



Situation Update

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Hpa-an Situation Update: Lu Pleh Township, 2012 to 2013

This Situation Update describes events occurring in Lu Pleh Township, Hpa-an District throughout 2012 and 2013, including development projects, stone mining, drug production and ongoing militarisation.

- *Villagers who lost their lands to governmentally instructed projects still await financial compensation.*
 - *Non-compliance with existing anti-drugs laws and regulations has resulted in a high presence of methamphetamine drugs that is controlled by the Border Guard Force (BGF) and other armed groups.*
 - *The villagers voiced their concern about the ongoing Tatmadaw's presence in the area.*
 - *The lack of development structures in the area has negative consequences on the education and work opportunities for the youth, who move to Bangkok in search of work.*
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Situation Update | Lu Pleh Township, Hpa-an District (2012-2013)

The following Situation Update was received by KHRG in November 2013. It was written by a community member in Hpa-an District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. It is presented below translated exactly as originally written, save for minor edits for clarity and security.¹ This report was received along with other information from Hpa-an District, including one interview, 164 photographs and 13 video clips.¹

In Klaw K'Tee village, Meh T'Moo village tract,² Lu Pleh Township, the [Burma] government has started to build a new town since 2011. In 2013, they will build a Government school and a hospital. In 2014, the Government has a plan to construct the road from Lu Pleh Town to Klaw K'Tee town. The Government's education department coordinator conducted a meeting in Klaw K'Tee town and stated that he would build a school that has grade 10 [the final year of high school in Burma]. They already built some of the [public] government buildings. They will pay the villagers who lost their lands because of the construction, but they have not done so yet.

In Lu Pleh Township, Meh T'Moo village tract, there are a lot of valuable white stones, so the company mines it in two places. The first place is at the confluence of Meh T'Moo River and Meh K'Loh River. The second place is at another place where there are a lot of stones, which is close to the confluence of the Paw Baw River and the Meh K'Taw River. They cannot mine during the monsoon season, but they can mine during the summer. It has been two years since

¹ In order to increase the transparency of KHRG methodology and more directly communicate the experiences and perspectives of villagers in eastern Burma, KHRG aims to make all field information received available on the KHRG website once it has been processed and translated, subject only to security considerations. For additional reports categorized by Type, Issue, Location and Year, please see the Related Readings component following each report on KHRG's redesigned Website.

² A village tract is an administrative unit of between five and 20 villages in a local area, often centred on a large village.

they started mining. The Paw Baw stone mine is located inside the mountain, so it does not damage the villagers' flat fields.

In Lu Pleh Township, they are selling drugs [methamphetamines]³ in the town. The people who sell the drugs belong to the BGF [Border Guard Force].⁴ The reason that the BGF sell the drug in Hpa-an District is because the Government does not follow [enforce] the [drug] policies completely. There are also many different armed groups, among which there are also people who do things secretly for their own benefits. There are also some people who connect themselves with the armed groups and act as one of them and sell the drugs, but are not members of the armed groups. Because there are many armed groups and many 'fake people' [who pretend to belong to an armed group] in Hpa-an District, there is also a lot of drug dealing. The most important reason [for the drug dealing] is that the country's rules and laws are not effective and enforcing.

Situation update

During 2012 to 2013 in Hpa-an District, Lu Pleh Township, the ceasefire agreement⁵ between the Burma government and the KNU [Karen National Union] made [the amount of] forced labour decrease, as it should be. However, the Tatmadaw camps are still remaining and they have not withdrawn yet.

Villagers' situation

During 2013, most of the villagers from Lu Pleh Township are flat field farmers and hill field farmers. There is also no other work for them, so most of the youth go to Bangkok to work. Some villagers send their children to school until they finish high school and some villagers until

³ The drug the community member is referring to is a tablet form of methamphetamine produced and sold in Karen areas, called *k'thee k'thay*, meaning "horse medicine" in the Karen language, or *yaba*, which means "crazy medicine" in Thai. First developed in East Asia during World War II to enhance soldiers' performance, methamphetamine has become increasingly popular in Thailand, Laos, Cambodia Vietnam, and in Burma where it is typically manufactured. See, "[Yaba, the 'crazy medicine of East Asia](#)," UNODC, May 2008 and "[Woman raped and killed in Pa'an District, October 2012](#)," KHRG, December 2012.

⁴ Border Guard Force (BGF) battalions of the Tatmadaw were established in 2010, and they are composed mostly of soldiers from former non-state armed groups, such as older constellations of the DKBA, which have formalised ceasefire agreements with the Burmese government and agreed to transform into battalions within the Tatmadaw. BGF battalions are assigned four digit battalion numbers, whereas regular Tatmadaw infantry or light infantry battalions are identified by two or three-digit battalion numbers. For more information, see "[DKBA officially becomes Border Guard Force](#)" *Democratic Voice of Burma*, August 2010, and, "Exploitation and recruitment under the DKBA in Pa'an District," KHRG, June 2009.

⁵ On January 12th 2012, a preliminary ceasefire agreement was signed between the KNU and Burma government in Hpa-an, Karen State. Negotiators from the two parties met for a 2nd round of talks on April 4th, where they signed a more detailed preliminary ceasefire plan, and held a 3rd round of negotiations on September 3rd and 4th 2012; see "[Preliminary Ceasefire Talks](#)," *Karen National Union*, April 4th 2012; "[KNU Delegations Departs for the Third Round Negotiation of Ceasefire with the Burmese Government](#)," *Karen National Union*, September 1st 2012. In 2013, the ceasefire process became a nationwide effort. On November 2nd, 17 ethnic armed groups signed a joint proposal for a nationwide ceasefire in Laiza, Kachin State; see "[Burma's armed ethnic groups sign nation-wide ceasefire pledge in Laiza](#)," *Kachin News*, November 5th 2013. Two days later in Myitkyina, Kachin State, the EAGs presented their proposal to a Burma government delegation, which then presented its own plan. The Government rejected the EAG's proposal for a multi-ethnic federal army, the EAGs requested more time to review, and both sides agreed to meet again; see "[Myanmar Peace Talks Fail to Nail Down Cease-Fire Agreement](#)," *Radio Free Asia*, November 5th 2013. On January 25th 2014, in Law Khee Lar, Karen State, 17 ethnic armed groups agreed to an updated proposal to be presented to the Burma government in Hpa-an in February 2014; see "[Ethnic armed groups sign 11-point nationwide ceasefire draft](#)," *Myanmar Freedom Daily*, January 26th 2014. For more information on the ceasefire and how it has affected local villagers, see "[Safeguarding human rights in a post-ceasefire eastern Burma](#)," KHRG, January 2012 and "[Steps towards peace: Local participation in the Karen ceasefire process](#)," KHRG, November 2012.

they graduate and get their university degree. After getting their degree, there are no jobs for them [in their own region], so they have to go to Bangkok to work.

Citizens' education

In some villages in Lu Pleh Township, the Burmese government built a school and hired teachers. Most of them [the schools] are primary school and middle schools. There are also KNU schools. There are also NGOs who support the schools.

Citizens' health care

Regarding health care in Lu Pleh Township, the Back Pack [Back Pack Health Workers' Team] health workers help the villagers. There are also clinics in some of the villages that are built by the Burmese government, but not in every village yet.

Citizen's economic situation

There is no economic planning in the Lu Pleh Township. Most of the villagers are farming flat fields or hill fields for income and they also sell their cows and buffalos. Most of them [the villagers] go to Bangkok to work.

Powerful groups

The powerful, armed groups in Lu Pleh Township are the Tatmadaw, the KNU, the BGF and the DKBA's [Democratic Karen Benevolent Army] *Kloh Htoo Lah*.⁶ The DKBA's *Kloh Htoo Lah* controls the area in Yaw Poh, Klu Htaung and the riverbank of the Salween River. The BGF controls the area in Hkaw Taw [Myaing Gyi Ngoo].

Conclusion

During 2012 and 2013, in Lu Pleh Township, the [number of] human rights abuses have decreased, as it should be. Therefore, in 2013 and 2014, the leaders in charge have allowed the villagers to cut trees to build their homes. Regarding the lands, the KNU's land department will measure the villagers' lands. They will also provide the land titles to the villagers.

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

- ["Incident Report: Two children injured from DKBA and BGF fighting in Hlaing Bwe, April 2013,"](#) (October 2013)
- ["Hpa-an Interview: Saw N--, June 2012,"](#) (October 2013)
- ["Civilian and Military Order Documents: November 2009 to July 2013,"](#) (October 2013)

⁶ The Klo Htoo Baw are DKBA forces in Hpa-an and Dooplaya Districts that refused to transform into Tatmadaw Border Guard battalions and which, in November 2010, began fighting Tatmadaw forces. They have been referred to as DKBA #907, Klo Htoo Baw (Golden Drum), and Brigade #5. Each of these terms refers to different configurations of DKBA units commanded by the brigadier general commonly known as Na Kha Mway, whose real name is Saw Lah Pwe. In September 2011, it was reported that the remaining DKBA forces were to be reconfigured into two tactical commands, Klo Htoo Wah and Klo Htoo Lah, and that Na Kha Mway would be the senior commander of these forces. In early November 2011, Brigade #5 signed a ceasefire agreement with the Burma government in which demands for its forces to transform into Border Guard units were removed, and the brigade has moved to re-establish its headquarters at Wah Lay, Kawkaik Township, Dooplaya District. See "[DKBA to accelerate military tactics](#)," *The Irrawaddy Magazine*, September 8th 2011; and "[DKBA Brigade 5 Reaches Ceasefire with Naypyidaw](#)," *The Irrawaddy Magazine*, November 4th 2011. For more on the origins of the current conflict and the transformation of DKBA troops into Border Guard battalions, see: "[Protection concerns expressed by civilians amidst conflict in Dooplaya and Pa'an districts](#)," KHRG, November 2010.

- [“Hpa-an Situation Update: T’Nay Hsah Township, April 2013.”](#) (October 2013)
- [“Pa’an Situation Update: June to August 2011”](#) (September 2013)

