



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Situation Update

October 30, 2014 / KHRG #14-55-S1

Thaton Situation Update: Bilin Township, May 2014

This Situation Update describes events occurring in Bilin Township, Thaton District during May 2014, including information regarding healthcare, education and villagers' livelihoods.

- *In Bilin Township there are three clinics that were established by the Karen National Union (KNU); Ta Meh Hkee, Ta Meh Hta and Meh Naw Ther, which mostly provide healthcare to villagers from the upper part of Bilin Township. However, these clinics are not able to treat all illnesses, in which cases villagers must travel to nearby towns for treatment.*
 - *In Bilin Township there are two high schools, one of which receives support primarily from the KNU and one that is primarily supported by the Burma/Myanmar government.*
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Situation Update | Bilin Township, Thaton District (May 2014)

The following Situation Update was received by KHRG in July 2014. It was written by a community member in Thaton District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor local 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 Thaton District, including three interviews and 55 photographs.²

Introduction

I went to Bilin Township during a field trip; the information mentioned below is [about] the problems that the villagers face and their concerns.

Villagers and their livelihoods

The villagers in the eastern part of Bilin Township mostly do farming. In doing this work for their livelihoods I saw that they have to face problems with other vegetation [weeds, etc]. They bought chemical weed killer to kill them but it did not kill all the weeds. Moreover, the weeds [started] coming up more than they were before, so that they have to face problems and struggle hard with cutting the weeds. The villagers in the lower part [of Bilin Township] mostly do paddy farming for their livelihoods and after harvesting they also farm corn, beans or other kinds

¹ 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 writing situation updates, community members are encouraged to summarise recent events, raise issues that they consider to be important, and present their opinions or perspective on abuse and other local dynamics in their area.

² 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 additional reports categorised by Type, Issue, Location and Year, please see the Related Readings component following each report on KHRG's Website.

of crops in farms close to the Baw Naw Kloh riverside. Some people grow fruits and vegetables and they sell them for their livelihoods.

Healthcare

In our Bilin Township there are three clinics called Ta Meh Hkee, Ta Meh Hta and Meh Naw Ther from our mother organisation [the KNU], and for these three clinics most people [patients] come from the upper part of Bilin Township. The villagers that we usually see from Baw Naw Hkee to Noh Ber Baw villages and Wa Kheh Hta village, during April and May we saw that those villagers had to face malaria. Also, the villagers from Htee Hpa Doh Hta and the villages in the lower part [of Bilin Township], in those villages, there are a few more female medics than in other villages. These female medics study [medicine] in the towns and other places and when they are well educated they go back to their villages and take care of the patients in their own villages. For these villagers, for any diseases they face that cannot be treated in the villages, they go to the towns.

Education

In Bilin Township there are two high schools, [one of which is] called Karen Thoo Lei High School also known as Kwee Lay High school. In this school most male and female teachers are from the [Karen Education Department³ affiliated] KTTC [Karen Teacher Training College], and after they graduate from the KTTC, they teach at Kwee Lay High School. These male and female teachers get paid a salary of over 100,000 kyat (US \$100.60)⁴ per year. These teachers do not complain [about the small salary]; they try to teach as well as they can for the love of their people. As for Lay Kay High School, it is just like a Burma government school because the teachers from the Burma government teach in this school, and these teachers receive a full monthly salary.

Conclusion

This is a biannual situation update. The information that I mentioned above, I have seen it and know that the villagers had to suffer and that teachers [in the area] receive support from different sources.

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

- "Land confiscation due to a road repair and expansion project in Bilin Township, Thaton District, January 2014," (September 2014)
- "Thaton Incident Report: Attempted rape in Thaton Township, September 2013," (August 2014)
- "Hpapun Situation Update: Dwe Lo Township, August to October 2013," (September 2014)
- "Chapter: The impact of anti-personnel and other mines in Southeast Myanmar since the January 2012 ceasefire," (September 2014)
- "Thaton Interview: U A---, May 2012," (September 2014)

³ The Karen National Union's Education Department. The main goals of the KED are to provide education, as well as to preserve Karen language and culture. During the civil war in Burma/Myanmar the KED became the main organisation providing educational services in the KNU controlled areas in Southeast Burma/Myanmar. The KED also previously oversaw the educational system in the seven refugee camps along the Thai-Burma/Myanmar border, however in 2009 these activities were restructured under the Karen Refugee Committee – Education Entity (KRCEE). See "[Conflict Erupts over Govt teachers deployed to KNU areas](#)," Karen News, August 20th 2013 and the KRCEE website: "[Who Are We](#)," accessed February 6th 2014.

⁴ All conversion estimates for the kyat in this report are based on the October 16th official market rate of 994 kyat to the US \$1.

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