



## Interview

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## Hpapun Interview: Daw A---, February 2013

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*This Interview with Daw A--- describes events occurring in Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District, during the period between January and February 2013, including a landmine explosion which wounded a villager's buffalo, arbitrary demands, explicit threats, and injuries to two villagers caused by a grenade.*

- *A Border Guard Force (BGF) Battalion #1014 soldier threatened a family with an M79 grenade launcher, demanding they provide a gallon of petrol for him. However, the family did not have a full gallon, the equivalent of eight bottles, and could provide only three bottles. The BGF soldier declined and pointed the M79 at the woman and her baby angrily and demanded they give him one gallon of petrol. As he placed down his M79, a grenade discharged accidentally and hit the woman and her baby.*
- *The victim reported the incident to the military court, and the BGF officer stated the BGF would compensate the victims with 250,000 kyat (US \$253.55) for the injury, although so far the victim has only received 100,000 kyat (US \$101.42). The BGF officer apologised to the villagers and requested the victim not to report the incident to any other organisation.*
- *A villager's buffalo stepped on a landmine in a sugarcane plantation. The BGF killed the buffalo in the morning the following day after meeting with the owner. There are also other landmines in the plantation, which were reportedly planted by the BGF. The villagers requested that the BGF remove them, but they dare not attempt this, as grass hides the location of many of the landmines.*
- *Daw A--- also describes issues arising from a dam project. The project had a video screening in the area in B--- village. Those from the project also provided a torch light to each house. According to the interviewee, she thought there is no benefit for the local people in the area.*

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## Interview | Daw A---, (female, 47), B--- village, Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District (January to February 2013)

*The following Interview was conducted by a community member trained by KHRG to monitor local human rights conditions. It was conducted in Hpapun District in February 2013 and is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.<sup>1</sup> This interview was received along with other information from Hpapun District, including 24 other interviews, 24 incident reports, one situation update, 226 photographs and 47 video clips.<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> KHRG trains community members in eastern Burma/Myanmar to document individual human rights abuses using a standardised reporting format; conduct interviews with other villagers; and write general updates on the situation in areas with which they are familiar. When conducting interviews, community members are trained to use loose question guidelines, but also to encourage interviewees to speak freely about recent events, raise issues that they consider to be important and share their opinions or perspectives on abuse and other local dynamics.

<sup>2</sup> In order to increase the transparency of KHRG methodology and more directly communicate the experiences and perspectives of villagers in eastern Burma/Myanmar, 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

**Ethnicity:** Karen  
**Religion:** Buddhist  
**Marital Status:** Married  
**Occupation:** Farming, logging and sugarcane plantation  
**Position:**

**What's your name?**

I am Daw A---

**How old are you?**

I am 47 years old.

**What ethnicity are you?**

I am Karen.

**How about religion?**

I am a Buddhist.

**How about your village?**

I live in B--- village.

**What do you do for your livelihood?**

I do logging, work on a sugarcane plantation and farming.

**How many children do you have?**

I have five children.

**How old is the eldest?**

The oldest is 22 years old.

**How about the youngest one?**

Four years old.

**Could you tell me how many houses are in your village?**

Currently, there are *[censored for security]*. People just move from place to place [are now internally displaced]. There are no people [not as many people live here, compared to a big village].

**Why do they have to move from place to place?**

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additional reports categorized by Type, Issue, Location and Year, please see the Related Readings component following each report on KHRG's Website.

Because they hear the sounds of scattered gunfire from different places and it is uncomfortable for them [villagers].

**Is there BGF [Border Guard Force]<sup>3</sup> in your village?**

Yes, there is.

**Including Burmese soldiers?**

They [the BGF] said there are Burmese deserters<sup>4</sup> that joined them.

**Did they [the BGF] say it like that?**

Yes, they did.

**Do they [the Burmese deserters] speak Karen?**

One or two [Burmese deserters] cannot speak Karen.

**The BGF said the Burmese are deserters and that they joined the BGF?**

Some [Burmese deserters] understand [Karen] but cannot speak it.<sup>5</sup>

**In B--- village, you said there are BGF. Do you feel that you are free in terms of working?**

No, not free. If it was free, we would be able to do sugarcane grinding. It is not free [in regards to working] and I had to abandon my sugarcane plantation. If we could do sugarcane grinding we could make 500 viss<sup>6</sup> packs of brown slab-sugar. [However] there are landmines and other explosives in the plantation.

**They have planted landmines in your sugarcane plantation?**

Yes, recently a buffalo was wounded [by a landmine] in the sugarcane plantation.

**Was it your buffalo that was wounded?**

Yes, my buffalo.

**Did they [the BGF] eat it [the buffalo]?**

Yes, they did. After the buffalo was hit by the landmine I thought that I would sell some buffalo meat, but they [BGF] ate it and I could not sell the meat.

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<sup>3</sup> 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/Myanmar government and agreed to transform into battalions within the Tatmadaw. BGF battalions are assigned four digit battalion numbers, whereas regular Tatmadaw infantry battalions are assigned two digit battalion numbers and 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.

<sup>4</sup> By the time of publication KHRG was unable to determine where these Burmese deserters had deserted from and why.

<sup>5</sup> The interviewee was still answering the previous question, giving further information on whether the deserters spoke Karen, while the researcher had moved on to another question.

<sup>6</sup> A viss is a unit of weight equivalent to 1.6 kg. or 3.52 lb.

**After the buffalo was wounded by the landmine, did the buffalo die immediately or did they shoot and kill it?**

[The buffalo] did not die immediately; they shot and killed it.

**Did you let them shoot and kill the buffalo, or did they decide to kill [the buffalo]?**

They were about to kill the buffalo when I saw them, and after they saw me, they asked me, “*What should we do?*”

I replied “[The buffalo] *is dying, do what you want.*”

**Male buffalo or female buffalo?**

Female buffalo.

**How much money were you going to make if you sold that female buffalo?**

[I could get] 500,000 [kyat] (US \$507.10),<sup>7</sup> for the buffalo and two other calves. You know the current market price [for buffalos]. It was a fat female buffalo.

**Did they pay you any money?**

No, they didn’t. I could sell only 12 viss (19.2 kg. / 42.24 lb.) [of meat]. I made 24,000 [kyat] (US \$24.34).

**Twelve viss of meat is the amount [of meat] that you could sell?**

Yes. I got 24,000 kyat [from selling the meat]; 2,000 kyat (US \$2.03) for one viss.

**Did they [BGF soldiers] pay for the meat they ate?**

No, they didn’t.

**Is the distance between the place they planted the landmines in your sugarcane plantation and your house far?**

It is about a two or three minute walk from my home.

**The eastern or western part of you sugarcane plantation?**

The eastern part at Hkoh Law River side. I talked [reported] about [the landmines] to the 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenant [from the KNU] because they [BGF] told us [about the location of the landmines] that they planted. But I did not know if they were telling the truth or not.

**While they were in your village, who lead them [BGF]?**

Now, the leader is called Ta Thoo.

**Is he there now?**

He just got back yesterday, when it was getting dark.

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<sup>7</sup> All conversion estimates for the Kyat in this report are based on the October 2<sup>nd</sup> 2014 official market rate of 986 kyat to the US \$1.

### **What is the real name of Ta Thoo?**

They call him Tha Beh.<sup>8</sup>

### **Is Tha Beh nice to you and other civilians?**

In the past he was not nice [to me]. [He was nicer to me] when my kid was hit by the gun and I went to court.

### **He was nicer after that?**

Yes, he was nicer after that.

### **So, you said your kid was hit by a gun; were you also hit?**

No, I was not hit. It hit my daughter and one of my grandchildren. I was at the sugarcane furnace.

### **How did they get hit by the gun?**

When my husband was moving our boat from the eastern side of the river, he was unfolding waterproof canvases from the boat to set it up. After that, he also went to the sugarcane stove. He [the BGF soldier who was also at the river] said, "*Ta, I will go too.*" [My husband responded], "*If you go, then go ahead.*" I was at the sugarcane furnace and I was walking. After the meal he [the BGF soldier] followed your brother<sup>9</sup> [to come back to my home] and when they had arrived home, he [the BGF soldier] asked "*Ta, can you give me one gallon of petrol?*" and [her husband replied] "*I have only three or four bottles of petrol.*" He said "*Ah, I want one gallon.*"<sup>10</sup> He [her husband] replied "*I don't have a full gallon.*" My daughter then said "*My father has told you it is not a full gallon; there are only three or four bottles of petrol.*" He [the BGF soldier] then picked up the M79<sup>11</sup> and he opened and loaded it, and said "*Should I shoot you in the head with this M79?*" My daughter replied "*You really want to shoot us and you don't understand that gunshots kill people?*" [sarcastically challenging the BGF soldier]. He opened and loaded the M79 and placed it on the ground pointing toward my daughter. When my daughter was standing, about to leave with one of her babies, while nursing him, the bullet<sup>12</sup> came out.

### **What is the name of the sergeant major that placed the gun facing [your daughter]?**

He is called Sergeant Major Hpah Day Day.

### **Is Hpah Day Day still there [in that battalion]?**

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<sup>8</sup> Saw Tha Beh is a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in Border Guard Force (BGF) Battalion #1014 in Hpapun District. KHRG has received multiple reports of Saw Tha Beh committing human rights abuses in Hpapun District, including forced labour, arbitrary taxation and violent abuse. For more information see: "[Violent abuse and forced labour in Hpapun District, November 2013 – January 2014](#)," KHRG, September 2014; "[Hpapun Incident Report: Forced labour and violent abuse in Bu Tho Township, January 2014](#)," KHRG, August 2014; "[Hpapun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, November 2013 to February 2014](#)," KHRG, August 2014; and "[Hpapun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, August to November 2013](#)," KHRG, December 2013.

<sup>9</sup> Here and throughout the interview, the interviewee refers to her husband as 'your brother'; this does not mean biological brother, but rather is a term of endearment used in S'gaw Karen.

<sup>10</sup> When recounting the words spoken by the BGF soldier, the interviewee appears to imply that the soldier was inebriated, by changing her intonation and slurring her words. The interviewee did not state this explicitly.

<sup>11</sup> The M79 grenade launcher is a single-shot, shoulder fired, break-action grenade launcher, which can fire rounds of various types. It is commonly used by infantry throughout the world.

<sup>12</sup> While the interviewee uses the S'gaw Karen term for 'bullet' an M79 is a grenade launcher, and can fire various types of grenade rounds, such as explosive, illumination, smoke, etc. It is unclear what type of round was fired from the weapon in this incident.

No, he is not [there].

**Did your grandchild get hit? Did he die?**

No, he did not [die].

**Did they take good care of you after you went to court?**

They said they would pay me 250,000 [kyat] (US \$253.55) for the medical treatment and I have received 100,000 [kyat] (US \$101.42) from them. They will pay another 100,000 [kyat] this month. It is now the beginning days in February.

**When did they get hit?**

They were hit on January 15<sup>th</sup>.

**In 2013?**

Yes.

**After they were injured did you go to the court immediately?**

I went [took them] to the hospital first.

**You sent your daughter to the hospital first, and you went to the court after that?**

Yes.

**What [BGF] battalion is that?**

It is Officer Maung Chit's battalion, #1014.

**How did you report the case [to them]?**

The baby was hit by a Klo<sup>13</sup> [M79] and people who come stay here [other villagers from the area] spread rumours, saying: "*The B--- village head has a walkie-talkie and a gun.*"

**They accused your husband [of having a walkie-talkie and a gun]?**

Yes. People who live on the other side of the river said that first. There are also some soldiers who love your brother [my husband].

Regarding whether the people's accusations were true or not, he [my husband] said: "*I am doing my work honestly and I have my dignity regarding that. You can search and explore, and if you find there is a [military use] walkie-talkie and a gun with me, I will cut my own throat. You don't need to do that. If you do you will be tired [by cutting my throat].*"

And not very long after, [the BGF] from B--- invited your brother and they asked him questions [about it]. They asked your brother: "*Hta Wah said you own a walkie-talkie and a gun*". He [my husband] said "*I don't own those.*"

He [her husband] continued: "*In the past, during peaceful times, one of my friends [who was in the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA)]<sup>14</sup> who lives in Ta Hkaw Poe [village] was very*

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<sup>13</sup> Klo is a Karen word for gun.

*friendly with me and I used to go hunting a lot [with that friend]. He trusted me and he let me use his gun [a G3 rifle]. When the BGF was split [from the DKBA], he [the soldier] was sent word to return them [the gun and walkie-talkie], and he returned them. He returned them a long time ago.”* In that complicated situation we worry [for our security].

I told you brother that I was worried for my daughter [and her baby] was injured, and I also have to worry about the accusations [against my husband]. Your brother said “*Do not go otherwise they [people] will say we make trouble by reporting [to the authorities] and you [his wife] also need to have sympathy for the front line people [the BGF leaders].*”

I replied to him “*No, I do not need to have sympathy, because for me there is nothing that can replace your life.*” Then I myself went to the military office to report it to them and they said to wait a couple days until the commander is back. After the commander got back he sent word for me to go and see him. I went there to see him and the officer told me “*Friend, do not report about this to other organisations, like the KNU, etc. We apologise to you for this and if you report it, the news will come out on the BBC and be published in the newspaper and that is not good.*” [After I returned from the office] I told this to your brother and your brother said “*We will not report it, investigate it yourself [meaning the BGF] and report it yourself [to other organisations].*”<sup>15</sup> I cannot remember all the words he [the officer] said.

**Do you know the name of the officer?**

No, I don't.

**Where is he from?**

He is from Pweh Kay village.

**Where does he live?**

He lives at the BGF *gon*.<sup>16</sup>

**What do people call it?**

I don't know. You should ask Saw W--- he knows. For me I cannot remember all.

**You just returned after you reported to him? Or did he give you money at the same time?**

He did not pay at the same time [as when I met him]. He said he will pay me but I haven't received [all of] it yet. I met him recently and he said he will pay me when he comes back again.

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<sup>14</sup> The Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA), formerly the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, was formed in December 1994 and was originally a breakaway group from the KNU/KNLA that signed a ceasefire agreement with the Burma/Myanmar government and directly cooperated at times with Tatmadaw forces. The formation of the DKBA was led by monk U Thuzana with the help and support of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), the name of the military government in Burma/Myanmar at that time. For more information on the formation of the DKBA, see "[Inside the DKBA](#)," KHRG, 1996. The DKBA now refers to a splinter group from those DKBA forces reformed as Tatmadaw Border Guard Forces, also remaining independent of the KNLA. As of April 2012, the DKBA changed its name from "Buddhist" to "Benevolent" to reflect its secularity.

<sup>15</sup> The BGF Commander told him not to report the incident. He then goes on to explain that he believes the BGF should investigate the incident and report it themselves to other organisations – they should take responsibility for what they did.

<sup>16</sup> A ‘*gon*’ refers to a camp which is situated on a gradient (hill) – in this instance the camp belongs to the BGF however the term ‘*gon*’ does not refer solely to BGF camps, it can refer to any type of camp located on a hill.

**So now he is living in B--- village and after the accident is he [BGF Battalion #1014 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Tha Beh] nicer to the villagers?**

Yes.

**Did his leaders punish him?**

No, he was not punished.

**Is he still there now?**

Now he is staying at the lower part [down river]. I requested that he [the soldier whose M79 discharged] come and see me but he didn't come and see me.

**He did not come?**

No, he did not come and see me. I just want to tell [discuss] the truth. I don't know if he is scared to see me or ashamed to see me.

**When they [BGF] live there [in the camp] do they demand things [from the camp] to eat?**

No, they do not demand things to eat. We also help them with boats and bamboo rafts [for transportation]. We thought [assumed] that it is ok for us if we can work freely even though we have to help [providing] them with boats or bamboo rafts [for transportation] and we do not complain even though they take it away for one or two days.

**Do they pay for using them?**

No, they don't.

**They do not pay for petrol either?**

Yes, they do sometimes. If we go with them they pay for petrol. If they go by themselves they just fill it themselves.

**They use it as their own boat?**

Yes, they use [the boat] and the boat engine, and sometimes they return it and it is not functioning, but we do not complain about that. We expect only for them to be peaceful and their [the BGF] work to go smoothly.

**Are there only [censored for security] houses in your village?**

Yes, there are only [censored for security] houses and they [the people who live in them] are my siblings.

**How about in the past? How many houses were in the village?**

There were 34 houses before the conflict.

**Now, where have the [people in those] houses gone?**

They moved to Hkaw Taw Poo Town.

**How long ago did they move to Hkaw Taw Poo?**

Some people moved one year ago and some people moved two years ago, at the time when the BGF was founded. The BGF have been founded for two years already now.

**They moved to Hkaw Taw Poo after the BGF was founded?**

Yes.

**So, you dare not go around your village as you want?**

No, I dare not.

**Why?**

When they [BGF] first came [in the village area], they announced that they have planted some landmines [in village area] and [since then] I dare not go around freely. People said “*You can avoid the wild elephant but you cannot avoid landmines,*” because you don’t know where they are [planted].

**So let’s go back to the case of your daughter and her baby. Did the [grenade launched from the] M79 explode?**

It did not explode.

**Did it [the grenade] hit her hand or leg?**

It hit her leg and she has not recovered [from her wound] yet.

**Left leg or right leg?**

Right leg.

**How about your grandchild?**

My grandchild got hit in his back. It occurred when he turned one year old. He was injured at his waist.

**Was he seriously injured?**

No, his wound was between his skin and muscle. He had to get two stitches in his muscle and four stitches on his skin.

**Which hospital did you take him to?**

[The hospital] in Hkaw Taw Poo. It is about politics [due to BGF involvement] and many people came and asked me [about how it happened] as they were interested to know.

**It was against the citizens and it was not the right [thing to do].**

Yes, it was not the right thing to do. I’ve been sick and I’ve went to the hospital but people [the media] did not come and interview me like that. Now, many [media members] come [for interviews] I don’t know where they are from, or from which organisation.

**Do they speak Karen?**

Yes, they do.

**Did people who cannot speak Karen come as well?**

Mostly, they speak Karen.

**Are they Karen or other ethnicities?**

They took photos as well when I was holding my grandson and my daughter's leg also.<sup>17</sup>

**When was your buffalo hit by the landmine? On what day? How many days ago?**

It has not been a long time. Just four days ago.

**When?**

What day is today?

**Today is [February] 8<sup>th</sup> [2013]. It must be on the 4<sup>th</sup> [of February]. Five days ago? [Including the day he conducted interview].**

On the fourth, in the evening, sometime after eight o'clock.

**So they [BGF] came and killed the buffalo the next day, on the 5<sup>th</sup>?**

Yes.

**This year, do you think you are free to conduct your livelihood activities?**

No, it is not free. There is hill side land which is free for farming but people [villagers] dare not do cultivation [as there are landmines planted] and they run away [move] one after another.

**Were they [the BGF] staying in the village, or outside the village when they were there?**

They built up their camp outside the village, on the highland, and there are also [BGF soldiers] in the village and in the monastery.

**Did they build their camp on villagers' plantations or land that belongs to others?**

On my older sister's land. My oldest brother's wife.

**What did they plant on their land?**

They planted betel nut trees and dog fruit<sup>18</sup> trees.

**Did they [BGF] buy that land?**

No, they didn't.

**They didn't buy [the land]? They just confiscated the land and built their camp on the land? Did they force villagers to go and build the camp for them?**

No they didn't. They brought people from the lower part<sup>19</sup> in order to build their camp.

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<sup>17</sup> The interviewee is answering the previous set of questions, pertaining to the individuals she perceived as being 'the media'. She did not answer this question regarding the other ethnicities.

<sup>18</sup> Dog fruit, also known as jengkol, is a bean containing sulphur and a mildly toxic amino acid. It is native to Southeast Asia and is commonly eaten with rice and fish paste.

**Are there any [BGF] groups that demanded forced labour?**

No. They demanded people from the lower part [from town] only.

**Are they still demanding forced labour now?**

In the past two or three days they cleared plantation land and they were carrying bamboo [to build their camp]. They bring people from the lower part [from town] for forced labour. They [BGF] said they hired them for labour.

**Have they finished building it?**

I do not live in the village, I moved to the other side of the river.

**Eastern part?**

Yes, it is in the eastern part. After my children and grandchildren got injured by the gun, they [her daughter] no longer wanted to live in the village, and I was also not happy to stay alone [at home in the village].

**So you also moved to the other side of the river as well?**

Yes, and now [on the other side of the river] there is a monk, a monastery and my oldest brother's house.

**How about the monk? Where does the monk get food?**

My brother takes care [of him] and we send [donate] him rice, oil and food.

**How does it feel because of that [incident]? What kind of thoughts do you have and how do you feel about it?**

It think it could be better if there is peace. Currently, sometimes I feel confused and living is not free. I don't like to live [in my area]. There are many villages in the lower and upper parts of my area but they are ok, it is only my village [where an incident occurred recently].

**How about the surrounding villages? Did they also move?**

There are no houses left in M--- [village].

**No houses left?**

No, not in the upper part of B--- [village tract], it is called M---.

**What is their [BGF] purpose for living there?**

I don't know what their plan is because I did not find out about that.

**How about the [Hatgyi] dam? Do you know anything about the dam?**

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<sup>19</sup> In this area of Bu Tho Township, when villagers use the term 'lower part', they are referring to the southern portion of the township, at the confluence of the Salween and Yuzalin rivers, which is more developed, and has a higher concentration of towns and villages. Conversely, 'upper part' refers to more remote areas further up river, which are sparsely populated.

In the past they said they will do it but now I don't know because I have not researched that and I don't know about it. I don't know if they will implement it or not, I am not sure.

**If the dam project is started, do you think you still can stay here?**

If the dam project is started, I don't think I can stay [in the village].

**Have you ever been in a dam discussion meeting?**

Yes, I have been there once.

**What did they say [in the meeting]?**

They said don't worry, it is going to be in the lower part [of the area]. For the upper part it will cause damage to how many villages [interviewee asking herself]? They mentioned it but I can't remember.

**You can't remember?**

No, I can't remember. They also showed a movie on the screen.

**What did the screen show?**

The dam and the Salween River's geographic location from the source. They showed a picture of the villages that will be flooded [if implemented]. They showed the area that is going to be flooded. They said it is ok for the lower part. They said it is ok but if they [start to build] it will become uncomfortable due to the soldiers.

**Have they built any shelters or buildings [for the workers]?**

No, not yet. Last year they brought the materials [for building the dam] and people destroyed them [the materials].

**What is the name of the person that organised the meeting?**

He is called U Myint Shwe.

**Is he Burmese, Chinese, Thai or Shan?**

He is Burmese.

**Did they provide anything during the meeting?**

They provided a torch light for each house.

**For use at home or generally?**

Home use.

**Do you think there are benefits for you if the dam project is implemented?**

I don't think so. We [I] do not have an education and [we] don't know. That is what I think.

**Do you think they will sell it [the electricity] to foreign countries only?**

Yes, I think so.

**Do you think that if you have to pay monthly [for electricity], you can afford it?**

Maybe if my work is going well. Currently, in this situation I don't think I can afford it.

**This year how much brown slab-sugar did you produce from your sugarcane plantation?**

Last year I produced 8,000 (12,800 kg. / 28,160 lb.) [viss of brown slab-sugar, in *t'la aw*<sup>20</sup> leaf packages]. This year I could produce only 900 (1,440 kg. / 3,168 lb.) A lot of them [sugarcane trees] were damaged. I thought I would be able to produce about 3,000 (4,800 kg. / 10,560 lb.) but I could make only 900.

**How about the [sugarcane trees] that you abandoned; if you could produce brown slab-sugar from those, how much do you think you could produce?**

I guess 700 (1,820 kg. / 2464 lb.) or 800 (1,280 kg. / 2.816 lb.) [viss].

**So they [BGF] did not remove their [landmines] for you?**

No, they didn't. I asked them to remove them they did not. They said the grass has grown tall and hidden the landmines, so they dare not [try] to remove them.

**Can you let your cows and buffalos go freely?**

No, I can't, so I tie them up there.

**So you are grazing your buffalo now?**

Yes.

**How about your other property, like your chickens, etc?**

The buffalo baby [calf] was left behind [after the mother died].

**Is that small buffalo still nursing?**

Yes. It is just over two months old.

**So you still have to take care of that [calf]?**

Yes.

**So now what do you feed that [calf]?**

I haven't found it [the calf] yet.

**[The calf] has been missing for two or three days, maybe it is dead already? And it is still nursing.**

I think if I take care of it [the calf] carefully, it could live on.

**You feed it [the calf] milk?**

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<sup>20</sup> *T'la aw* trees are teak-like trees with large leaves, which are traditionally collected by villagers and used to make thatched shingles for the roofs of houses.

Yes.

**Is there a school in B--- village?**

No. It has been two years now [without a school]. Usually, [in the past] there is a school.

**So, there was no school after the BGF was founded?**

No.

**So your children are not able to go to school?**

No.

**Do you have children who are of school age?**

Yes, I send them to study in Hkaw Taw Poo [Town]. I can afford to send just some of my children to school.

**Do you have to pay expenses to study in Hkaw Taw Poo?**

Yes, there are costs because they have to stay in somebody's house. If they could stay in their own house there would be fewer costs.

**So do you have anything else to say about your work or livelihood?**

I think in my mind I am not happy [here in the village], I want to move. It is not free and I am not happy.

**If you could move, where would you want to move?**

I think I will move to D---.

**Is it in the eastern part or western part [her village]?**

Eastern part.

**Do you wish for the dam project to be implemented or not?**

This should not be happening. We could not stay [in our area] if it is implemented. I just wish for it not to be implemented. Recently, I wished to send [my children] one buffalo thigh. It was not free [to move in the area] and I could not send it.

**How much do you have to spend for your children's schooling per year?**

The cost is higher as their grade is higher. I let them stay in their uncle's house and there is not too much cost. [I have to provide] just for food. I have only one child that goes to school [now].

**How much do you have to spend per year?**

It is about 700,000 [kyat] (US \$709.94) per year.

**What standard is he in?**

Eighth standard.<sup>21</sup>

**If your child is not staying in their uncle's house then there would be more expenses than that?**

Yes, right. You have to pay for book fees, clothes, etc.

**You are living just right above the river side?**

Yes, I am.

**So, if the dam is implemented, you probably can [remain] here?**

No, I can't. It is not only me among the people who live around here [that] hope the project is not implemented.

**What villages are situated in the upper part of the river?**

There are Taung Kyah [village], Hpa Yah Kyaw, Pa Deh Hta and in the lower part, they depend on the Salween River.

**Where do they plan to build [the dam]?**

They said at Taung Kyah.

**Are there still plans for this project? Or they have cancelled it?**

I have not heard [for a while] already.

**Now, you live close to the BGF and sometimes you have to meet with the KNU [if they request a meeting]. What do you think of them? Which group is heavier [worse]?**

I cannot say which group [is better] we are Karen and we love Karen people.

**Do they [the BGF] get a salary?**

Yes, they do. They get a salary from the Burmese [Tatmadaw].

**From the government?**

Yes, from the government.

**Do you think it is ok that they get a salary from the government and from that side [KNU] there is no salary?**

For this group [the KNU] they do not receive the salary from the government and they are ok. We can tell openly [if there is problem with them].<sup>22</sup>

**How about the other groups? How about the BGF? Is it ok to admonish them?**

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<sup>21</sup> Those in eighth standard are aged 13-14 years. This is therefore the equivalent of US grade 8/9.

<sup>22</sup> The researcher is asking if the interviewee thinks it is fair that the BGF receive a salary from the government and the KNU do not. The interviewee replies that the KNU do not need or expect a salary from the government. If there is a problem with KNU soldiers, the leader of the KNU can be approached easily.

No, they won't listen if you say so [admonish them]. Before the day my child [and grandchild] was hit by the gun, a [BGF soldier] broke my boat lock and was rowing the boat for fun. He came back above the riverside and said "*Aunty I will eat one of your betel-nuts.*" I replied "*Eat,*" and I placed the box before him. I called him sergeant major. I told him "*Master sergeant major, you are old enough and you should know what is good and what is bad. The lock can be broken [if you try to break it]. We do not want to interact [with soldiers], we want to live separately [from soldiers].*" He replied "*We are not married men, we are single.*" [After that] I stopped talking [to him]. The more that is spoken, the greater the chance there will be misunderstanding. I do not want to talk and there are worries for us too.

### **How about other things?**

No, I do not have other things [to express].

**If so we will talk later if we have [things to express]. Thank you.**

Further background reading on the situation in Hpapun District can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- "Villagers accused of witchcraft is killed by Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO) soldiers, Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District, November 2014," KHRG (May 2015)
- "Hpapun Interview: Saw A---, January 2014," (April 2015)
- "Home guards attacked by Tatmadaw in Lu Thaw Township, Hpapun District, February 2015," (April 2015)
- "Hpapun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, October to November 2014," (April 2015)
- "Tatmadaw artillery fire directed at villagers working on hill field farms in Hpapun District, February 2015," KHRG (March 2015)

# Mu Traw (Hpapun) District



Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)