lah Soe says the villager was right. It simply doesn't work if you *only* tell villagers how to avoid future mines or tell them to restrict their travel. What do they do if they desperately need a meal or



are seriously ill from malaria and need a medic urgently?

Lah Soe says one solution to help the villagers is for the ERA and MRE teams to travel together to deliver food and mine risk knowledge. This also cuts down on the time villagers have to give up from farming to listen to 'outside experts'.

Lah Soe says the same currently happens in Karenni State, where the Karenni Social Welfare and Development Centre (KSWDC) and MRE teams work together.

Also, in Tenasserim Division, the Karen Department for Health and Welfare (KDHW) and MRE teams cooperate with the Back Pack Health Worker Teams, who register mine victims and take care of them.

Lah Soe says that MRE, by working together with ERA and other health teams, has gotten a positive response from villagers. He says that the numbers of villagers now attending mine risk education programs has jumped by a massive 60 percent in a year.

How to help _ _



Saw Eh Noe, 37, is the Back Pack Health Worker Team (BPHWT) medic in charge of Pa-An District in Karen State. Twice a year, the medics go into villages in the area to administer treatment to the ill, provide health education to villagers and give first aid treatment for landmine injuries.

Saw Eh Noe, during his last trip in August 2008, treated a landmine victim who had stepped on a Burmese army landmine. “During our trip, when we stopped at Nya Baw Di Khi village in Hlaingbwe Township, there was a Karen soldier who had stepped on a landmine and I was called to go and treat him. When I arrived to where the victim was, he had already lost much of his blood. If the blood loss couldn’t be stopped in a couple hours, he would die. So I hurried to stop the bleeding and gave him some other necessary first aid treatment. I then sent him to the closest clinic.”

In Burma, many civilians and soldiers have lost eyes, hands and legs because of landmines. Many have died from blood loss and from not being treated in time.

Medic Saw Eh Noe says: “many landmine victims would like to come to us for treatment since it is free of cost, but they are prohibited by the DKBA. So, many of them have to go to a Burmese hospital to get treatment and have to pay all the medical expenses.”

Saw Eh Noe said that it is good for villagers to know how to help a landmine victim. This can be done by administering first aid when there is no doctor. It can take days to get proper treatment in Karen State. He suggests the following information is essential to making a difference and saving someone’s life:

- When a person has stepped on a landmine, it is more than likely that there are more mines in the area.
- Be careful when getting to the victim as it can risk other lives, including your own.
- Try to find someone who has first aid experience.
- Check the breathing. If the victim cannot breathe, clean his/her respiratory tract, i.e. clean out blood or anything blocking the

__when there's no doctor

airway, mouth or throat. This has to be done first as a victim can die within four or five minutes without air. Examine the victim for air movement.

- Keep the wound at a higher position than the heart.
- Look for the bleeding point and then try to stop the bleeding immediately, if you have nothing, tear and use your clothes.
- Press the main artery with your hand to stop bleeding. There are three main arteries; in the leg, it is at the upper thigh; in the hand/arm, it is at the armpit; and, in the upper body it is at the throat.
- Clean out dust and leaves from the wound. Get a piece of cloth and put it on the wound. Wrap the wound to stop the bleeding.
- Always check the pulse to see if it is too fast, too slow or has stopped.

- Always check the temperature of the victim. He/she cannot get too cold, so keep them warm.
- Send the victim to a village where there may be a medic. If you cannot carry the victim, look for other people to help. Do it quickly.
- Check blood circulation and breathing often. Give limited food and fluids.
- Get the victim to a hospital and or a doctor as soon as possible.

These points are a basic guide to saving a landmine victim's life when there is no doctor. Saw Eh Noe is an experienced medic who has been working with the Back Pack Health Worker Team for more than four years. He says: "landmine victims often die of a treatable injury caused by bleeding because people don't know how to handle it without a doctor."

Saw Eh Noe says he has faced many difficulties in his work but says he is determined to continue doing it in the future.



Photo: BPHWT

Ranger's deliver aid

Saw P'Deh Thoo, 32, is from T'Ka Kee village, Kyain Township in Dooplaya District, started working with the Free Burma Rangers (FBR) almost eight years ago in communications. The Free Burma Rangers are a humanitarian organisation who deliver aid to displaced people inside eastern Burma.

target villagers”

Saw P'Deh Thoo says most of the landmines used in Taungoo are MP14's that result in leg injuries, but he adds that a new landmine is being used. He doesn't know who is making it or supplying the Burmese army with it.

“On the 19 December, 2008, while providing humanitarian

District stepped on landmines in 2008. He said fortunately no one from FBR's team had done so this year.

“There were two women and five men who stepped on landmines. Our workers were lucky in 2008, there were no landmine incidents. Where as in the past year, some of our workers stepped on landmines, and were also arrested or killed by the Burmese army.”

Saw P'Deh Thoo says in some circumstances, there is a positive side to using landmines, he explains.

“Karen soldiers do not have enough equipment or soldiers to fight the enemy. They put landmines down so they can hear the enemy attacking and they can warn the villagers. If their enemy retreats they demine and let the villagers know it's safe. Because Karen soldiers do it in this way, Karen villages are not easily attacked.”

Saw P'Deh Thoo says.

“Karen landmines are not as good or strong as SPDC landmines. Karen people don't have enough money to buy the landmines new like the SPDC and they create them themselves. The SPDC soldiers use an M14 landmine that is better and stronger than anything the Karen use. They use more of this kind of landmine because it is quick and easy for them to plant these.”

Saw P'Deh Thoo says that he is determined to continue his work even though he is aware of the danger. He says there is only one thing on his mind, to help the people.



Photo:FBR

“We not only do our own duties. If we go to help people in IDP areas, we help the villagers with as much as we can. If we see that the villagers or our members are sick or have stepped on a landmine, and if we don't have any doctors to help, we help them ourselves.”

Saw P'Deh Thoo says villagers face more landmines being planted by the Burmese army (SPDC).

“The SPDC use more landmines around villages, at the bottom of church ladders and also in villagers working areas. They deliberately

assistance at an IDP hiding place, we were shown a new landmine that the Burmese army is using against villagers in this area. We don't know who is making it and no one here has seen it before. It was found alongside the Kyauk Kyi - Hsaw Hta Road, near Muthey in Ler Doh Township. The Burmese army is placing these and other mines to block the movement of the villagers in this area.”

Saw P'Deh Thoo said that according to their report, seven villagers in Taungoo (Taw Oo)

[No place to call home]

Naw Lae Gay, 58, from Thay Kho Cher Der village in Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) district, Karen State says “I have had to escape from the Burmese army and flee from village to village since I was 10.”

By the time she was 30, the longest she was able to stay in one place was the five years she spent in Khaw Hta, but even that was short-lived.

“In 2000, troops came and attacked villages nearby so we fled again and stayed in Hokker in Mu Traw district for two years. In 2002, we moved again to Baw Gaw. We always have to run.”

Most villages are close to Burmese army camps.

“Every time we hear mortar fire we know they are coming close to us so we hurry to hide our things in the house and get ourselves ready to run.”

Naw Lae Gay says she is worried the army will catch her alive and torture her.

“Villagers are afraid the SPDC army troops will do bad things to you if they can catch you alive. I am older but if troops come I will run using my walking stick. I will not let them catch me alive. If they shoot me dead, it is better than if they get me alive”.

Living like this makes it difficult for Karen villagers to have a normal life. Many people are displaced

because of the army operations and can’t work on their farms. Naw Lae Gay says, “After the harvest this year we only got 15 sacks of paddy. It will be only 10 tins and there are four members in our family, each person eats one tin of rice a months. It is not enough.”

To buy enough rice for their families is often difficult for Karen villagers. Naw Lae Gay explains. “One tin of rice costs 10,000 kyats. We have no way to make money. For us to get 2,000 kyats we have to work carrying goods through mountain for four hours. To get one tin of rice we have to do that five times”



Landmines show no mercy

Saw Eh Wah, 43, the CIDKP district coordinator for Taungoo (Taw Oo) who helps get food and medical assistance to displaced people inside Karen state, says landmines make his work difficult.

“They don’t distinguish between who they blow up, good or bad. This delays our work and makes it dangerous to distribute food and medical assistance to the neediest villagers, as well as making it difficult for us to document the problems faced by Karen IDPs.”

Saw Eh Wah told *Inside News* that he and his colleagues always have to be alert and aware of landmines.

“We always have to be careful, especially where the Burmese army has operations and places where fighting has taken place. It is very dangerous for our staff.”

“It is frustrating when we don’t get to our distribution points quickly. Our [Karen] people need help and we want to provide them with it as quick as we can. If there are Burmese army operations or the danger of landmines, we have to wait or go around it to avoid the mines, and it takes us much longer to do our work.”

Where Saw Eh Wah and his people work, in Taungoo (Taw Oo) district, in eastern Pegu, has been heavily attacked since the Burmese army began their offensive in late 2006. The attacks, including the burning down of villages and the use of landmines, have caused major problems for the villagers in the area. Saw Eh Wah explains that the Burmese army plants landmines along the road, near farms or in and around abandoned villages. He says many villagers return to their villages after attacks to salvage



what they can. Saw Eh Wah told *Inside News* about of a girl from Shro Kho village, in Daw Pha Kho township, Taungoo (Taw Oo) district, which was burned down in April 2008. “The Burmese army planted landmines around her village. Villagers didn’t know that it was landmined. When the girl went back to collect some vegetables, she stepped on one and lost a leg.”

Saw Eh Wah worries that one of his workers will trod on a landmine far from medical help.

“During one of our trips, one of our colleagues stepped on a landmine. It was far from medical help. It was impossible for us to carry him. We tried to contact the local authority and villagers to help us transfer the patient to a clinic. It is hard to save lives in a jungle surrounded by mountains - that was my worst experience

with landmines.”

Saw Eh Wah said he relies on information from the local Karen for safe passage.

“If we are not sure about the danger, we contact the local authorities and ask for their guidance. We can’t just go in quickly to deliver assistance.”

Saw Eh Wah is angry when the aid trips are delayed because of Burmese army operations and the danger of landmines.

with landmines.”

Saw Eh Wah says even though they risk landmines when they work inside Karen State, it is worse for the villagers who have to risk their lives daily.

“We face the danger of landmines only when we go inside, but our Karen people face it everyday. They have to learn to live with it.”

Once were enemies



In a small concrete block house at the back of Mae Tao Clinic a group of men sit chatting. Some are former soldiers, others are farmers. Most are missing a limb or two. All are victims of landmines.

Mya Sein, a former Burmese army soldier, is being fitted for a new prosthetic leg. What is unusual about this scene is that the fitting is being done by a Karen medic. The Karen people have been at

war with the Burmese regime for the last 60 years. Yet in this quiet clinic workshop there is no animosity, only care.

Mya Sein explains, "When we were young we were never enemies, it was only when I did my compulsory army service that I fought, but now we're like brothers."

Maw Keh, who set up the prosthetics clinic, is a former Karen soldier and says it is not the

first time he has treated Burmese army soldiers.

"Our aim is to be humanitarian toward everyone."

Mya Sein had his left leg and arm blown off by a homemade landmine when he was fighting with the Burmese army against Chinese and Burmese communists in northern Shan State.

"In 1979, I stepped on a landmine and since 1980 I've been using a homemade leg, it's hopeless. Here [at the Clinic] I will get a new one that I can walk well with."

Mya Sein was in the army eight years and when he left he did not receive any pension.

"I got a job in the civil service, but in 1988 I was outspoken about the government and was transferred. I was then arrested and jailed under false charges of corruption - for stealing rice. It was untrue, there was more rice than there was supposed to be."

Mya Sein insists *Inside News* use his real name.

"Use my army ID, my prison number, my photo.

We're all dead men here, if they want to arrest me, let them come. One day it will be our turn. Meanwhile, it's important the outside [world] knows the truth of Burma."

Mya Sein complains the Burmese regime left him with nothing.

"We have sacrificed for the country, I now have nothing, they took my house, land and all my possessions. Now I don't even own a spoon and plate."

More attacks - - -

The Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), a breakaway group from the Karen National Union, and now a militia sponsored by the Burmese regime, has sped up their offensive in Pa-an District, Karen State.

The attacks started in October this year and villagers in the area say the DKBA are laying more landmines in the villages and on walkways. The soldiers are also forcing villagers to be human mine sweepers. Po Nga Kyat, 62, stepped on a landmine when forced to walk in front of DKBA soldiers. The soldiers dumped him in the jungle to bleed to death. Saw Di Kwe, second-in-command, Battalion 22, Brigade 7, of the Karen National Liberation Army said the use of villagers as land mine sweepers by the DKBA is on the increase.

“DKBA troops led by Bo Young Ni forced Po Nga Kyat to go in front of them as a guide. He stepped on a landmine when he reached the eastern part of Pha Kay Kwi village near a path at the bottom of a mountain range. After he stepped on the landmine, the DKBA soldiers abandoned him to die.”

On the same day, Saw Pha Du, 48 a villager from Ta Kre Ni village in Hlaing Bwe Township, Pa-an District was also forced to walk in front of a DKBA troop. He stepped on a landmine and died on the way to hospital.

Saw Di Kwe says, “Saw Pha Du was forced at a gun point by Saw Maung La Wah from DKBA Brigade 999, Battalion 2 to walk them into a landmine area and he stepped on a landmine.”

As a result of increased military activity, there are more landmines being used by both sides in the conflict. However, Saw Di Kwe argues that the KNLA only use mines to target their enemy and not against civilians, as the DKBA and Burmese army do.

“We use more landmines only when we hear our enemy is preparing to attack, when they retreat, we remove our landmines. Furthermore, we document our landmines areas in maps and inform villagers where they are. Unlike our enemies, we do not use them on paths or places where villagers usually are.”

Maung Kyaw, 35, a villager from Hti Per Khee



village, said DKBA soldiers planted landmines near villages, paths and on villagers' farms. He says, not only are people at risk, but also their animals.

Maung Kyaw's brother-in-law, Saw Pha Klai, 42 stepped on a landmine while he was looking for his pig near his former village, Hti Per Khee in Hlaingbwe Township, Pa-an district. The village was burned down on September 2008 and villagers were forced to relocate to Hti Per Wah village by the DKBA.

Maung Kyaw explained how the Saw Pha Klai's incident occurred: “After he moved to Hti Per Wah, he remember that his pig was left at his old village so he went back to look for it. On October 10, 2008

--- more landmines



at 7:20 in the morning, he stepped on a landmine near his burnt house and lost his left foot.”

In the same way, Saw Pha Nya Lu 30, a villager from Khaw Thoo Khi, Hlaingbwe Township in Pa-an district stepped on a DKBA landmine near his farm.

Saw Ka, a local KNLA officer, who witnessed the incident said: “Saw Pha Nya Lu was going to harvest rice on his farm. He stepped on a landmine on a path close to his field and lost his right foot.”

Commander Saw Di Kwe agrees that the impact of landmines is terrible, especially for civilians. He

explained that the only reason he used landmines was to defend and to protect villagers.

“If it is possible, we [KNLA] don’t want to use landmines. We use it only for defending our people and as security for ourselves. Since we are not strong and well equipped, we have no other choice. If we are not doing it in this way, our enemy will attack our villagers and take over our territory.”

Considering the increased attacks by the DKBA and Burmese army in Karen State, the use of landmines is not likely to stop in a near future. Meanwhile, villagers will continue to be victims of landmines.

Uncle Maw Keh offers hope to landmine victims

A queue of people missing legs or arms forms outside a small building in Mae Tao Clinic. ERAY JOHN reports for Inside News.

Uncle Maw Keh is in charge of the prosthetics department at Mae Tao Clinic. Maw Keh, 57, has been making artificial legs for land mine victims for 21 years. He now lives at the clinic with his family of five children and his wife.

Maw Keh has first hand knowledge of the damage landmines can do. When he was a soldier in 1986, operating out of the former KNLA headquarters of Mar Ner Plaw, he stepped on a landmine.

“After I got injured I went for treatment at Mae Sot Hospital. I met a Frenchman working with an NGO, Operation Handicap International (OHI). He told me about his work.”

Maw Keh says he was interested and very enthusiastic to learn more.

“I joined with him to learn about prosthetic work.” Maw Keh says there was a big need at the time for helping landmine victims.

“In 1984, when there was lot of fighting, many people were injured and could not get treatment as there was no help available.”

Maw Keh says because of his injury he started to learn more about prosthetics.

“OHI asked the permission of my KNLA leader if I could work with them and I helped set up a prosthetic clinic at Per He Lu village on the [Thai Burma] border.”

After the KNLA HQ at Mar New Plaw was over run by the Burmese army in 1998, Maw Keh moved to Mae La Poe Hta village. As the Clinic was always under threat from attacks from the Burmese army, in 2001, Maw Keh approached Dr. Cynthia Maung



Uncle Maw Keh continued from page 16....

if he could set up a prosthetic clinic at Mae Tao Clinic in Mae Sot.

Maw Keh started training people to build prosthetics in a small room. He says, “Our work will not be finished in the short term, we will be here for a long time and we need to plan.”

Maw Keh says it was hard in the beginning setting up a prosthetic clinic. “In the beginning we only had support from donations given by individuals. As our work got better we had two organization offer help. Help Without Frontiers (Italy), supported us so we could produce 200 prosthetics a year and Clear Path International (US) supported us with materials and training. USAid support our staff with small stipends.” Maw Keh says most patients come from Karen State and says people of all ethnicities and religions are welcome at the Prosthetic Clinic.

“There are many people who come here from different places and from different ethnic groups. We also treat soldiers from the SPDC [Burmese army]. Our aim is to be humanitarian toward everyone.”

Maw Keh says people who use their prosthetics are satisfied with the service.

“Most people come back and report how they feel after they get their prosthetic leg. Most people say, ‘we are very comfortable with our new leg, we feel we have the same energy as before and we can walk a long way’.”

Each month the clinic registers an average of about 20 prosthetic leg fits. The Clinic only has funding for 200 legs a year and Maw Keh says, “We also have to repair old prosthetic legs and help people as best we can.”

There are six staff working at Maw Keh’s prosthetic clinic. Mae Tao Clinic reported in 2007, that a prosthetic training course for new staff, for six people a year will be run.

Maw Keh has trained people from inside Burma, so that they can return to set up clinics.

“I am very pleased to work for my country. After I was injured, I thought what can I do for my nation? I now have this ability to help give prosthetic legs, so I am very proud to help. I will continue doing this for as long as I can. I am very pleased because people who come here get comfort from their prosthetic legs.”



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BURMA'S

Landmines defend and protect our villagers and our soldiers. But they are not a good thing. They should not be made anymore. I have a son who is with Free Burma Rangers and I worry and am scared for him so much. There are many people who have lost their eyes, arms, hands or legs because of landmines and I feel sorry for them. - Pa La Ku, KWO



Photo:BPHWT



I am scared. If someone said this way has landmines I wouldn't go. Landmines kill people but our people use them for fighting in the field. It is better to use them in a positive way.
Naw Ter Kaw Paw, medic

I don't see landmines as good. If we use more landmines, it will produce more danger for our villagers. It is not easy, we need landmines because we use them to protect our villagers. We don't have enough soldiers and weapons so we have to use landmines."
Saw Hay Doh Moo, IDP medic



“I’m scared...”

Landmines are very dangerous and can kill people, so we are afraid of them very much. But we Karen people have a weakness and don't have enough equipment, so we use landmines for our security. Saw Sunny, staff - General HQ KNLA



KILLING



Photo:BPHWT

If we don't use landmines it is not possible for us to do anything. We use them, but we always let the villagers know. But (SPDC) soldiers use landmines and they don't let the villagers know so landmines hurt many villagers.

Saw Soe Lay, villager



FIELDS

Landmines are my biggest fear. Landmines can kill and damage our bodies. Landmines can't talk and we can't see them easily. People feel sad after they are injured by a landmine. But people use it to protect our villagers and change our situation. - Saw Maung Zaw Min





Karen Ambulance!

Burma is a long way from medical help

Lucky to be alive...

Saw Maung Soe, 19, lives in Mae K'Naw village, in Pa Pun district, Karen state. He has five sisters and two brothers. He is a farmer. Mostly he stays in his village and is lucky, as he has never had to hide in the jungle from Burmese army attacks. However, the army comes into his village and orders the villagers to give them money.

On 23rd August 2008, Saw Maung Soe stepped on a landmine when he went into the jungle to get logs. He said, "The landmine was close to the river side. I was lucky I went with my friend Saw Maw Law and when the accident happened he knew what to do. He looked after me and took me to my home. When I arrived home my family immediately sent me to Mae Sot Hospital in Thailand and I got my first treatment there."

To get from Mae K'Naw village to Mae Sot Hospital takes six hours by truck. Saw Maung Soe says.

"When I arrived at the hospital they cut off my leg straight away. I was at the hospital for about 10 days and I got the best treatment and the best food. When my leg got a little better, I returned to my village and the treatment continued in my village." When he came home he was looked after by his family and his friends until his leg got better.

When his leg had healed to a dry stump, Saw Maw Soe came back to Mae Sot to Mae Tao Clinic to get a prosthetic leg. This time he didn't have enough money for the transportation and needed help and says,

"After I get the prosthetic leg I will return to my village. For a few years I will be restricted and will not be able to do everything or go everywhere, but I will try to relax and get strong."

Saw Maung Soe is featured on the front cover