



## Situation Update

September 11, 2015 / KHRG #15-11-S1

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### **Hpapun Situation Update: Bu Tho and Dwe Lo townships, April 2014 to February 2015**

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*This Situation Update describes events and issues occurring in Bu Tho and Dwe Lo townships, Hpapun District between April 2014 and February 2015, including the embezzlement of public funds, child labour, and fraudulent gambling.*

- *Hpapun District administrator U Aung Than Zaw oversaw the construction of bridges in Bu Tho Township, paid for with government funds. He spent only 14,400,000 kyat (US \$12,933.36) of the allotted 30,000,000 kyat (US \$26,944.50) on actual bridge construction. The remaining 15,600,000 kyat (US \$14,011.14) he used to fund his own business.*
  - *Two cases of child labour occurred in Hpapun District: one in S--- village, Ma Htaung village tract, Dwe Lo Township; and one in G--- village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township. The two underage workers were employed in construction work and the abuse occurred due to a lack of awareness regarding child labour rights.*
  - *On September 27<sup>th</sup> 2014, casino owner U Myint was arrested by police and taken into custody by Hpapun Township police for cheating people out of their money at the casino.*
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### **Situation Update | Bu Tho and Dwe Lo townships, Hpapun District (April 2014 to February 2015)**

*The following Situation Update was received by KHRG in March 2015. It was written by a community member in Hpapun 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.<sup>1</sup> This report was received along with other information from Hpapun District, including five incident reports, ten interviews, and 210 photographs.<sup>2</sup>*

### **Human rights abuses occurring in Mu Traw (Hpapun) District from April 10<sup>th</sup> 2014 to February 2015**

Regarding human rights in Myanmar, one abuse or another is usually occurring [at] any [one] time, especially by the Naypyidaw [Burma/Myanmar] government, government staff, the

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<sup>1</sup> KHRG trains community members in southeast 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.

<sup>2</sup> In order to increase the transparency of KHRG methodology and more directly communicate the experiences and perspectives of villagers in southeast 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.

Tatmadaw or Border Guard Force [BGF]<sup>3</sup> soldiers. [Abuses] are usually perpetrated the most by the Naypyidaw [Burma/Myanmar] government's BGF soldiers and [Burma/Myanmar] government staff.

The human rights abuses [that I am going to mention now] happened between April 10<sup>th</sup> and December 27<sup>th</sup> 2014 in Bu Tho Township and Dwe Lo Township, Mu Traw [Hpapun] District. To be specific, the abuses occurred in: G--- village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township; S--- village, Ma Hta village tract, Dwe Lo Township; and Kaw Ka Yet village, which is also called Pweh Hta village [in Karen], Htee Tha Daw Hta village tract, Bu Tho Township.

The human rights abuses were committed by the Thein Sein government's BGF soldiers and Thein Sein's government staff, especially the staff from the Construction Department and township administrations. They [Burma/Myanmar government] abuse human rights. [Thein Sein's] term as president is about to end and [his party] now wants to win the coming 2015 election [and is willing to do anything to keep control of the presidency]. The government staff and BGF soldiers will do whatever they want for their own benefit whether or not it abuses human rights. The village head from G--- village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, [named] U Tun Naing, [who is] 45 years old, said, "*After the 2015 election, we [the local community] are not sure what we are going to do and who we are going to be [ruled by].*"

The human rights abuses that occurred in Mu Traw [Hpapun] District were: the embezzlement of civilians' money, the abuse of children's rights (child labour), cheating [people out of their] money [while gambling]. I am going to mention them all in detail.

#### **The embezzlement of civilians' money: December 27<sup>th</sup> 2014**

[First] I am going to discuss Hpapun Township<sup>4</sup> Administrator U Aung Than Zaw, 35 years old, who embezzled [Burma/Myanmar government] funds [meant to benefit] civilians. He stole money [meant to be spent for the benefit] of the civilians and he used the money that he got for his own benefit. The date [this information was reported to the KHRG researcher] was December 27<sup>th</sup> 2014 in G--- village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw [Hpapun] District. The people who are the victims of [U Aung Than Zaw's] profiteering are a mason, Ko Ye Win Lat, 41 years old, and the villagers from G--- village.

They [township administration] are acting this [way] because the current township administrator, district administrator and so forth have been selected from the Tatmadaw [to serve as part of the] Thein Sein administration. They committed the crime of embezzling the civilians' money or the civilians' belongings because they learned bad habits while serving in the camp [Tatmadaw] where they became accustomed to using corrupt [practices].

The incident happened as follows. The Myanmar government spends and distributes a lot of money to construct the roads and bridges that are necessary for the villages' development. Hpapun Township Administrator U Aung Than Zaw, [who is] 35 years old, constructed bridges in villages using the money distributed by the government. U Aung Than Zaw was given 2,500,000

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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 Burma/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> Hpapun Township is a Burma/Myanmar government demarcation which corresponds to the Karen townships of Lu Thaw, Dwe Lo and Bu Tho, which are located in the Karen demarcated district of Hpapun.

kyat (US \$2,245.36)<sup>5</sup> to construct [each] bridge. However, he spent only 1,000,000 kyat (US \$898.15) or 1,200,000 kyat (US \$1077.78) on constructing each bridge and used the rest of the money for his own business. Therefore, the money that was meant to serve civilians was not used properly to benefit civilians. The [Burma/Myanmar] government staff unnecessarily used the money for their own benefit which does not benefit the civilians.

U Aung Than Zaw constructed concrete bridges which are unnecessary: one bridge was constructed in Hway Hmon village, nine bridges were built in G--- village, and two bridges were constructed in Nga Ein Su village in Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township. He digs the [necessary] pit and constructs the bridges regardless [of the fact that] there is no irrigation, stream, pond, puddle, valley or ravine [in the area that the bridge crosses]. Regarding the construction [cost] of the bridges, the government budgeted 2,500,000 kyat (US \$2,245.36) per bridge. [One of] the bridge constructors, Maung M---, who is 41 years old, said, “It cost only 1,000,000 kyat (US \$898.15) or 1,200,000 kyat (US \$10,77.78) [per bridge].” The government budgeted 30,000,000 kyat (US \$26,944.50) for 12 bridges. Since it actually cost 1,200,000 kyat (US \$1077.78) per bridge, it would only cost a total of 14,400,000 kyat (US \$12,933.36) for 12 bridges. The rest, 15,600,000 kyat (US \$14,011.14), is in U Aung Than Zaw’s possession. Therefore, the civilians’ money is wasted.



The top two photos are of a cement bridge that was constructed under the supervision of Hpapun Township administrator U Aung Than Zaw. The photos were taken on December 24<sup>th</sup> 2014 in G--- village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District. It was constructed in the centre of G--- village in an area where it was not appropriate to have it built. The bottom two photos, taken on December 28<sup>th</sup> 2014, are of a

<sup>5</sup> All conversion estimates for the kyat in this report are based on the June 16<sup>th</sup> 2015 official market rate of 1,113.40 kyat to the US \$1.

bridge which was also constructed under U Aung Than Zaw's supervision in the north of Nga Eain Su village in the same village tract. This bridge is lower than the water level in rainy season so villagers said that the bridge is not as useful as it could be. [Photos: KHRG]

### **Abusing children's rights (child labour): December 27<sup>th</sup> 2014**

In Bu Tho and Dwe Lo townships, Mu Traw [Hpapun] District, although I think that human rights abuses have decreased, I have observed that human rights abuses still happen. If one type of abuse has disappeared, another new type of abuse has occurred.

On December 27<sup>th</sup> 2014 a children's rights abuse happened [was observed by a KHRG researcher] when child labour occurred in Ku S--- village, Ma Htaw village tract, Dwe Lo Township. [A case of child labour also took place] in G--- village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw [Hpapun] District.

In S--- village, the perpetrator is [a Burma/Myanmar government] construction group leader and engineer U Maung Maung Than, 54 years old, who was sent on special duty by the [government] construction department to construct the bridge in [the] village. The victim is Saw A---, who is also called Saw B--- and is [only] 16 years old.

In addition, child labour occurred [was observed by a KHRG researcher] in G--- village, Meh Klaw village tract, Dwe Lo Township on December 26<sup>th</sup> 2014. The perpetrator was Ko Si Thu, an engineer from Hpapun Township's construction sub-department office. The victim was Ma C---, a 16-year-old from D--- village, Bago Division. The abuse happened because the construction engineers in charge do not know a lot about children's rights, while the parents also do not know the rights of their children.

To state clearly, the [Burma/Myanmar] government authorities do not educate and explain to the civilians about child rights. The administrators at many different levels also do not know about human rights. Therefore, children are being asked to work in many different types of jobs. No one, including the Myanmar government leaders at different levels, as well as the parents and civilians, wants to solve this problem. There is also no one who will distribute the literature [about children's rights] for the civilians to understand. The children are asked to work the same as adults in every working place.



The photo on the left is of Saw A--- (a.k.a. Saw B---) who is a 16-year-old from E--- village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District. He is working as a manual labourer at the S--- Bridge construction site, pictured on the right, in S--- village, Ma Htaw village tract, Dwe Lo Township. The photos were both taken on December 27<sup>th</sup> 2014 in S--- village. [Photos: KHRG]

### **Cheating [people] out of money: September 1<sup>st</sup> 2014**

The case of cheating [people] out of money happened [was reported] on September 1<sup>st</sup> 2014 in Kaw Ka Yet village ([called] Pweh Hta village [in Karen]), Htee Tha Daw Hta village tract, Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw [Hpapun] District. The issue is that civilians are being cheated out of their money.

The main perpetrator cheating [people] out of their money is U Myint, [who is] 72 years old. He lives in Bu Ya Phyu village, Kha Yan Thon Khwa Township, Yangon Division. The people who committed [the abuse] with him are BGF soldiers of the Myanmar government from Company Colonel Tin Win's BGF Battalion #1014.<sup>6</sup>

The victims are U T---, 55 years old, who lives in U--- ([called] V--- [in Karen]) village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw [Hpapun] District and the people from Hpapun, Ka Ma Maung and Shwe Gon [town] areas who came and gambled. According to local people, [they were] cheated [out of a total of] 160,000 kyat (US \$143.70), which was taken by U Myint.

The reason he was doing this [cheating people out of money] was not just to get money. It was [also] to create a huge social problem between the KNU and Myanmar government in mixed-control areas.<sup>7</sup>

The incident happened as follows. U Myint founded a casino named "*Tha Ma Di*" in which he made them [patrons of the casino] play [according to] German [rules]. He cheated and took all of the money in an unfair way by allowing the civilians to gamble [on a game they did not understand]. The local authorities, police, and [a different group of] BGF soldiers who formed themselves together [to track the case] stated, "*U Myint is going to secretly disappear after he gets a lot of money [from the civilians].*"

U Myint appointed Company Colonel Tin Win<sup>8</sup> and the soldiers from BGF Battalion #1014 as his general [private] security while gambling at the casino. Through gambling he [U Myint] made a lot of money. After nearly one month of gambling, on September 27<sup>th</sup> 2014, the police from Hpapun Township went and arrested U Myint and he was detained in a Hpapun Township police cell. However, no one now knows where he has been sent to from the Hpapun Township police cell. There has also not been any compensation for the gamblers.

In addition, no one knows exactly who he [U Myint] left the money that he had cheated from the gamblers with. The Hpapun District administrator said, "*We are going to arrange [compensation to] the best [of our ability] for those who have to be compensated by 'Tha Ma Di' casino.*"

### **Consequences**

Regarding the problems that led to human right abuses, as long as there is no accurate [strict] rules that are set up for the Myanmar government's Tatmadaw and government staff and as long

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<sup>6</sup> KHRG has received numerous reports of human rights violations committed by soldiers from Border Guard Force (BGF) Battalion #1014, including killing, torture, violent abuse, explicit threats, arbitrary taxation and demands and land confiscation. For more information, see "[Human rights violations by Border Guard Force \(BGF\) Battalion #1014 in Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District, May 2012 to March 2014](#)," KHRG, July 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Presumably, the researcher meant to say that this gambling incident could be reported by villagers to the KNU, who would have to advocate on their behalf with the Burma/Myanmar administration, thus adding to existing tensions between the two administrations in this mixed control area.

<sup>8</sup> Company Commander Saw Tin Win from BGF's Battalion #1014 has been implicated in human rights violations, such as torture and killing, as well as land confiscation and forced labour. For more information regarding these abuses and those of other officers in BGF Battalion #1014 see, "[Human rights violations by Border Guard Force \(BGF\) Battalion #1014 in Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District, May 2012 to March 2014](#)," KHRG, June 2015.

as the Tatmadaw and the [government] staff cannot control or stop their minds being greedy, one abuse or another will happen at any [given] time.

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

- “Hpapun Incident Report: Villager killed by Border Guard Force (BFG) Battalion #1013 in Bu Tho Township, March 2015,” (September 2015)
- “Human rights violations by Second Lieutenant Tha Beh of BGF Battalion #1014 in Hpapun District, between 2012 and 2015,” (September 2015)
- “Hpapun Interview: Saw A---, January 2015,” (August 2014)
- “Explicit threats and the indiscriminate firing of mortars and small arms by BGF soldiers in Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District, June 2015,” (July 2015)
- “Human rights violations by border guard force (BGF) Battalion #1014 in Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District, May 2012 to March 2014,” (July 2015)

# Mu Traw (Hpapun) District



Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)