



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Interview

February 12, 2018 / KHRG #16-29-A2-I1

Toungoo Interview: Naw Be---, January 2016

This Interview with Naw Be--- describes events occurring in Htantabin Township, Toungoo District, during the period between 2012 and 2016 including land disputes, increased freedom of movement and development needs in the community.

- *Naw Be--- discusses in detail the process of villagers acquiring loans from the Burma/Myanmar government, including concerns about not being able to acquire future loans if they permit the KNU to acquire the land.*
 - *Although the Burma/Myanmar government has promised to bring electricity to Bf--- village, the project was stopped because villagers could not pay all the required instalments. Some villagers have complained that the money collected to pay for the project is being kept instead by the village administrator and are now distrustful of development projects in the village.*
 - *Naw Be--- reports an increase in land disputes since the 2012 preliminary ceasefire between original land owners and current residents.*
 - *Naw Be--- also discusses increased freedom of movement since the 2012 preliminary ceasefire, female involvement in politics in the 2015 election, issues regarding taxation in the village and her vision for the future.*
-

Interview | Naw Be--- (female, 47), Bf--- village, Htantabin Township, Toungoo District (January 2016)

The following Interview was conducted by a community member trained by KHRG to monitor local human rights conditions. It was conducted in Toung District in January 2016 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 Toungoo District, including four other interviews and nine video clips.²

¹ 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.

² 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.

Ethnicity: Karen
Religion: Baptist Christian
Marital Status: Married
Occupation: Healthcare worker
Position: Villager

What is your name?

My name is Naw Be---

How old are you?

I am 47 years old.

What is your nationality?

Karen.

What is your religion?

Christian.

Baptist or Anglican Christian?

Baptist Christian.

What do you do for living?

I stay at home and treat patients and also work on the farm.

Do you have family?

Yes.

How many children do you have?

I have six children.

What is the age of your oldest child?

I have twins [who are my] oldest and they are both 22 years old. They are female and male twins.

What is the age of your youngest child?

My youngest child is six years old.

We would like to discuss the situation in Burma/Myanmar, especially at the national level, so can you tell us what you think about the [2012] Ceasefire agreement?

After the [preliminary] ceasefire was signed we have been able to work freely as villagers and also as farmers. The Burma/Myanmar government now supports us by loaning us money. We can travel very freely and we are no longer asked questions when we cross the gates [checkpoints] during our travels. We also do not need to inform [the village head] if we go to stay overnight in other villages as strangers. We are able to live freely and we are [therefore] delighted with the ceasefire.

Where do you live?

I live in Bf--- village.

How many households are there in Bf--- village?

There are over [censored for security] households in Bf--- village. I think some of the villagers have left the village and so there would [therefore] be over [censored for security] households left; I do not know the exact number.

Do you know the number of villagers [in Bf--- village]?

I do not know.

Is there any clinic in your village?

There is no clinic in our village. There are only midwives and village health workers in the village. Therefore, if the villagers get sick we send them to the hospital.

Who appointed the midwife [and] health workers?

They are appointed by the government.

The Burma/Myanmar government?

Yes.

How many of them are there in the village?

There is no midwife in the village. They all stay in Tha Daw.

Tha Daw is a village?

Yes, Tha Daw village.

Is that a Karen village?

No, it is a Mon village.

What about education? Is there any school in your village?

Yes, there is a school.

How many standards³ are taught in the school and is it a primary school or a middle school?

Eight standards are taught in the school and it is a middle school but there are not enough teachers to teach in the school. There are many students but a lack of teachers.

How many students are there in the school?

I do not currently know. In the past I used to be on the school committee.

Can you guess how many of them?

I think there are around 400 students in total.

How many teachers are teaching in the school?

In the past there were 15 teachers but some of them have left the school and there is no one to replace them. There are currently seven teachers left. In our village the villagers have had to hire three teachers by themselves, which has therefore caused problems for the villagers to pay salary to the teachers.

Are there three of them?

³ 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.

Yes.

Do they receive a salary?

Yes, the villagers have to pay them a salary.

How much do you pay them per month?

We do not pay them a monthly salary. We pay them an annual salary and also donate some rice to them. Last year, we paid only two teachers but this year we paid three teachers and the standards have also been promoted [raised] because the numbers of students is also very high this year.

Are there any students whose parents are unable to support their study?

Yes, some parents are not able to support their children but they try [their best]. As you know, if you live in the town and your children are in Standard Eight you need to send them to an expensive [private] tuition class. As we live in a village, there are not enough teachers and no [private] tuition teachers. One male villager who passed Standard Ten helps us by teaching as a tuition teacher and teaches the students who are in Standard Eight.

Does he live in Bf--- village?

Yes, he lives in Bf--- village and guides them in their study and he also looks after all of the students. This is very helpful for us. There are not enough teachers in the school, which has caused problems for us at the school.

Do any NGOs or the Burma/Myanmar government come to distribute school materials such as books and backpacks?

In the past year UNICEF came once to distribute backpacks and books. The Burma/Myanmar government also provided school uniforms to the students this year.

Did they donate them to every student?

No, they gave them to the necessary students starting from Standard Four. The Karen National Union [KNU] also distributed books and volleyballs to the school.

Where do they [students] continue their schooling after they have completed all the [standards] here?

If they complete all the standards here then they continue their studies in K'Moo Kyoh School.

How many standards are taught in K'Moo Kyoh School?

Ten standards are taught in K'Moo Kyoh School.

Is it very far from here to K'Moo Kyoh School?

I think you came across that school. It is not very far [from here] but during the rainy season the students have to go to school by [crossing] the main road.

How are you doing with your living [livelihood] here as you are working on the peanut plantation?

In terms of livelihood even if there is unfavourable weather we can still produce enough foods by the grace of God but the insects attack the peanuts and we have to use insecticide to kill them. We are really grateful for the people who sell the insecticides on loan to us. We pay them back after we sell the peanuts. As I mentioned before, the Tatmadaw do not disturb us at all. They do not ask for taxes from us but the Karen [KNU] tax us for many things including our motorbikes. We only use motorbikes for traveling purposes [not for business]. I personally have

a motorbike and use it to drop the patients [to their home] during the day and night time [as needed] but I still have to pay taxes [to the KNU]. This year I have not paid [my motorbike tax]. I said [to the KNU] that my motorbike is very old and I always have to fix it. I paid 70,000 kyat [US \$51.36]⁴ to fix my motorcycle this year so I told them [the KNU] that I will not pay the [motorbike] tax in this year because I am not a carrier [someone who uses their motorcycle to carry people for money].

How much do they [KNU] tax per motorbike?

They tax them [villagers] 5,000 kyat [US \$3.67] per motorbike.

So if you own two motorbikes you have to pay 10,000 kyat [US \$7.34]?

Yes.

Does this tax only apply to the carriers [moto-taxis]?

No. We only use it for personal use [but still have to pay the tax].

Do they tax the carriers [moto-taxis]?

Yes but after the villagers heard about this information they do not want to be carriers [moto-taxis] because if something happens to them no one can help them. I think they [KNU] will tax them more than 5,000 kyat [US \$3.67] but I am not sure because I never found out this information and I also did not keep it in my mind [remember it]. Currently, the Tatmadaw [Burma/Myanmar government] do not tax us and they also loan us money when we farm our land. The Burma/Myanmar government loans us 100,000 kyat [US \$73.37] if we own one acre of land. If you own five acres of land they loan you [us] 500,000 kyat [US \$366.84] and if you own ten acres of land they loan us 1,000,000 kyat [US \$733.68].

They loan you 100,000 kyat per acre of land?

Yes they loan us 100,000 kyat [US \$73.37] per acres of land.

Do they earn a profit [interest] from you?

No, they only earn 10,000 to 20,000 kyat [US \$7.34 to US \$14.67] as profit [interest] per year but if you pay them early you have to pay less interest but if you pay them very late you have to pay them more. Usually in March we have to pay them back but if we pay them a little bit late I think we have to pay more.

How much do they ask for in profit [interest] if you pay late?

We have to pay them 3,000 kyat [US \$2.20] more. If they do not act that way [raising the interest for late payment] some people would take it [the loan] and not want to pay it back.

When did they start this [loan project]?

They have been running it for many years already but I personally took them [loans] only two years [times] because I had to have surgery on my eye and I had to support my children with their studies. I think I am going to pay them back in February. If we pay them back early they will loan us [money] for another term earlier because they loan it term by term.

Do they pay them [loans] only for paddy farmers? What about peanut plantation [farmers]?

⁴ All conversion estimates for the kyat in this report are based on the October 4th 2017 official market rate of 1363 kyat to US \$1.

They only loan to paddy [farmers]. Some villagers finished their peanut [plantation farming] in February and repaid their loans. [Then] they will give you the loan for next year a little bit early if you repay early.

Do they [Burma/Myanmar government] provide this loan only in Bf--- village?

They have been providing it to every village including Karen and Bamar villages. Currently the people come to survey the farm lands and we worry that the Tatmadaw [Burma/Myanmar government] will not loan us money again [if we permit the KNU to survey the lands] therefore some villagers did not allow people [from the KNU] to survey their land. The other concern is that we also have Burmese ID cards and [we worry that they will] question us by asking '*You have Burmese ID cards [so] why do you allow people [the KNU] to survey your land?*' We stay between [are governed by] both of them [Burma/Myanmar government and KNU], which causes problems.

Is it becoming a problem for the villagers' livelihood?

Yes it has become a problem for the villagers and we also do not dare to tell them [KNU] openly because they are our people [Karen]. If we tell them [that our livelihoods are being harmed] it would seem as if we were not respecting their dignity.

Are there any NGOs who come to conduct development projects in your village? The development projects related to water supply and electricity?

You mean humanitarian aid like [when] they distributed solar panels, electricity and water to the local villages?

Yes, so do they come to distribute it there?

The KNU [and other groups] distributed it in A--- village because it is a small village but they do not distribute it in Bf-- village because Bf--- is a large village. Frankly, I think the KNU leaders do not think that the villagers in here need [the aid]. In reality both rich and poor people live in this village. Some poor villagers need [aid]. I cannot say more about it [the economic situation of the village]. If I say more then I might speak incorrectly. In A--- village they went to support them and train them about how to make fertiliser, tiger balm and soaps to sell to earn some income. In the local villages there is a lot of peanut powder, soil and manure to make fertiliser.

Were they conducting training there?

Yes, they had been conducting training to them [villagers] regarding how to make fertiliser. I was born in A--- but after I got married I went to live in Bf---. I have lived in both villages and if I heard that something happened I ask around for the information because I am very inquisitive.

Bf--- villagers were not invited [to the training]?

Bf--- villagers were not invited because after some people became leaders they just do what they want and look out for their own benefit. They [village leaders] are concerned that if the people [from outside of village] come to do something [activity] in our village they will influence them [village leaders] to do something [they fear that people from outside the village come with an agenda to change the village]. In my opinion I think they want to come [for conducting training] but as you know villagers are like fingers [different from each other] and they will never be able to come together. We only need collaboration [agreement on what the village needs] and if you have good collaboration they [outside groups] will support us [by conducting training]. I learned this information because one of my younger brothers is working with that organisation. They also distributed aid to B---, C---, D--- villages and distributed rations.

Are they NGOs [who are distributing aid and rations]?

Yes, they are NGOs.

Some NGOs are from religious [groups] and some are from the government but do they all have to go along with the government [agreement in order to access the area]?

I think that the NGO [who distributed the aid and rations] is from a religious [group] but they are not from [attached to] the religious leaders at the Taw Oo [Toungoo] local level. I think they are from a Christian association and they asked one Thara [teacher]⁵ to distribute the aid for local development.

Are they distributing the aid to the villagers?

Yes. They distributed the aid, conducted training and taught villagers how to raise cows and buffaloes. They invested some money to buy [livestock] to raise.

So they were giving [loaning] money to the poor villagers to buy pigs to raise?

Yes. Some villagers in Bf--- village bought cows to raise and they [NGO] loaned them money.

Is there any organisation conducting development projects related to road construction and electricity?

Yes. With regards to electricity, the people [the Burma/Myanmar government] told us that they will set up it for us a long time ago but it has not taken place yet. They required us to pay 400,000 kyat [US \$293.47] for number one [the first instalment], 30,000 kyat [US \$22.01] for number two [the second instalment] and 200,000 kyat [US \$146.74] for number three [the third instalment].

They required it [the money to be paid] in this way?

Yes they required all villagers to give it but some villagers [did not have money].

Did you allow them to set up the electricity?

Yes we need and allowed them but some villagers did not have money so therefore we could not pay them all [the total amount they requested]. Thus, it has not taken place and it has stopped. They told us to give 200,000 to 400,000 kyat [US \$146.74 to US\$293.47] to set up electricity wires and lamp posts from E--- to the old primary school in our village.

Are they [the electricity providers] the Burma/Myanmar government?

Yes they are from the Burma/Myanmar government.

Are they going to give you electricity wires and lamp posts?

Yes we were told to give [provide] one mile in length of wire but we are not sure about lamp posts. It has been long time already so I do not remember in detail. They told us that they will set this up and I paid them 200,000 kyat [US \$146.74]. I told them, "*I am going to give you only this much and if it is completed I will pay you 200,000 kyat [US \$146.74] more later*". I told them, "*I will pay you on the day when you come to set up the electricity transformer and register my name on the list [to receive electricity]*". Currently, many villagers do not want electricity because they do not have enough money [to pay for it]. If they take it they have to buy wires and a meter box. They have to buy a meter box for 90,000 or 100,000 kyat [US \$66.03 or US \$73.37]. They [Burma/Myanmar government workers] said that we have to buy the wire and the meter box so therefore some villagers were not able to afford that and they did not do it. Thus, it caused difficulties for the leaders who managed this project and it had to be stopped.

⁵ *Thara* (male) or *tharamu* (female) is a Karen term used for any teacher, pastor, or any person to whom one wishes to show respect.

When was it started?

It started a long time ago and if you keep this in your mind I am sure that you will see bamboo poles on your way [when you leave the village] where they have been repairing the road.

I saw that people have cleared the road and cut down the trees?

Yes they are working on it. They will send an electricity transformer but they said that villagers can pay the amount for only one transformer but a large village needs two transformers. Whether it is one or two transformers, it has not been set up yet so we are not able to do anything.

How has the village head managed it?

I do not know but for us we have not completely paid them yet. Therefore they have not set up electricity for us and [they also] have not cleared the road yet. They just cleared the main road. I think it is not easy to get electricity. We had collected 130 [thousand kyat or US \$95.38] for a very long time already therefore some villagers got angry and said, *'You [village administrator] collected money and loaned it for profit,'* because they [the village head/administrators] did not do as they said. Some villagers think that even if we already paid we still have to pay for the electricity meter box and they also think, *'If it has been set up by the Burma/Myanmar government why should we pay for the meter box?'* Therefore, some of them do not want to do it.

The village head and village administrator have not consulted with villagers about that?

Yes, a few days ago they consulted with villagers by organising a meeting but some villagers did not join the meeting because they were not interested and had already lost their faith. Because we have to pay for many things some of us are not interested [in the development projects]. I personally think that it [development projects] is a good opportunity [for the village] and I am very happy when the people [the Myanmar government] are helping us [by providing electricity]. If we get [electricity], it will also bring benefits for our future children. I said it is a good opportunity and we should do it. Some villagers think that we would have to pay for a meter box, for wire and the amount of electricity energy [megawatts]. Some of them think that instead of using electricity it is better use solar panels. We need it, and the people [the Myanmar government] are going to help us. Also, no one wants to live in darkness nowadays as it is now an era of development.

Are there any villagers who still use solar panels?

Yes villagers in Bf--- are using solar panels. We do not have to spend [a lot of] money when using solar panels and all villagers are currently using solar panels.

Regarding land issues, do villagers in Bf--- village have land titles?

Yes they all have land titles because the Burma/Myanmar government provided them for us and we stick them [laminated] with plastic.

Are there any land issues happening here?

I have not faced any land issues in my family.

Are there any land confiscations committed by the Burma/Myanmar government?

The government do not confiscate land but one land issue did happen here. The lands [belonging to villagers] were passed down by their grandparents from one generation to another. In the past [before the 2012 preliminary ceasefire was signed] none of them cared about the land but after the ceasefire was signed they wanted the land back. The people who

took care of the land in the conflict period were angry at the owners because they asked for the land back after the ceasefire period. This [land conflict] has been happening in our area. In the past, people cleared the land and worked on it and after they did not want to work on it [anymore] they sold it to other people. Some people just finished their duty [to clear the land] because if they did not do that they would be questioned by people [Burma/Myanmar government and Tatmadaw] all the time. After they had finished [clearing the land], they sold it to other people. They sold it piece by piece and after the ceasefire was signed they [the people who had originally cleared the land] asked for their land back. I do not know if it is a good sign or not. It has been happening in our village. Some of them are not satisfied with each other because some of them [original owners] came to them [current residents/owners of the land] to take back the land. I do not know how they asked [for their land back].

Have you not seen what happened?

No I have not seen [this with my eyes]. The old people said that the land will laugh at you if you argue with one another about the land. I do not keep my eyes on the land issue and I have never asked about it either. I heard they [current residents/owners of the land] gave half of the acres [back] to the [original] land owner. If they own six acres of land they gave three acres of land to the [original] land owners. I just heard about that but I am not sure if it is true or not because I have never asked questions about it.

Have you worked as a village head or a health worker in the past?

I have been working as a midwife health worker since I was single.

Have you [now] resigned?

Yes, but if people need me I still go around and help them.

So if villagers need your help you still help them?

Yes, if they need my help I still help them.

How do you feel about the situation in the past and the situation in the present?

What do you mean by 'situation'?

As you have been working as a midwife what do you think about the situation before the ceasefire was signed and after the ceasefire was signed?

After the military coup [the protracted conflict beginning in 1949] we had to hide our medicine and we could not travel freely in the night time. Currently, we can travel freely and we also can keep medicine [in our house]. In the past, if we kept medicine and if they [Tatmadaw] saw it [medicine] they said that we kept it for insurgents [Karen soldiers]. If some people were feeling sick I had to go and look after them secretly. Some people did not have money and if they went for medical treatment in town it cost a lot of money so therefore we just looked after each other and charged them a very low price and some of them I did not charge them because I felt pity for them. It was just a voluntary job to be a midwife health worker. If I could treat them I did it but if I did not I sent them to the hospitals. At the present time we can travel a bit more freely at night time. When the military coup happened it caused problems for the villagers because we were not able to keep medicine with us and we lived with worry but currently we can travel freely and also store medicine freely. In order to live freely in our village it is in God's hands to lead us towards our future.

I would like to ask you about the 2015 election. How many female villagers were involved in the 2015 election [by voting]? How do you get opportunities [to be involved in the

election] as you are a housewife and how satisfied are you with the opportunity that you got?

After the [Nationwide] ceasefire⁶ was signed?

Yes. After the ceasefire was signed, do women get more or fewer opportunities?

After the ceasefire was signed, we live freely as women.

Do women get equal opportunities and feel more secure in their job roles?

We are receiving equal opportunities. I cannot talk about it [explain further].

Were there any women villagers elected as candidates in the election?

Yes, some of us [women] were elected and people were calling us to be candidates but we were not interested in political issues. We can only do farming and live very peacefully in our own way. We just live and earn like that. If the people requested us [to be candidates] we told them that we were not interested in politics. We live in our own way.

Did any parties come to do election campaigning?

Yes, they came here.

How did they organise the process?

Yes, they said that you should vote for Na Ga Pyu [Party]. We were told to go to listen to the speeches and we just attended without interest. Many parties influenced us to vote for the different parties but I think most of all villagers here voted for mother Suu [Aung San Suu Kyi, NLD party]. We voted for them because we thought that we are farmers and when we were facing difficulty we had to pay [tax] even when we did not have paddy rice. We were crying [but] mother Suu and [NLD] governors also supported us. We thought that she is the only girl who works for [represents] us so we have a responsibility to vote for her and we also receive support [loans from the Burma/Myanmar government]. We voted for her because we thought that she would advocate for us, by consulting with governments [to loan more money] therefore we would receive more support from the government. Whether it is truth or not we do not know but we voted for mother Suu.

What is your vision in the future?

At the present time the [Burma/Myanmar and KNU] governments signed the ceasefire agreement therefore they financially help us and do not disturb us in our work and we can also travel freely. If our Karen people [KNU] do not tax and disturb us it will be very good, but if they still disturb us the [Burma/Myanmar] government or the Tatmadaw also might do that too. I am thinking in this way. If they do not cause problems by not taxing us they [Burma/Myanmar government] might think that if no one is taxing us we will be able to live peacefully. But if some groups want to disturb [cause problems] with each other it can also impact us and this is what we think in our heart.

⁶ On October 15th 2015, after a negotiation process marred with controversy over the notable non-inclusion of several ethnic armed groups and on-going conflicts in ethnic regions, a [Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement \(NCA\)](#) was signed between the Burma/Myanmar government and eight of the fifteen ethnic armed groups originally invited to the negotiation table, including the KNU, see "[Myanmar signs ceasefire with eight armed groups](#)," Reuters, October 15th 2015. The signing of the NCA followed the January 12th 2012 preliminary ceasefire agreement between the KNU and Burma/Myanmar government in Hpa-an. Karen civilians and the KNU have more recently expressed their concerns about the lack of progress in moving from a ceasefire towards genuine political dialogue. See, [KNU Chair Highlights Weaknesses In The NCA During Anniversary Celebrations](#), Karen News, October 2017 and [NCA signatories urge govt to reboot peace process](#), DVB, October 2017.

Tharamu [teacher], would you like to add anything that I have not questioned you about?

I think as we are farmers we want to live and work on our own, peacefully on our own farms. There is no other job in this village and, if we are not disturbed by any [armed] group, we can live peacefully on our own. But if we are disturbed [facing problems], as we are under control by both governments [in a mixed-control area between Burma/Myanmar and KNU] sometimes it causes problem for us. When they disturb [us by taxation] we have to live with worry and unhappiness. We have concerns that when our people [KNU] tax us in this way, the [Burma/Myanmar] government also will disturb [tax] us. If they [both the KNU and Burma/Myanmar government] disturb [tax] us we will be very weary. In the past we had faced disturbance [problems] but at the present time after the ceasefire was signed we can travel and live peacefully. If we live and work on our own there will be peace and if we are not disturbed by any [armed] group we can work happily as villagers. If our children do not have to serve as soldiers and if the people do not tax us then we do not feel regretful and we do not feel that we suffer poorly in our life. If they [Burma/Myanmar government] heard another government [KNU] comes to disturb us [by taxing us] the other government [Burma/Myanmar] might [repeat these actions and] come to disturb us too. We have concerns about what will happen to us in the future. We cannot see and predict it and also it is not in our hands [in our control]. I think if we stay on our own the government also will not disturb us.

Tharamu would you like to say anything else?

I want to talk about the needs of villagers. The people [Burma/Myanmar government] said that they would set up the electricity for us but it never happened. So I just want to know whether there is any group that is able to support us [set up electricity]?

Do you want the electricity based on the need of villagers?

Yes we need it. The people [Burma/Myanmar government] would like to help us [but they] required money from us and therefore some villagers were not able to pay. Thus, is there any other group who will be able to help us?

You want electricity?

Yes our village is situated near E--- [village] and that village received electricity for many years already but our village still has not received it. As you know, we are under the control of two governments so is it suitable for us to permit [one group/government to provide development] or not? We always think about it. Living under the control of two governments causes difficulty for us. We always think about whether it is good to ask for [something] or whether it is good to express our feelings. We cannot do everything by ourselves. We work on the farm to grow paddy every year and even though the paddy [rice] has high market price the soil is not good enough to produce rice. We have to use fertiliser and although we spent a lot [of money] for our farming but we can produce only a little [paddy]. It is not like this for cardamom plantation farms. For cardamom plantations if you plant for a year it can produce fruit for two to three years but for flat [paddy] farming we have to plant paddy every year. At the present time the peanut [plantations] were attacked by insects so therefore we had to buy pesticide to spray them. After we sold peanuts we have to give [repay] our debt for the pesticide. We also do not have peanut seeds to grow so we had to borrow it from the boss [rich people] and if we borrowed one sack of peanuts we have to pay them two and a half sacks of peanut for their profit [interest]. Some villagers took two sacks of peanut seed and they have to pay back five sacks because this year the market price is very high. The villagers are having difficulty earning a living in their life.

So this year the market price is very high?

Yes. They asked us to pay five sacks of peanuts for the profit [interest on the loan]. Some people who do not have peanut seeds to grow borrow it from the rich people. Therefore the villagers just work for their living in this way. If the people do not know [about the situation] they will think that it [the market price for peanuts] is good price and can generate a lot of income. In reality, we [villagers] raise livestock in order to earn income to buy rice. We hope the government will understand us.

Thank you *Tharamu*.

Yes, thank you.

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

- “Toungoo Interview: Naw A---, February 2017,” (January 2018)
- “Toungoo Situation Update: Thandaunggyi Township, March to May 2017,” (December 2017)
- “Toungoo Interview: Naw Ka---, October 2016,” (June 2017)
- “Toungoo Interview: Saw A---, January 2016,” (February 2017)
- “Toungoo Interview: Naw A---, November 2015,” (February 2017)

Taw Oo (Toungoo) District

