



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Interview

December 2, 2016 / KHRG #15-79-A2-11

Dooplaya Interview: Naw A---, August 2015

In this Interview, Naw A--- describes events occurring in Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District, in August 2015, including education, water supply and healthcare.

- *Naw A--- talked about the difficulties that she and her fellow teachers face at their school because one of the Burma/Myanmar government teacher's husband teaches some of his wife's lessons even though he is not a trained teacher.*
 - *Naw A--- also raised an issue that villagers from another village have diverted water from her village by using pipelines without consent from villagers in her village. This caused problems for the villagers because these pipelines are placed under their houses, plantations and farms. Villagers are also worried that they might face water scarcity in the summer season.*
 - *Naw A--- also mentioned that her school teaches up to Standard 4 and they teach both the Karen Education Department (KED) and the Burma/Myanmar government's curriculum. In the past they could teach Karen language up to Standard 4, however, since two years ago, when her school became a Burma/Myanmar government school, they are only allowed to teach Karen language up to Standard 2. Villagers also have to provide accommodation and basic support for the school teachers who are hired by the Burma/Myanmar government.*
-

Interview | Naw A--- (female, 29), C--- village, Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District (August 2015)

The following Interview was conducted by a community member trained by KHRG to monitor local human rights conditions. It was conducted in Dooplaya District on August 2015 and is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.¹ This interview was received along with other information from Dooplaya District, including four other interviews, one situation update, 291 photographs and seven video clips.²

¹ 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 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.

² 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

Name: Naw A---

Ethnicity: Karen

Religion: Buddhist

Age: 29

Marital Status: Single

Occupation: Teacher

What is your name?

Naw³ A---

How old are you?

29.

What is your ethnicity?

Karen.

What is your religion?

Buddhism.

What is your occupation?

Teacher.

Where do you live?

Dooplaya District, Kaw T'ree [Kawkareik] Township, H--- village tract.

Can you tell me about the information that you have told me about before?

One of the [Burma/Myanmar government] female teachers comes and teaches here. She came with her husband and her husband does not have a job so she gave one subject for her husband [to teach in the school]. We do not want her husband to teach with us as he is not a teacher.

What about other issues?

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

³ Naw is a S'gaw Karen female honorific title used before a person's name.

There are eight teachers and one teacher's husband. She takes two subjects. If she cannot handle both subjects then she could ask to share them with the other teachers. She does not have to give it to her husband.

How many standards do you have in your school?⁴

This is a primary school so there are only four standards.

How many students and how many teachers are there in the school?

There are 95 students and eight teachers.

Is this school supported by the villagers or by the [Burma/Myanmar] government?

There are five teachers that the [Burma/Myanmar] government sent and three teachers who are supported and hired by local villagers.

What about the school principal?

There are two principals: one was locally hired by villagers and another is from [the Burma/Myanmar] government, who is only a temporary assistant. If we have to select a new principal, we only want a principal from local people [villagers]. For [teachers coming from the Burma/Myanmar] government side, they don't know about the village's situation.

What is the teacher's husband's name?

His name is B---. I think that if she [his wife] cannot handle the subjects then she should give them to the other teachers and not to her husband. Do we have the right to say that, '*as you are not a teacher you should not interrupt your wife,*' or is that not okay for us to say?

Do you want to talk to him about this?

Not personally, but if possible, I want the school committee and relevant responsible person to have a meeting and discuss it. Or can we talk about it with him ourselves?

Can you tell me about your feelings and the challenges with your work?

Some people think that he can teach very well because he is educated and we think the same. However, he has not been given any responsibility or authority for anything [in the school] so he should not been involved in the school.

What about the village's situation?

⁴ 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.

Some people think that we do not like the teacher's husband and they think we complain too much. I think I am making this complaint in the right way. It does not mean that we do not like him.

Are there any other issues?

There have been no consultations for the water distribution project. They have not held any meetings or informed villagers in C--- village when submitting proposals to the Burma/Myanmar government. When the government approved [their proposals] they just came and installed the pipes and started their project without speaking with the villagers. Some pipes go under villagers' houses, go through villagers' plantations and villagers' land so many people are not happy about this and it will be difficult for them to find water during the summer season.

Are there any armed groups [that are active in your area]?

No, only villagers from K--- village. They come and take water from C--- village.

Did they come and talk to villagers before they took water from C--- village?

Yes, they did but villagers from C--- [village] did not agree to it. But they did it anyway.

Is there anything else you want to say?

Villagers do not have [much] income from their business activities to earn money for a living, but they still have to pay taxes and support the teachers that [the Burma/Myanmar] government sent to the village.

How did they collect money?

Each month, they [village committee members] go to each household and collected two bowls of rice and one basket of charcoal. The school committee also had to provide accommodation for them [Burma/Myanmar government teachers] but the government had also given them money to build a house to live in as well as a salary.

How much salary do they get per month?

They get more than 200,000 kyat [US \$158.51]⁵ per month. We do not know exactly how much it is.

What about the locally-hired teachers?

Each household gives each of them three bags of rice per year. The Kaw Thoo Lei education department [Karen Education Department]⁶ also provide them with a stipend of 7,500 baht [US

⁵ All conversion estimates for the kyat in this report are based on the 14th October 2016 official market rate of 1,261.78 kyat to US \$1.

\$212.62]⁷ per year. They are paid a stipend based on the number of students. If they have more students, they are paid more. But now, even though there are more students, the number of teachers has also increased so we get much less because we have to share [the total] amongst ourselves.

Does the KNU's [Karen National Union] education department also provide money to the [Burma/Myanmar] government teachers as well?

No, they only give money to the locally-hired teachers.

I just want to check, is it only the households who send their children to school that have to provide three bags of rice?

Every household has to provide it, the whole village. For a widow or an orphan, we do not ask for the same amount. It depends on their situation and whether they can pay it or not. If they can't pay it, that's fine.

Anything else?

Our village's school was constructed and supported by the villagers, the school teachers and our monks so I think we should only hang our Karen [national] flag. The [Burma/Myanmar] government teachers do not like that and they want to hang the Burmese [Burma/Myanmar national] flag in front of the school instead of the Karen [national] flag. Regarding the subjects that are taught, the [Burma/Myanmar] government only allow us to teach Karen language up to Standard 2. In Standards 3 and 4, they do not allow us to teach [Karen language]. In the past we taught Karen [language] but since two years ago we have not been allowed to teach it at Standards 3 or 4.

When did the Burmese [Burma/Myanmar] government teachers arrive [in your village]?

Two years ago. [Now] we teach both subjects provided by the KNU and the [Burma/Myanmar] government. We do not just teach [the subjects] from the [Burma/Myanmar] government or the KNU.

Anything else?

⁶ 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: "[About](#)," accessed July 21st 2015.

⁷ All conversion estimates for the baht in this report are based on the 14th October 2016 official market rate of 35.27 baht to US \$1.

In the past the KNU came and provided medicine for children, for example preventions, worm prevention and vitamins that keep eyes healthy but I do not know the name of the medicine. [They used to provide this medicine] every six months but now they know that the [Burma/Myanmar] government now provides us [with some medicine] so they do not come as regularly as before.

In this village, do any armed groups come and oppress the villagers?

No.

How many armed groups are there in this village?

Just the DKBA [Democratic Karen Benevolent Army].⁸

Anything else? What about electricity and water?

We want solar panels for the villagers.

Has the village head submitted a proposal [to the Burma/Myanmar government] for the villagers to get solar panels?

Yes, but they did not respond to us.

Anything else?

If possible, we [teachers] want a computer for our school. Right now we have to write exam questions for the students by hand. If there were fewer students, it would be easy for us, but when the number of students increased we have had to work longer hours, so if we had a computer it may make it easier for us to do our work.

Anything else?

No.

Ok thank you very much if you do not have anything else to say.

⁸ The Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA Benevolent) was formed in 2010 as a breakaway group following the transformation of the majority of the original Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (1994 – 2010) into Border Guard Forces (BGF). This group was originally called the Democratic Karen *Buddhist* Army until it changed its name to the Democratic Karen *Benevolent* Army in April 2012 in order to reflect its secularity. This group is comprised of different divisions, including Klo Htoo Baw Battalion and DKBA-5, and was led for many years by General Saw Lah Pwe aka Na Khan Mway who died in March 2016 and was replaced by General Saw Mo Shay in April 2016. The DKBA (Benevolent) signed a preliminary ceasefire with the Burma/Myanmar Government on November 3rd 2011 and then signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) on October 15th 2015. The group is based in Son Si Myaing area, Myawaddy/Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District, southern Kayin State. This DKBA (Benevolent) (2010 – present) should not be confused with, either the original DKBA (Buddhist) (1994-2010) which was transformed into the BGF in 2010, or with the DKBA (Buddhist) (2016 – present) which was formed in 2016 as a splinter group of the DKBA (Benevolent). Importantly, the DKBA (Benevolent) has signed both the preliminary and nationwide ceasefire agreements with the Burma/Myanmar government, whereas the DKBA (Buddhist) has not signed either agreement.



These two photos were taken by a community member on June 30th 2015 and July 1st 2015 respectively in C---village, Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District. The first photo shows pipes that were placed on a villagers' plantation fence to transfer water from a river to the village. The second photo shows a pipeline that was dug under a C--- villager's house to transfer water to K--- village. Because of the water situation, there is social conflict between the two villages, because K--- villagers planned to transfer and get the water from C--- village's stream. C--- villagers currently use and consume this water, and the water pipe was laid without consent from C--- villagers. K--- villagers received support from the Burma/Myanmar government for the water pipeline. C--- villagers raised their concern that they will face with water shortages in the future, especially in summer, because water from C--- stream will be reduced year-by-year if it is siphoned to K--- village. [Photos: KHRG]



This photo was taken by a community member on June 29th 2015 in C--- village, Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District. The photo shows C---'s primary school.

This school has some disagreement between the local Karen teachers and the Burma/Myanmar government teachers. There are three local Karen teachers and five government teachers. One of local Karen teachers has been teaching at this school since 2006; one of the government teachers has been teaching in this school since 2013 but has a higher position than the local Karen teacher. Therefore, the local Karen teachers questioned as to whether it is reasonable to appoint the higher positions such as the Principal position to the government teachers rather than to the local Karen teachers. In the past, they did not have a Principal position but only appointed responsible people to be in charge of the school. Now, the government has appointed their teachers for the Principal position.

There is a further dispute between local Karen and government teachers because local Karen teachers want to put the Karen national flag up in front of the school but the government teachers want to put the Myanmar national flag up instead. There is also disagreement about the teaching of Karen language at the school since the school became a Burma/Myanmar government school in 2013 and therefore now teaches a Burmese-language curriculum. *[Photo: KHRG]*

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

- “Dooplaya Interview: Saw B---, March 2015,” (November 2016)
- “Dooplaya Interview: Saw A---, February 2016” (November 2016)
- “Ongoing militarisation in southeast Myanmar,” (October 2016)
- “Dooplaya Field Report: Military conflict, violent abuse, and destruction caused by development projects, January to December 2015,” (October 2016)
- “Forced recruitment of a child soldier by KNLA in Kyainseikgyi Township, Dooplaya District, October 2015 (UPDATED),” (October 2016)

Dooplaya District



Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)