



# Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

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## Interview

April 27, 2017 / KHRG #15-57-A8-11

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## Hpapun Interview: Saw A---, July 2015

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*This Interview with Saw A--- describes events occurring in Lu Thaw Township, Hpapun District, during April 2015. The issues included are: illegal logging, blocked access to humanitarian aid, and barriers to gained Myanmar National Identification Cards.*

- *The villagers in Baw Thay Hta village tract conducted logging to earn a living in the years between 2000 and 2014. They conducted logging because they did not have any small business opportunities to earn their income and they could not produce enough food from their hill and flat farms to provide for their livelihoods. The villagers bribed Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO) and Karen National Union (KNU) Forest Minister Paw Muh Khah, in order to access the trees for logging.*
  - *In 2014 the Burma/Myanmar government had provided humanitarian aid to local villagers who live in Lu Thaw Township, Hpapun District, but the Karen National Union (KNU) Hpapun District administers prohibited the local villagers from accessing the aid.*
  - *The KNU officially announced they will not permit villagers to get Myanmar National Identification Cards when they held the KNU annual meeting in B--- village, Baw Thay Hta village tract.*
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## Interview | Saw A---, (male, 40), B--- village, Lu Thaw Township, Hpapun District (April 2015)

*The following Interview was conducted by a community member trained by KHRG to monitor local human rights conditions. It was conducted in Hpapun District on April 15<sup>th</sup> 2015 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 ten other interviews, one situation update, 301 photographs and 15 video clips.<sup>2</sup>*

**Ethnicity:** Karen

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

**Religion:** Animist  
**Marital Status:** Married  
**Occupation:** Farmer  
**Position:** Villager

**What is your name?**

My name is Saw A---

**How old are you?**

I am 40 years old.

**Where do you live?**

I live in B--- village.

**Which village tract is B--- [located] in?**

B--- is in Baw Thay Hta village tract.

**What township are you living in?**

Lu Thaw Township.

**What about district?**

Mu Traw [Hpapun] District.

**What is your ethnicity?**

Karen ethnicity.

**What is your religion?**

Animist.

**Do you take on any responsibilities in the village?**

I do not take on any responsibilities, but I was elected to the school committee.

**What do you do for a living?**

I work on a hill farm. I work on a hill farm each year.

**Do you have your own family?**

Yes, I have a family.

**How many children do you have?**

I have six children.

**How many girls and boys?**

Two girls and four boys.

**What is the age of your youngest child?**

My youngest child has not yet turned one year old. My youngest child will turn one in the ploughing season [May/June].

**Does everyone in B--- village work on hill farms or do most of them work on farms in the plains?**

Most villagers work on hill farms and a few of them work farms on the plains.

**How many households are there in your village?**

There are [censored for security] households, including widows and orphans. I just counted [the households] in the mountain side, but did not count [households in] the other parts of the village.

**You said most of them work farms on the plains?**

No, most of them work on hill farms.

**Do they produce enough food each year?**

Most of them do not produce enough food. For me, last year we grew two baskets of paddy seeds and collected only ten baskets of paddy. Poh<sup>3</sup> C--- [a villager] grew ten baskets of paddy [seeds] and he collected only ten baskets of paddy too.

**What made you unable to collect enough rice?**

The paddy did not grow well because paddy seedlings were too dry after they were planted.

**Are there any other problems?**

Yes. The other problem is that insects attack the paddy. The main problems are that insects kill the paddy and that the paddy is infertile [because of the heat].

**Has this happened in previous years?**

It happened in previous years. It also occurred two years ago.

**Which year did it happen?**

It happened in 2012.

**How many baskets of paddy seed do you plant per hill farm?**

Most villagers here plant seven to eight baskets of paddy [seed] on each hill farm.

**What about you?**

For me, I usually plant three to four baskets of paddy [seed] on my hill farm.

**How many baskets of paddy can you produce [harvest] from the seven to eight baskets of paddy seed that you plant per year?**

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<sup>3</sup> Poh is a Karen honourific title for a married man.

Some years we can produce 100 baskets of paddy, but other years we can produce only ten baskets of paddy. Last year Poh D--- [a villager] planted seven baskets of paddy seed, but he collected only 80 baskets of paddy.

**What do villagers do when they cannot produce enough food?**

They cannot do anything [on the farms]. They collect fruits [to sell], such as dog fruit and cardamom, but the trees do not produce [enough] fruits. It is very difficult for us.

**Do any villagers in B--- [village] have their own cardamom plantations?**

None of the villagers have their own cardamom plantation. We just harvest them from the forest.

**Do they collect any other types of fruit?**

No other fruits.

**What about durian?**

There are not many durian trees; only a few durian trees. However, there are a lot of betel nut trees.

**Do they sell betel nut?**

If the betel nut trees produce enough fruits, we also sell them.

**How much do they earn per 100 betel nuts?**

They earn 1000 kyat [0.74 USD]<sup>4</sup> per 100 betel nuts.

**Does every villager have their own betel nut plantation?**

No, only a few villagers have betel nut plantations.

**How many of them have betel nut plantations?**

I think more village 20 villagers have betel nut plantations and only a few villagers do not have plantations. Betel nut trees can produce only a small amount of fruits.

**How do villagers earn income if they do not have betel nut and cardamom plantations?**

They cannot do anything [except these livelihood activities]. They just work for their daily meals.

**Do villagers in B---- village have to buy rice?**

They have to buy rice all the time.

**Do only a few villagers have to buy rice or do many of them have to buy?**

Most villagers in B--- village have to buy rice. Only one or two households have enough food. Last year, only two or three households had enough food.

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<sup>4</sup> All conversion estimates for the kyat in this report are based on the February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017, official market rate of 1,380.35 kyat to US \$1.

**Do farmers that work on the plains produce enough food?**

Yes, farmers on the plains produce enough food.

**Where do you buy rice?**

We buy rice from Hpapun Town.

**How far is B--- [village] from Hpapun [Town]?**

It takes us around one hour from B--- village to E--- place.

**What about to Hpapun?**

It takes about two hours [in total].

**Do you transport rice by yourself?**

We transport [rice] by boats half of the way. After [the rice] reaches E--- place, we carry it ourselves. The people come to sell rice at [E--- place].

**How much do you have to pay per basket of rice?**

Sometimes for a basket of rice we pay 15,000 to 16,000 kyat [\$10.87 to 11.59 USD].

**What about in the previous year?**

Last year we paid 17,000 kyat [\$12.32 USD] per basket of rice because there were many kinds of rice. For me, I did not have money, so I only bought a small basket of rice.

**Are there any small business [opportunities] for B---- villagers to earn an income?**

Yes, some villagers in our village hire others to create plots of land [to grow paddy].

**What kinds of diggers do they hire?**

They hire villagers to make plots of land. Some villagers conducted logging illegally to earn an income, but now there are no logging trees.

**How much do they pay them per day?**

They pay them 4,000 kyat [\$2.90 USD] per day.

**Where did people log trees illegally?**

They conducted logging in E--- place. They only logged the branches of the trees.

**Were the villagers permitted to log?**

They were not permitted to log. If they were arrested, they would have to pay the fine.

**Where did they sell the logs?**

They sold them in Hpapun Town.

**When did they conduct logging? Was it many years ago?**

They started logging from 2000 until 2014. From 2013 to 2014, we carried the logs by ourselves. Now there are no more mature trees; only branches of the trees that are a little bigger than house posts.

**Have you ever conducted logging there?**

I conducted [logging] there once, but now I do not conduct anymore. I just carry small [single] logs by myself.

**You said you conducted logging once, so did you conduct it at night or during the day?**

I used to log during the day and only logged small branches of the trees. The people did not allow us to log mature trees. They only allowed us to log branches of the trees. If you want to log mature trees, you have to log them at night [in order to not be caught].

**How much did they earn per log?**

They earned 60,000 kyat [\$43.47 USD] per tonne of logs. They also have to hire elephants [to move the logs] and the loggers. They paid 10,000 kyat [\$7.24 USD] for each elephant and 5,000 kyat [\$3.62 USD] to the loggers.

**Did they hire the elephants?**

Yes, they had to hire them because they could not move the logs by themselves.

**Are there any KNU [Karen National Union] armed groups, such as KNDO [Karen National Defense Organisation], [presently] operating where they conduct logging?**

Yes, KNDO has been operating there.

**Did they know you were conducting logging?**

Yes. They knew, but you have to bribe them because they are frontline soldiers. If you give them [money], they will not say anything.

**Did you ever bribe them when you were logging?**

Yes, we bribed them. The investments [bribes] were given to soldiers based in Qq--- place. The chief of Forest Administration is Poh Kyweh [and] his son-in-law, also known as Paw Mu Khah [works in the Forest Ministry].

**Is [Paw Mu Khah] the chief of the Forest Department?**

No. He is a forest minister, who is in charge of Baw Thay Hta area.

**What is his name?**

His name is Paw Muh Khah. Poh Kyweh is the chief of Forest Administration and he lives in Day Poo Noh village. Poh Kyweh appointed him [Paw Muh Khah] to be his proxy. There are two of them [forestry staff], but I do not know the other's name.

**When did you bribe the KNU to conduct logging?**

At the present time, we have to bribe them if we want to do logging. We have to bribe them even if we log small trees.

**Can you tell me how much [money] you had to bribe them [KNU]?**

I am not sure, because I do not conduct logging very often. I think they [loggers] will bribe them about 10,000 to 20,000 kyat [\$7.24 to 14.49 USD] and if they are allowed to log five tonne of logs, they might try to log ten tonne of logs.

**Did you hear if anyone conducted logging in 2015?**

None of the villagers in my village conducted logging.

**What about other people?**

Other people conduct logging because the KNU is now allowing people in Suh Loh Kloh and Maw Loh Kloh [areas] to conduct logging.

**Do they conduct logging illegally?**

No, they do it legally.

**What is the place name where people are logging illegally?**

In E--- place, but presently there are no more trees to log. The logging of trees still occurs in F--- area.

**Did they conduct logging illegally?**

Yes, some of them did it illegally and others did it legally. The people [local authorities] always arrest them [loggers] because they know [the villagers] transport the logs along the river and one of villagers in G--- village died [drowned].

**When did the incident happen?**

I am not sure whether it happened in 2011, 2012, or 2013.

**Did he [the man who drowned] log illegally?**

Yes, he did. He transported the logs along the river with his friends during the night, but his other friend can swim.

**When did they transport the logs? Was it in the rainy season or summer?**

It was in the rainy season, because you cannot transport logs easily in the summer.

**Did you see or hear if the [loggers] bribed the people [KNDO<sup>5</sup> soldiers and the KNU]?**

I heard about it.

**Who told you?**

A lot of people bribed them.

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<sup>5</sup> The Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO) was formed in 1947 by the Karen National Union and is the precursor to the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA). Today the KNDO refers to a militia force of local volunteers trained and equipped by the KNLA and incorporated into its battalion and command structure; its members wear uniforms and typically commit to two-year terms of service.

**Yes, I know a lot of people bribed them, but can you tell me the names of the elephants' owners [who conducted logging]?**

Yes, one person is Poh H--- [a villager]. [He] always conducts logging and bribes people [KNDO soldiers and the KNU].

**Where does he live?**

He lives in I--- village, Baw Thay Hta village tract.

**Does he live in Baw Thay Hta village tract?**

Yes, he lives in Baw Thay Hta village tract.

**Are there any villagers who were witnesses?**

Some villagers were witnesses and saw them with their own eyes, but they did not want to tell them [the loggers].

**Did they not report the issue?**

No, they did not report the issue. They said that if you were able to do [logging], you could earn [money].

**Did the village tract, township, and district leaders know that Paw Muh Khah [Forest Minister] was bribed by the loggers?**

The village tract leaders and forest ministers were also bribed.

**What about township leaders?**

I think a few township leaders might know the issue.

**Is any logging taking place in other village tracts?**

No.

**Have the people, who were logging and transporting logs illegally, been arrested?**

Yes, they were arrested and fined.

**What kinds of fines did they require?**

They [villagers] were fined to pay money and had their bamboo rafts [used for logging] confiscated.

**How much [money] were they fined for each bamboo raft?**

Some of them were fined 10,000 kyat [\$7.24 USD] and others were fined 100,000 kyat [\$72.45 USD]. If they transported teak logs, they were fined 100,000 kyat for each raft.

**Who confiscated the raft? Were they from the KNLA [Karen National Liberation Army] or the Forestry Department?**

They were KNU members [from the Forestry Department]. After they confiscated the rafts, they resold the logs. After they sold the logs, I do not know what they did [with the money].

**Did they resell the logs after they confiscated them?**

Yes, they resold the logs in Hpapun [Town].

**Do you know [who] the leaders of the group are that confiscated the rafts?**

Poh Kyweh's son in-law, who lives there.

**Did he lead that group [to arrest loggers] the previous time?**

Yes, he did, he has been living there for five years. Poh Kyweh elected him to be in charge of that area.

**Where does Poh Kwyeh live?**

He lives in Day Poo Noh village.

**Who does he work for?**

He works for the Forestry Department.

**Is he the chief of the Forestry Department?**

Yes, he is the chief of the Forestry Department.

**Which area does he control?**

Do you mean Bo<sup>6</sup> [Poh] Kyweh?

**Yes.**

He controls each reserve forest area under the Forestry [Department].

**Have any villager heard about Paw Muh Khah reselling the logs?**

They heard about it. For me, I never asked them for more information, so I do not know what they did with [money].

**Were villagers happy to pay the fine? Did villagers agree to pay the fines?**

Some of them agreed [to pay the fines], but some were not happy about it. Therefore, some of them still conduct logging.

**Were they [the loggers] sent to district or township [authorities]?**

They were not sent there because I did not see them sent there.

**None of them were sent [to the authorities]?**

Yes, none of them. However, last year, Poh H--- was sent [to township and district level authorities].

**Why was he sent?**

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<sup>6</sup> *Bo* is a Burmese title meaning 'officer.'

He was sent because he conducted logging illegally.

**When?**

He was sent during the harvest season.

**Did he not bribe them?**

They said he conducted logging illegally several times, but he escaped arrest [punishment]. He had been informed not to do logging several times, but he never listened.

**Who arrested him?**

The KNU [KNLA] officers.

**Do you know their names?**

I do not know. Frontline soldiers and J---'s brother in-law were also conducting logging, but they hid their involvement even though they were the main people logging illegally.

**Were any KNU officers involved in logging?**

Yes, the KNU officers were involved in logging, because the forestry ministrers were from the KNU. They [the forestry ministers] conducted the logging with Poh H--- [a villager] at K--- place. M--- villagers submitted the case [to KNU leaders] and township leaders. The leaders asked them [the officers] to meet at the township [office].

**When did they conduct the logging?**

They conducted logging in harvest season, as I mentioned above.

**Was it in 2014?**

Yes, it was in 2014 during harvest season [approximately September/October]. It was not 2015 yet.

**Did he [Poh H---] receive punishment?**

I am not sure how many days he stayed there [detention place]. I think [it was] over two weeks. The people who conducted logging illegally were mainly KNU officers. When the villagers also started to conduct logging, they [the KNU officers] only blamed villagers.

**Were there any [KNU] leaders involved or only their staff?**

The people said Ta Thoo was also involved [in logging].

**What does he do for work?**

He is a front-line soldier.

**Is he an officer?**

Yes, I think he is an officer. I think this year he was promoted to three ranks or one star [Sergeant or Second Lieutenant]. In the military, he is the highest rank among the soldiers who are based in Baw Thay Hta place.

**Is he a KNLA officer?**

Yes, I think he is.

**Where is Ta Thoo based?**

He is based in Kyeh Leh Hkaw [place], because his barrack is based there.

**How many years have they been based there?**

They have been based there for three to four years.

**Does he have any other names or only Ta Thoo?**

I do not know if he has other names. I only know Ta Thoo, and he is locally known as Ta Thoo.

**Where is he based?**

He is based in Kyeh Leh Hkaw [place].

**Did the villagers hear about the logging or see it with their own eyes?**

The villagers saw it [evidence of logging] with their own eyes, because they had not completed sawing all of the logs they had cut down.

**Where did they illegally conduct logging?**

The logging was conducted in L--- place.

**Did they [villagers] cut them [the logs] with chainsaws or lumber saws?**

They cut them with chainsaws.

**You said the villagers saw them with their own eyes, so did you also see [the evidence] or did you hear about it from other villagers?**

Many villagers talked about it. For me, I just saw the sawdust left behind from the chainsaws, which the loggers had used. They logged many logs with chainsaws. They conducted the logging in M--- community's protected forest area.

**Was it the community's protected forest?**

Yes, it was.

**It was not the KNU's protected forest?**

No, M--- villagers protected forest.

**How many KNU officers were involved in logging?**

Ta Thoo, Paw Mu Khah and Poh Kyweh's children were involved. Many villagers in N--- [village] were involved in logging, but those people are the main people [loggers].

**Who were the main people?**

The main people were the KNU officers. Poh H--- went to saw the logs with Naw O---'s father. I told them, "*M--- villagers might catch you if you continue logging*".

**Is Poh H--- a villager?**

Yes, Poh H--- is a villager. His chainsaw was taken away by villagers from M---.

**Have they already returned [the chainsaw] to him or not?**

They have not returned it to him yet.

**Did he [Poh H---] get fined?**

Yes, they fined him 40,000 kyat [\$28.98 USD]. Then they [villagers] returned the chainsaw to him.

**What kinds of trees did they log in L--- place?**

They logged *Hsyeh Per Hee* [a type of hardwood tree].

**Did they log any other types of trees?**

No, [they did] not log any other trees.

**Did they construct any buildings after logging the trees?**

They transported them [the logs] to Hpapun.

**Did they build houses [with the logs]?**

I do not know. The people who bought the logs will do something. I think the rich man in Hpapun might buy them.

**Where did they transport the logs?**

They transported the logs to a monastery in Hpapun [upper part of Hpapun section 4] and to Nauk Bet Ka [section].

**Which village tract is L--- place located in?**

L--- is located in Kaw Poo village tract.

**Is it located in Kaw Poo village tract?**

Yes, it is located in Kaw Poo village tract.

**After they [villagers who were logging] were arrested, were they seriously punished or lightly disciplined?**

They were not seriously punished.

**How many days were they punished [forced to work]?**

They were punished for ten days [performing physical labour].

**Did they send them [loggers] to township or district [authorities]?**

They [local authorities] sent them to district [court] not township. All of them were sent to P---village].

**Do they permit villagers to log to build houses?**

No, they do not allow it.

**Why?**

We are allowed to log to build houses, but we have to receive a permission letter [from the KNU]. They ask 5000 kyat [\$3.62 USD] for a permission letter, which only allows us to log five-tonnes of logs.

**How did villagers feel after they heard KNU officers were conducting logging illegally?**

Many villagers were not satisfied with the KNU officers, but they did not dare to express it like me. Some villagers felt okay with them.

**Do villagers complain about this issue?**

Yes, they complain, but not in front of other people.

**What did they say privately?**

They mainly talked privately and said, *"If the leaders can do [logging, then] why are we not allowed [to log]? They were the ones who prohibited us from conducting logging and they were the ones logging themselves."* We did not dare to talk, we just talked behind them [privately].

**Have any villagers requested permission letters to build their houses?**

None of the villagers in B---village requested permission letters. They just cut down the trees and asked people to saw for them.

**Do they [local authorities] try to secretly inquire [about these] villagers?**

No, they do not.

**Have they ever come to the village?**

Yes, they have, but they have not said anything [to the villagers who built wood-houses].

**Have they ever given permission for logging in Baw Thay Hta village tract?**

I have not heard anything about it, but I heard they will be opening an opportunity for logging in F--- area. I am not sure whether they will open the opportunity or not.

**After villagers were prohibited from logging, has there been any conflicts happening in your village?**

No, I have not seen anything happen. The only other things [problems] were solar panels and water pipe [distribution].

**What were the problems with the solar panels and water pipes?**

We were not allowed to take solar panels and water pipes. We were not sure whether they [the Lu Thaw Township authorities] themselves took them or not. However, [we know] the authorities

took all the rice [intended for the villagers] that was distributed by Burma/Myanmar government. We heard details about the rice distribution very recently. I bought one basket of rice [from the Lu Thaw township authorities] even though the Burma/Myanmar government wanted to distribute that rice to B--- villagers [for free].

**When did this happen?**

It happened in 2014.

**Which month?**

I do not remember.

**Did the Burma/Myanmar government distribute solar panels and water pipes?**

Yes.

**Were they from the Burma/Myanmar government or another organisation?**

We were not sure where they came from. I was thinking of asking you.

**Did you not ask any leaders about it?**

I asked the leaders [Lu Thaw Township authorities] and they said, *“do not take the aid from the Burma/Myanmar government. If you take [the solar panels and water pipes] the Burma/Myanmar government will get more members. Then they [Burma/Myanmar government] will submit your list with your names to [higher officials] and they will say that they have people in there [more government party members]. Then you all [villagers] will become SLORC<sup>7</sup> [State Law and Order Restoration Council] members and the KNU will have no more members [followers]”*. They [Lu Thaw Township authorities] said that they [Burma/Myanmar government] also will campaign for the [2015] general election. If it is true or not we are not very sure.

**Did you write proposals in order to get water pipes or were they freely-distributed?**

The leaders from Hpapun Section 4 asked us to go and said, *“You have to collect water very far from your village. Therefore Burma/Myanmar government will help you. Would you like to receive them [water pipes]?”* This is how they ask us. We told them that we really wanted it [water pipes], but the [KNU] leaders [in Brigade 5] did not allow us to collect [aid]. They [Hpapun section leaders] told us, *“You will get it for free. If you do not take it, you are very stupid.”* We said we would go there to check the situation. If they seriously prohibit us, we cannot do anything.

**Have you ever written a proposal to them?**

No, we have never written proposals. We didn't write proposals to get rice. They [Burma/Myanmar government] just sent it themselves and later monks asked us to take the rice. The people there [KNU leaders] told us not to take the rice, so we couldn't do anything.

**Where does the monk live?**

He lives in Section 4.

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<sup>7</sup> In Karen, the Burmese phrase Na Wa Ta (SLORC) is commonly used to refer to the Burma/Myanmar government or to Burma/Myanmar's state army, the Tatmadaw. Many older Karen villagers who were accustomed to using the phrase Na Wa Ta (SLORC) before 1997 continue to use that phrase, even though the SLORC has not officially existed since 1997.

**What is his name?**

His name is Sayadaw<sup>8</sup> Rr---

**Does he live in the monastery?**

Yes, he lives there.

**Who sent rice to you?**

Burma/Myanmar government.

**Did they send it for villagers?**

Yes, they sent it to the monastery for the villagers. They kept them [the rice] at the monastery and asked us to take and transport it ourselves.

**Did villagers go to take the aid?**

No, the villagers did not take the aid, because the people [Lu Thaw Township authorities] did not allow us to take [it]. Thus, we did not dare to take the aid.

**Who did not allow you to take the aid?**

The KNU did not allow us to take the aid.

**Do you know the names of the leaders who did not allow villagers to take the aid?**

I do not know their names, but all of the leaders in brigade five prohibited us.

**How do you know that they resold the rice?**

I heard it from Ss--- after I argued with him and told him that in the end the leaders themselves took the aid. He agreed with me and said, "*You are right; Paw Muh Khah also took some aid.*" No one was happy with them [the KNU].

**What does Ss--- do for work?**

He is a KNDO commander.

**Did he also take aid [from the villagers]?**

I do not know, because I have not asked him. I think he [Ss---] knew it [about the aid] because he is a soldier based in Kyeh Leh Hkaw [place].

**Did they transport the rice from Hpapun to there [their base] by boats or did people transport it for them?**

They [Lu Thaw Township authorities] took the rice from the monastery [of Hpapun Town in Section 4]. After Bo Eh himself came back from Hpa-an, he transported all the rice [from Hpapun to his base].

**Who told you that Bo Eh transported all the rice?**

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<sup>8</sup> Sayardaw is Burmese term for a high monk.

The people from Hpapun told us. The monk also told us.

**Did the monk [Sayadaw Rr---] himself tell you?**

Yes, the monk told us, but we did not note it [the date] down.

**Did the monk give them the rice?**

Yes, the monk gave the rice to them [Lu Thaw Township authorities]. We were not sure whether they [Lu Thaw Township authorities] bought the rice from monk or not. I do not think the monk would sell the rice, because it belonged to the villagers.

**Did they [Lu Thaw Township authorities] not allow villagers to take [the rice]?**

Yes, they did not and when they took all of rice they did not inform the villagers.

**Did they not let villagers know when they took the aid?**

They did not let villagers know.

**Did any leaders at the township or district level know about the incident?**

If Bo Eh transported the rice, he would have to transport it to the township and district because their offices are based there. We have not asked [villagers] for confirmation. If you ask many people, they will know about the incident. In 2014 I heard Burma/Myanmar supported the KNU with Christmas materials. Saw Q--- said he went to transport it [the materials to the KNU] for them [Burma/Myanmar government], but a few days later they [KNU] returned the materials. However, later Bo Eh came back and he transported all [of the Christmas materials] and did not return them [the materials to the Burma/Myanmar government] again.

**What kind of support did they provide?**

They [the Burma/Myanmar government] provided materials for the Christmas [celebration].

**Did they support them with money?**

I think they [might have] supported them with bread, candies and soups when they were celebrating Christmas.

**Did it [support] come from the Tatmadaw or the Burma/Myanmar government?**

I think it might have come from the Burma/Myanmar government, but I am not sure. I do not think the Tatmadaw would support them [Lu Thaw Township authorities]. Maybe the aid came from other organisations, but I am not sure whether it came from a Karen organisation or not.

**Are you the only one who heard the KNU leaders took the rice or did any other villagers hear about it?**

Many villagers heard about it, but they [know] as much as I do since they are also not sure about the incident.

**Have you ever met with Sayadaw Rr--- [about the issue]?**

I have not met him and never kept in mind [thought to ask him] about this issue.

**How did villagers feel after they heard about the issue?**

Some villagers were not happy about the incident, but some of them didn't care.

**The people who were upset about the incident what did they say?**

They did not say anything in the meeting. Last time [in the annual meeting] they did not raise this issue. The leaders only talked about Identification Cards. The village tract leader and the secretary of village tract leader asked B--- villagers if any villagers in B--- village made IDs. Villagers told them that none of villagers in B--- village received IDs. The only people who made IDs are the leaders. Thay Wee Heh is a KNDO commander. He said that many of his soldiers got IDs. Many villagers from R--- and S--- got IDs, but B--- villagers did not.

**Can you tell me why they [Lu Thaw Township authorities] did not permit villagers to make IDs?**

They said it will benefit SLORC when the 2015 general election takes place. They said they [Burma/Myanmar government] would [use the ID cards to] increase their members. If it is true or not, we do not know. The aid also might be used in this way. The KNU leaders in Brigade 5 said that if the government provides ID cards they will record your name and submit it to Naypyidaw [to register you for membership with the government's ruling party]. They said some villagers in B---, T--- and F--- village already have ID cards. They said if the general election takes place there will be no more votes for the KNU [as everyone with ID cards will be registered as a supporter of the Burma/Myanmar government].

**Do you know when the election will take place? Did they let you know?**

They did not tell us, and we do not know [the election date].

**When did they conduct the meeting regarding ID cards?**

They conducted the meeting in 2014.

**Where did the meeting take place?**

The meeting took place in B--- village. It was the annual meeting. They told each household [not to make ID cards].

**Who organised the meeting?**

The meeting was organised by the KNU. Village tract leaders and KNDO leaders from each area participated in the meeting. The township and district leaders did not participate in the meeting. When they [the KNU] organised the meeting, they asked one person from each household to participate in the meeting, but I did not participate in the meeting. Many people had taken the aid [solar panels and rice], but then they were asked to return the aid.

**Who is the Baw Thay Hta village tract leader?**

Saw U--- is Baw THay Hta village tract leader and he lives in V--- village.

**Who is the village tract secretary?**

There are two village tract secretaries. They are the general secretary and the vice-secretary.

**Have any villagers made ID cards in previous years?**

The Burma/Myanmar government have only provided an opportunity for the villagers to make ID cards once. They provided ID cards for free. They [Lu Thaw Township authorities] told [villagers]

not to make ID cards. In 2015, I told a KNDO commander, “[*if you guys [KNDO commanders] said it would only benefit SLORC, then why do leaders and soldiers go to make ID cards?*]” When they held the meeting, they said that the people who always have to travel made ID cards. I asked them, “*don’t villagers have to travel?*” They said that they [KNDO commanders and soldiers] sometime have to go for urgent traveling. I responded [and said], “*I saw many soldiers did not travel after they made ID cards. They just kept the card with them*”. I said, “*When our children grow up, they will also have to travel.*”

**Were there any villagers who wanted to make ID cards before the leaders held the meeting?**

Many villagers wanted to get IDs because they provided it for free, but after [the meeting] leaders did not allow us to make them, and so we did not dare to make [ID cards].

**Was there a difference in the number of villagers who wanted to receive IDs and those who did not want?**

The villagers who wanted to get IDs are fewer than the villagers who did not want to get IDs. If the leaders permit us to get IDs, I think there will be a lot of villagers who want to get [IDs]. I almost went to make an ID card. A villager in my village went to make an ID card too.

**Who went to make an ID card?**

Saw W--- went to make an ID card. After the leaders held the meeting, he came to ask me whether he should go to make an ID or not. I told him, “*If you want to get one just make it because many people went to make*”. I saw them [the KNLA and KNDO soldiers] with my eyes when they went to make them, but I do not know the soldiers’ names. The next morning, he went to make an ID and he got it. He is the only person who got an ID card. He needed an ID card because he wanted to go to Toungoo [town]. After he got an ID, he did not go to Toungoo, because he got married.

**When did they provide free IDs?**

I think they provided them in 2011, 2012 or 2013. I am not so sure [which year], but it should have been during those three years.

**When did the villagers go to make IDs?**

The villagers went to make IDs the same year that Saw W--- got married. He has been married for over one year, so I think it was in 2013.

**Are there any KNU soldiers who went to make IDs after they held the meeting?**

I did not see any of them make IDs after they held meeting, but before they held the meeting many of them went to make IDs. Each year they hesitate to conduct the annual meeting, and this year they held the meeting after [the Burmese/Myanmar government offered] free delivery of ID cards. Forest administrators also went to make an ID card.

**You said the forest administer also went to make an ID card?**

Yes. Hpah Hsee’s son-in-law went to make an ID card.

**Did they [KNU] not allow villagers to make IDs?**

Yes, they did not allow.

**Did any villagers raise this issue in the [KNU annual] meeting?**

I heard Thara X--- said that if the [KNU] leaders make ID cards [and the villagers have evidence], then they [the KNU] will know [hear] about it from the villagers.

**What about the solar panel issue?**

Yes, last time they held the meeting they raised the solar panel issue.

**Did they hold the meeting about the solar panel issue, and not the issue about ID cards?**

No, they held the meeting about the solar panel issue and not the IDs because they had already held a meeting regarding the ID issue before.

**Did you hear that people would distribute solar panels or [did] village heads have to write the proposal [to receive it]?**

We heard the Burma/Myanmar government will distribute solar panels [without proposals] and I also heard they will donate money to the villagers.

**How much will they donate?**

They will donate 300,000 kyat [\$217.34 USD] to each household.

**Will they donate 300,000 kyat [\$217.34 USD] to each household?**

Yes.

**How many solar panels will they distribute?**

They will distribute one to each household. If there are 30 households [in a village], then they will distribute 30 solar panels. All villagers in Y--- village have already received solar panels.

**Did any villagers in B--- village have to write a proposal [to receive] solar panels?**

I did not hear if they wrote a proposal for solar panels.

**Do you need it [solar panels]?**

Yes, I need it. If they distribute water pipes, I will take them, because I already told the village head. We heard that B--- villagers wrote a proposal to receive aid, but in other villages the villagers already took the aid [without writing proposals].

**Who took the aid?**

The villagers who live in Y--- [village] have already taken the aid [solar panels]. They live very close to the leaders, but they have already taken them [solar panels]. Vice leader of village tract and sectary of village tract leader live there.

**Why did they [Lu Thaw Township authorities] not allow villagers to take solar panels and what did they say?**

They said that if we take the aid, it will only benefit SLORC.

**Did they [KNU] consult villagers in any other ways, or did they just hold the meeting?**

No, they just held the meeting.

**Did they explain to the villagers clearly [about why they did not allow them to take the aid]?**

No, they did not clearly explain this to the villagers and the villagers did not understand [why they could not collect the aid].

**Do any villagers want to collect solar panels?**

Yes, many villagers want to get solar panels.

**Is there a difference between the number of villagers who want to collect [solar panels] and [those] who do not want to [collect them]?**

Most villagers want to take the aid, but we do not dare to take the aid.

**Do you know how many villages in each village tract have taken the aid?**

All villagers in Y--- village have taken the aid.

**Do you know any other villages?**

N--- village.

**What about villages in other village tracts?**

In other village tracts, villagers in K'Law Hta village tract took the aid.

**Did leaders stop them from taking them?**

I am not sure about the other village tracts, but the leaders asked Y--- villagers to return the aid. They returned them when Ss--- got married.

**How many solar panels did they send to Y--- villagers?**

I do not know how many household are in Y--- village, but people said only two households did not receive the aid.

**Which village tract is Y--- located in?**

Y--- is located in Baw Thay Hta village tract.

**Who did you say lives there at the moment?**

I said vice leader of the village tract and the sectary of village tract live there [Y---village].

**Did they also take the aid?**

One of Ma Z--- 's daughters took a solar panel.

**Did she return the panel?**

When I went to a villager's engagement party, she had not returned the panel yet. The other villagers had already returned the aid.

**Have they all returned the aid?**

Yes, because the KNDO Commanders and village tract leaders asked them to return [the solar panels]. Village tract leaders, KNDO commanders, and liaison officers returned the aid for them. The leaders used boats to return the villagers' aid.

**Did Y--- village head write a proposal for solar panels?**

I don't know whether the village head wrote the proposal or not. I think the Burma/Myanmar government wanted to help the villagers. I think no one had to write proposals. In B--- village, when they were distributing the rice they told us that if we want to make ID cards we can make them for free.

**Did they ask for money for the solar panels?**

I am not sure whether they asked for money or not. And I am not sure if they will ask for money later or not. They did not tell us clearly.

**What do you think about Y--- villagers returning the solar panels? Do you think all of the solar panels reached [the Burma/Myanmar government]?**

The leaders returned the aid themselves.

**Where did they return the aid to?**

They returned them [solar panels and water pipes] to Section 4 [of Hpapun Town].

**Did the people [leaders, KNDO, and liaison officers] send them through Section 4 [leaders]?**

Yes, they sent it to Section 4 and kept them at the administrator's house.

**Who is the administrator?**

Aa---'s mother. She is Bb---'s sister.

**Is she the village head?**

Yes, she is the village head. There are a lot of solar panels at Aa---'s mother house and also near the other part of [Pgeh Loh Kloh] river.

**What is other part of river?**

The other part of river is Nauk Bet Ka.

**Was it [the aid] kept at the village head's house?**

Yes, the solar panels were kept in the village head's house.

**Did any villagers say anything to the leaders after they ask them to return the aid?**

I did not hear them say anything.

**Did any other villages take the aid besides Y--- village?**

Cc--- and Dd-- villages might have taken the aid. And also the villagers who live close to N--- [village] might have taken some solar panels. I think they also had to return them. They [the KNU leaders] said they asked them to return the solar panels, but I am not sure whether they [the villagers] return them all or not. I do not know.

**Did they ask all of the villagers to return the solar panels?**

Yes, all villagers were asked to return the aid. I have not met with Ee--- and Ff--- villagers. If I meet them, I will ask them whether they have returned the aid or not. All of the villagers who live in Baw Thay Hta village tract returned the aid.

**Did they [Burma/Myanmar government] support villagers with only solar panels and rice? Have you heard if the villagers were supported with anything else?**

I heard they [the Burmese/Myanmar government] will also distribute money.

**You only heard about it?**

Yes.

**Has [the money] not arrived?**

Yes, [the money] has not arrived. I heard the people said B---villagers asked about it, but none of them asked.

**Who told you about it [that the Burma/Myanmar government would distribute money]?**

The leaders told us.

**Did any KNU departments come to donate anything to the villagers?**

Last year they donated 30,000 kyat [\$21.73 USD].

**Did they donate it to each person or each household?**

They donated it to each person.

**Did they donate [money] only to Baw Thay Hta village tract or did they also distribute it to other village tracts?**

They only donated it to Baw Thay Hta village tract.

**Who donated it? Was it from the district or the township?**

It was from both, district and township.

**When did they donate it?**

They donated it in 2014.

**Was it in 2014?**

Yes.

**Did they donate it once or more than once?**

In the past they donated 500 kyat [\$0.36 USD] to each person, but I am not sure about this year.

**Is it Kyat or baht?**

Kyat.

**Have they donated kyat or baht in their most recent donation?**

Kyat.

**Did they donate it to each household?**

Yes, they did, except [they did not donate kyat to] the people who did not submit their names. They did not receive the donation.

**Did they [those villagers] ask for a donation?**

They asked the leaders and Tt---'s household received the donation. When we received the donation, Uncle Gg--- and his wife did not receive it. This happened when his wife passed away.

**So, they did not receive it [the donation]?**

No, they did not.

**Did they [the KNU departments] not help them?**

No, they did not.

**Did they [KNU] not know?**

Village head leader said he forgot to submit their names because only two people lived in their household.

**Did they not tell them [Uncle Gg--- and his wife] when they were distributing the donations?**

They did tell them, but they said they did not have any money left.

**Did they distribute any donations in other townships or village tracts?**

Hh--- villagers mainly complained about it [not receiving donations].

**Where is Hh--- located?**

It is located in Dweh Loh [Township].

**What did they complain about?**

They complained that they [the leaders] only distributed donations to B--- villagers. Many li--- villagers have also been waiting to receive the donations. Last year they [li--- villagers] did not pay their taxes and had to serve as carriers [transporting materials for *loh ah pay*<sup>9</sup>].

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<sup>9</sup> *Loh ah pay* is a Burmese term now commonly used in reference to forced labour, although traditionally referring to voluntary service for temples or the local community, not military or state projects.

**Who organised the donation money?**

I do not remember the name of the person. They live in the upper part [of Day Poo Noh village]. Puh Maw [Adjutant General] worked with them when they were distributing money.

**Are they from B---?**

No, they are from the KNDO office.

**Was Puh Maw [Bridge 5 Adjutant General] involved?**

Yes, Puh Maw and the other one was Pah Daw Khaw. Do you know Pah Daw Khaw?

**No.**

Pah Daw Khaw lives in F--- [village]. Governor Kyay Baw was also involved.

**Governor Baw?**

Yes. Many people [leaders] were involved [in organising the donations]. Village tract leaders from four village tracts were there too, such as Poh Htoh Kloh and another person with a high position, but I do not know that guy's name. Soldiers such as Bo Pah Noo also participated in distributing donations.

**Where does Bo Pah Noo live?**

I guess he lives in Hkaw Poo. He came to Kyeh Leh Hkoh.

**Did they come to donate money?**

Yes, they came along with other people.

**Can you tell me what K'Law Hta villagers said when they were upset?**

They said that B---villagers received the donation, so it was not fair for them.

**Where is li--- located?**

It is located in Lu Thaw Township.

**Did you say that li--- villagers did not pay their taxes?**

Yes, they did not. They said that they have been waiting for the leaders to hold the meeting before paying taxes to them. If they [the leaders] do not hold the meeting, then they [the li--- villagers] are not going to pay their taxes.

**Can you tell me why they did not pay the taxes?**

They did not pay the taxes because they said that if they [the KNU department] donated money, they should donate it to each village tract instead of only donating to Baw Thay Hta village tract.

**Did they hold a discussion with villagers before they donated the money?**

The villagers gathered the same day as they were distributing money. They said that you had to sign your name after you took money. When it was B--- turn they ran out of paper to sign. We could not sign our names because the paper had run out.

**What did they do after the papers had run out?**

We took them [the donations] without signing.

**Did you sign your name?**

We could not sign our names since there was no more paper left, but some village were able to sign their names.

**Did they donate it [money] to orphans' and widows' families?**

We submitted our complaints [to village leaders] that the paddy had died and couldn't produce rice. We faced food shortages, secondly, sickness, and thirdly starvation.

**Do any other organisations donate aid or is it only district and township [KNU leaders]?**

They only donated to Baw Thay Hta village tract.

**Are there any other organisations besides the KNU?**

I only know of that group [the KNU].

**What about the organisations, which are not a part of the KNU?**

I do not know any other organisations.

**Are there any clinics in B---village?**

[There are] no clinics [there], only in Day Poo Noh village.

**Where do you go if you are sick?**

We usually go to Hpapun.

**Hpapun and Day Poo Noh, which one is closer?**

Hpapun is closer.

**Does Hpapun have a KNU hospital or a Burma/Myanmar government hospital?**

Hpapun has a Burma/Myanmar government hospital. A health worker from Day Poo Noh could not deliver her baby and she also went to Hpapun hospital.

**A health worker from the KNU?**

Yes.

**Could she not deliver the baby?**

Yes, she is Hpah Tee Poh Yaw's daughter in law. She went to Hpapun Hospital to deliver her baby.

**What are the illnesses facing villagers in B--- village?**

They commonly experience headaches, diarrhoea, and have difficulties delivering babies.

**Do they face malaria disease?**

Yes, they experience malaria disease.

**Do they experience serious illnesses?**

Yes, one villager currently has a serious illness.

**What kind of illness does he have?**

He has cancer.

**Where does he live?**

He is Jj---s father. He smells very bad because he does not have anyone who [takes care of him]. In the past, he lived with his wife, but after his wife passed away he lives by himself. The people said that sometimes maggots fall off his body. First, it [the cancer] started happening on his jaw, then it moved to the roof of his mouth. He can still eat food.

**When did he get [mouth cancer]?**

Last year.

**Is there anyone [who can] give him medicine to take?**

[Villagers have] no hope to receive medicine. Last year [KNU Forestry Minister] Poh Kyweh's son, Saw Kk---, and Poh Li---'s daughter came once when I cut my leg. They said that we had to beware of AIDS now. I think that if you get AIDS you might [have gotten it] by having sex with someone. I got angry with them at that time when my leg was recently cut. I almost told them off because my wound was still bleeding when they told me [about AIDS]. I asked them, "*did you bring any medicine with you?*" They told me that they did not bring anything. I asked them, "*Should I kill you with a knife?*"

**Are they health workers?**

I do not know. They live in Day Poo Noh.

**Why did they come?**

They came to organise and to raise awareness about healthcare and diseases.

**Who do they work for?**

They work for the health [department from the KNU] because they came to distribute medicine. When I asked them they said they brought some medicine with them, but not a lot.

**When did they come?**

They came in 2013.

**Did they distribute medicine or provide any injections?**

They did not do anything. They just held talks [to raise awareness] then went back [to their base] early the next morning. They said they distributed medicine, but they only brought pinworm with them. [So] I called her pinworm nurse.

**Did any other people come or only them?**

Only them.

**Have they provided [enough] awareness or distributed enough medicine to the villagers?**

No, they have not. They just said that if you are feeling sick, go to Day Poo Noh Hospital to test for the illness and see if it is a urine infection and/or malaria. They said you have to prevent the disease.

**Did anyone report the health condition of that grandpa?**

No one reported it because even if we report it, no one will come to provide medical treatment for him. As I told you, when I cut my leg I asked them to give me medicine, but they did not have [any].

**Has he [the cancer patient] ever tried to report it [his illness] to the Burma/Myanmar government?**

I think if he reports it, he might get support.

**What kinds of examples did Saw Kk--- and Thara Mu use to show you how you will get AIDS? Did they explain to you what AIDS is?**

They did explain it, but after listening to them I cannot explain it to you.

**Can you tell me as much as you remember?**

I do not remember anything since it took place many years ago.

**Did they tell you how AIDS happens?**

They did not tell us. For me, I know AIDS is transmitted through sex.

**Have any other organisations come here?**

No other organisations have come here.

**Have any organisations come to support the villagers with education?**

Yes, they only came to encourage the villagers to improve the [education] situation.

**You said there is no clinic based close to your village?**

Yes, there is no clinic based close to my village.

**How much do you have to pay for travel fees if you go to Hpapun [hospital]?**

Currently, it does not cost a lot. Last year my wife was hospitalized in Hpapun and it cost only 120, 000 kyat [\$86.93 USD]. She had surgery and was sterilised.

**Do you usually go to Hpapun Town if you need surgery?**

For me, I usually go to Hpapun, but I am not sure about other villagers.

**Do other villagers usually go to Day Poo Noh?**

No, they mostly go to Hpapun. I have only seen Ler Buh Moh go to Day Poo Noh. She was hospitalised for a few days and then she came back. She said that the medics only gave her one or two doses of medicine to take and they never inject patients.

**Do they take good care of patients?**

Yes, they took good care of my wife. They gave me eggs, rice and salt [when my wife was hospitalised].

**Is it a Burma/Myanmar government hospital in Hpapun?**

Yes, [it is a] Burma/Myanmar government hospital.

**Do leaders prohibit you from receiving medical treatment there?**

No, they do not prohibit us from medical treatment.

**A few months ago, did any groups come to test for malaria?**

No, I never saw it. They asked people to go, but none of the villagers went.

**Do they [health workers] do malaria research in any other village tracts or townships?**

In Kler Aoo Der. I saw they did research there, but not in Baw Thay Hta. They might have done it in some other areas, but not in my village. I know they did research in Kler Aoo Der and Klaw Hta villages.

**What do they do for their research? Do they provide medicine or what do they do?**

The health workers visit household by household to distribute medicine.

**Do they check for sickness?**

Yes, they do blood tests.

**They only do blood tests?**

Yes. After Peh Poo Luh came back from medical training, she said she does not have medicine to treat patients after they take malaria blood tests. We only take blood tests. Then we have to buy medicine ourselves.

**Where did Peh Poo Luh go for medical training?**

To Day Poo Noh.

**Did they not give her medicine after she finished training?**

They did, but not enough. They did not give her much medicine. It was not enough for everyone who was tested for malaria because many people had malaria. I did many blood tests and they came up positive, but I was not given any medicine to take because there was no medicine. Therefore, I have to buy it myself and we buy mefloquine [antimalarial medicine]

**Do you know any other groups that have recently been active here or only that group?**

I do not know of any new groups since 2014 or 2015.

**What about in the past [before 2014 and 2015]?**

I saw they came here once in 2012.

**Who came?**

The health workers.

**Did they not let you know the organisation's name?**

No, they did not.

**Did they not tell you where they were from?**

They were from Day Poo Noh.

**Are there any schools in your village?**

Yes, a school was built in the village and four standards are taught in the school.

**How many teachers are teaching in the school?**

There are two teachers teaching in the school.

**Are they from your own village or others?**

One of them is from our own village and the other is from a town in the delta region. They teach together with my niece [who is also a teacher].

**When was the school built?**

I think it was built over seven years ago.

**Does the KNU government support this school?**

Yes. They support it by [paying the] teachers' salaries and [providing] note books.

**Where is the support from?**

The support is from the KNU.

**What kinds of support do they provide?**

They support them with money.

**How much do they pay each teacher per year?**

Last year both of them received 9,000 [\$257.13 USD]. Do you think this is enough to receive?

**Is it baht or kyat?**

It is baht. I think they received 3,500 baht [\$99.99 USD]<sup>10</sup> per person.

**Do they only receive 3,500 baht per year?**

Yes.

**Do any other organisations support this school?**

Kaw Muh Traw from Hpapun supports the school. They support it with money.

**How much do they support them per year?**

They support them 300,000 kyat [\$217.33 USD] per year. In total from both donors they receive 600,000 kyat [\$434.67 USD] per year.

**Kaw Mu Traw is a Christian organisation, right?**

Yes, it is a Baptist Christian organisation.

**Who supports the school teachers with food?**

The villagers and students' parents support them.

**How much do parents have to give each teacher?**

Three of my children go to school, but I only pay for two because my other child does not study any grade yet. We have to pay one big tin<sup>11</sup> and forty bowls of rice, one litre of cooking oil, salt, chilli and ajinomoto [MSG].

**Are there any parents who cannot afford it?**

Yes, some parents cannot afford it, but they try their best to pay at the end of the year. This year the two school teachers did not finish their rice. Therefore, we gave them less [rice] and paid them with money [instead]. So one big tin of rice is the same as 6,000 kyat. [\$4.35 USD].

**How many standards<sup>12</sup> are taught in the school?**

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<sup>10</sup> All conversion estimates for the baht in this report are based on the February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017, official market rate of 35.00 to US \$1.

<sup>11</sup> A big tin is a unit of volume used to measure paddy, milled rice and seeds. One big tin is equivalent to 10.45 kg or 23.04 lb of paddy, and 16 kg or 35.2 lb of milled rice.

Four standards are taught in the school, just like the KNU School.

**How many students are there in the school?**

Thirty students are in the school.

**How many students were in school last year?**

Last year there were over twenty students, but less than thirty.

**Do they all live in your village?**

Yes, all of the students live in my village.

**Are there only two organisations supporting the school?**

Yes, only two organisations.

**Does KED [Karen Education Department] come to support the school here?**

The KED does [support] under the supervision of the KNU.

**What kinds of support do they provide?**

They provide money, note books, pens, volleyballs, and cane balls [bamboo balls]. We have to go to get school supplies from Meh Nuh Hta.

**How far is it from Meh Nuh Hta to here?**

We have to stay there overnight. The school teachers go to get the money [their salary] in Day Poo Noh.

**Do you have to transport school materials by yourself or do you hire people?**

The villagers have to carry the supplies.

**You said from Meh Nuh Hta, it takes you one night to come back?**

Yes. When we reach there we sleep over night and come back the next morning.

**How many people go to carry school materials each year?**

Three people go to carry school materials each year.

**Do you rotate people each year?**

Yes, we rotate people and some villagers go to carry while others do not. The villagers are also not very unified [do not help equally].

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<sup>12</sup> A standard refers to a school year in the education system of Burma/Myanmar. The basic education system has a 5-4-2 structure. Primary school runs from Standard 1 to Standard 5, lower secondary school is Standard 6 to Standard 9, and upper secondary school is Standard 10 to Standard 11.

**Why did they [some villagers] not go to carry school materials?**

They said that their children are not old enough to study and some of them said their children do not study in the village and study at other places instead.

**How many of them do not go to carry school materials?**

Almost seven or eight people.

**Are there many villagers that carry materials or are there only a few?**

Many of them go to carry school materials and only a few of them do not go.

**Did they [the village heads] talk to them?**

Yes, they did, but they [the villagers] said their children do not study in the village and some are not free [to carry supplies] or their children have already dropped out of school.

**Who is the village head in B---village?**

Poh Mm--- is the village head.

**How many village heads are there in B---village?**

There is only one village head.

**Who is the school's headmaster?**

Poh Kler Mee is the school headmaster.

**Where do students go to study after they pass KNU primary school?**

They go to study in Day Poo Noh and some of them go to study in Hpapun [Town]. It depends where their parents want to send their children.

**Have you experienced any problems in the past seven years since school was built regarding the teachers' salary or food?**

We have not faced any problems.

**Thank you very much, uncle, for sharing the information regarding the situation in B---village, in Baw Thay Hta village tract, that I wanted to know from you. Do you want to add anything that I have not asked you already?**

This year the villagers want to upgrade the school, but we cannot afford it.

**How do you want to upgrade it?**

We want to repair the school.

**Is it damaged or is it too old?**

They want to repair it because the teak [wood] is not so good and the teachers are not happy to teach in this school.

**Why do they [teachers] not want to teach in the school?**

They do not want to teach there because the school was built in the middle of the houses. In the past, we built schools outside of the houses. More recently the villagers have built their houses very close to the school. Therefore, now it is very crowded.

**You mean the houses were built around the school?**

Yes. The people who live in the upper and lower parts of the village pool around the school therefore the teachers do not want to teach in the school.

**Is it a problem?**

Yes. They prefer to build a new school and keep the old school as a church.

**Do villagers agree to build a new school?**

Some of them agree, but some do not agree. Many villagers do not agree and only a few of them agree. Therefore, it is not easy to build a new school.

**In your opinion, do you think a new school should be built or not?**

I discussed it with the school headmaster and we both agreed to build a new school.

**Is there a church in here [the village]?**

The church and the school are the same building. They teach on the ground floor of the school.

**What religion do most villagers believe in?**

Most of the villagers in B--- village are animists.

**Are there any Christians in your village?**

Yes, a few households are Christian, but not many of them.

**So most of them are animists?**

Yes.

**Are there any problems?**

Yes, the problems are related to the water pipes. People wrote proposals to the leaders, but we did not receive them. The Burma/Myanmar will give [them to] us, but we do not feel safe enough to take it.

**Have you ever written a proposal to the KNU?**

We wrote proposals to the KNU many times, but we did not receive [any water pipes].

**How many times have you written proposals?**

We wrote a proposal when Thara Poh Hseh came to teach here, but we still have not received anything yet.

**Have they [the KNU] ever told you that they would provide water pipes?**

No, they never told us. They only told us to *"wait and listen, wait and listen."*

**How many years have you waited and listened?**

Since my children were not old enough to study, but now they are already old enough.

**You said the Burma/Myanmar government will support you?**

Yes, they will support us, but they [Lu Thaw Township authorities] will not allow us to take it [water pipes].

**Just [water pipes] that, or is there anything that you left out?**

No, only that.

**In regards to the water pipes, does the KNU support any other villages?**

I think the KNU might support other villages such as, Kler Aoo Der. The villagers there might receive support from the KNU.

**Are there any other organisations supporting [villagers] or are they directly supported by the KNU?**

I do not [know].

**Have you seen any water pipes in Kler Aoo Der?**

Yes, they provided water by installing water pipes in the village.

**Is Kler Aoo Der the only village? Or are there any other villages supported by the KNU?**

Yes, not only Kler Aoo Der. Another village is Klaw Hta. I am not sure whether they bought it [water pipes] by themselves or not, because I have not followed up on this issue with them.

**Have you not asked them?**

Yes, I have not asked them.

**Okay, thank you very much. Do you have anything else to add?**

I do not have anything to add; just only that much.



The above photos were taken on April 4<sup>th</sup> 2015 in U--- area of Hpapun Town, at Uu--- village head's house. They show the solar panels, batteries, tube lights and wires which were provided by Burma/Myanmar government to the villagers in F---, Nn---, Oo---, and Y--- villages. The villagers went to collect 40 solar panels [from Hpapun town] and brought them back with motor boats. The KNU heard the information and they told villagers, *"none of you were allowed to take. You have to send them all back directly to Hpapun Town."* Therefore the villagers responded to them, *"we will not send the aid back because we already brought it to our villages."* and so they did not dare to send it back. [The villagers told them,] *"If you do not allow us to take, you have to send it back by yourself [KNU]"*. Later Saw Pp--- himself went to send it back. They [he] went to keep it in Uu--- at the village head's house and other peoples' houses. The solar panels did not reach the government office. Also some of them were lost along the way. After they kept it there, some of them [villagers] went to take it secretly. They said, *"if other people ask about it, we will tell them we bought it ourselves."* I received the information from Uu--- village head and some of villagers also told me. [Photo: KHRG]

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

- "Hpapun Interview: Saw B---, October 2016," (March 2017)
- "Hpapun Interview: Saw A---, March 2016," (January 2017)
- "Hpapun Field Report: January to December 2015," (December 2016)
- "Hpapun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, June to August 2016," (November 2016)
- "Hpapun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, March to May 2016," (September 2016)

# Mu Traw (Hpapun) District



Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)