

Toungoo Field Report: Slow transitions towards real change, January to December 2015

January 20, 2017





Field Report

January 20, 2017 / KHRG #16-6-F1

Toungoo Field Report: Poor transitions towards real change, January to December 2015

This Field Report includes information submitted by KHRG researchers describing events occurring in Toungoo District between January 2015 and December 2015. It describes different human rights violations and other issues important to the local community, including: military activities, land confiscation, healthcare, education, drug issues, discrimination against Muslim people, and development projects that took place in Toungoo District. This report also describes local residents' concerns about military activities, development, education, healthcare, and land confiscation.

- *Land that has been traditionally possessed along with land titles by the local residents in Htantabin Township, Toungoo District was forcibly confiscated by the Tatmadaw as well as Burma/Myanmar government, by giving permission to companies such as Kaung Myanmar Aung and Shwe Swan In in order for them to carry out business operations in rural areas.*
 - *In Thandaunggyi Township, the students from the primary school had received free education services for two years at the time of reporting, as well as books, bag, pencils and 1000 kyat (US \$0.75) per student from Burma/Myanmar government. However, the education students are receiving is poor, as school teachers are often absent; they frequently leave the village to visit their homes, which can take up to two weeks per trip.*
 - *The Burma/Myanmar government healthcare services are not reaching remote areas in Toungoo District. Healthcare services in areas such as Thandaung Myo Thit are therefore poor due to the lack of medicine in clinics, and medics and doctors are providing insufficient services to local residents. Doctors or medics sometimes refer patients to the Thandaung district hospital, which has better treatment compared to the hospital in Thandaung Myo Thit, which charges fees that are too high for rural villagers.*
 - *KHRG field community members from Toungoo District also described concerns that local villagers have regarding military activities such as troop rotation, ration transportation, military target practice, and other military operational activities on the ground.*
 - *Muslim people who live in Thandaung Myo Thit Town, Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District are discriminated against by U Myo Tint, who is a self-appointed chairman of religious affairs and Thandaung Myo Thit Town administrator. He has been attempting to drive Muslim people out of Thandaung Myo Thit Town.*
-

Introduction

This report covers issues including land confiscation, education, healthcare, development projects, military activity, drug issues, and discrimination against Muslim people, which occurred

between January and December 2015 in Htantabin and Thandaunggyi Townships in Toungoo (Taw Oo) District. Since the 2012 preliminary ceasefire¹, villagers have also seen an increase in development projects in local areas. These projects are often accompanied by land confiscation, which in the cases below has negatively impacted villagers' livelihoods and, as a result, prevented them from accessing essential healthcare services.

Land confiscation

In the years since the preliminary ceasefire agreement was signed between the Karen National Union (KNU) and the Burma/Myanmar government, land confiscation has remained a major issue in all districts across Karen State. The land confiscation incidents reported by KHRG community members in Toungoo District in 2015 were predominantly perpetrated by businesses,² Tatmadaw,³ and the Burma/Myanmar government.⁴ These groups give permission, or directly sell, to companies such as Kaung Myanmar Aung⁵ and Shwe Swan In,⁶ to carry out business activities on land traditionally used and possessed by local villagers in rural areas, including land on which the villagers previously held land titles. Livelihood impacts caused by this land confiscation, such as losing vocational work, are compounding; they lead to further problems, such as inability to pay for the cost of education or healthcare.

¹ On January 12th 2012, a preliminary ceasefire agreement was signed between the KNU and Burma/Myanmar government in Hpa-an. Negotiations for a longer-term peace plan are still under way. For updates on the peace process, see the [KNU Stakeholder webpage](#) on the Myanmar Peace Monitor website. For KHRG's analysis of changes in human rights conditions since the ceasefire, see [Truce or Transition? Trends in human rights abuse and local response since the 2012 ceasefire](#), KHRG, May 2014. In March 2015, the seventh round of the negotiations for a national ceasefire between the Burma/Myanmar government and various ethnic armed actors began in Yangon, see ["Seventh Round of Nationwide Ceasefire Negotiations," Karen National Union Headquarters](#), March 18th 2015. Following the negotiations, the KNU held a central standing committee emergency, see ["KNU: Emergency Meeting Called To Discuss Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement And Ethnic Leaders' Summit," Karen News](#), April 22nd 2015.

² This information is taken from an unpublished interview from Htantabin township, Toungoo District received in December 2015 and ["Toungoo Situation Update: Thandaunggyi and Htantabin townships, November 2014 to February 2015," July 2015.](#)

³ This information is taken from an unpublished report from Htantabin Township, Toungoo District received in December 2015.

⁴ This information is taken from an unpublished report from Htantabin township, Toungoo District received in December 2015.

⁵ This information is taken from an unpublished report from Htantabin township, Toungoo District received in December 2015. Kaung Myanmar Aung Company (KMAC) or Kaung Myanmar Aung Group of Companies is a Myanmar-owned business group with investments in teak plantations in Toungoo District, and mining, agriculture, shipping, construction and real estate development within Myanmar. Their chairman is Mr Khin Maung Aye. KMAC have been implicated in land confiscation cases in southeast Myanmar which have included threats to villagers who were customary owners of the lands, see ["Toungoo Situation Update: Thandaunggyi and Htantabin townships, November 2014 to February 2015," July 2015.](#) Affected villagers held protests against the company in 2015 and early 2016 in order to demand the return of their lands, see ["Toungoo Situation Update: Thandaunggyi and Htantabin townships, November 2015 to January 2016," July 2016.](#) For information on a similar case with KMAC in Pyin Oo Lwin Township, Mandalay Division, see ["Presidential adviser sues 13 farmers for trespassing," Myanmar Times](#), September 2nd, 2013.

⁶ This information is taken from an unpublished report from Htantabin township, Toungoo District received in December 2015.



The photo on the left was taken in May 2014 in Seik Pu Taw village tract, Htantabin Township, Toungoo District. Villagers work in this area and are in possession of land titles for the land. In December 2013, Kaung Myanmar Aung Group of Companies entered onto the land, cleared it, and set up a signpost stating the land now belongs to them and it will be used for teak plantations. As a result, villagers' plantations were confiscated. Villagers from A--- lost the most land. [Photos: KHRG]

In Toungoo district, land confiscation and destruction is also caused by development projects, such as dam building,⁷ construction of electricity cables and pylons,⁸ creation of an industrial zone,⁹ road construction,¹⁰ and other military purposes. For example, in 2014 the Burma/Myanmar government confiscated areas of land for which villagers already possessed land titles. This land, in C--- and D--- villages, was then sold to Nyein Chan Yay [Peace Group].¹¹ In many cases, offending actors did not fairly provide compensation, and neither the compensation nor consultation process was carried out to the satisfaction of the local civilians. According to a local resident interviewed by a KHRG community member on November 22nd 2015, in E--- Village in Toungoo District, about business activities conducted by Kaung Myanmar Aung and Shwe Swan In companies, *"they forcibly gave 50,000 kyat [US \$36.64]¹² per acre of land. Whether the villagers take their money or not, they will lose their lands so they take the money even though they do not want to take money and sell their land. They were afraid of the authoritative system...There was no discussion [consultation] with the villagers. They do not take the consent from the villagers".¹³*

⁷ This information is taken from an unpublished report from Htantabin Township, Toungoo district received in July 2015.

⁸ ["Toungoo Situation Update: Thandaunggyi Township, January to February 2015,"](#) KHRG, October 2015.

⁹ ["Toungoo Situation Update: Thandaunggyi Township, January to February 2015,"](#) KHRG, October 2015; ["Toungoo Interview: Naw A---, January 2015,"](#) August 2015.

¹⁰ This information is taken from an unpublished report from Htantabin Township, Toungoo District, received in November 2015.

¹¹ This information is taken from an unpublished report from Htantabin Township, Toungoo district received in July 2015.

¹² All conversion estimates for the kyat in this report are based on the 13th December 2016 official market rate of 1329 kyat to US \$1

¹³ This information is taken from an unpublished report from Htantabin township, Toungoo District received in December 2015.

Furthermore, in some cases villagers whose land was confiscated were not provided with compensation despite having previously received official Burma/Myanmar government permission to use the land. In an interview conducted by a KHRG community member in F--- Village, Na Ga Mauk village tract in Htantabin Township, a villager commented on the practices of Kaung Myanmar Aung Company, *“They never say that they are going to pay the compensation. We also do not want to get the compensation that they will pay to us. They [company] said that a rubber tree [is] worth 200 kyat (US \$0.15). What can we do with 200 kyat (US \$0.15)?”*

Local villagers respond to incidents of land confiscation by development projects with various village agency strategies, including: trying to stop the perpetrators by sending complaint letters¹⁴ to high level authorities, or holding protests¹⁵ before the development projects are carried out.

Education

In Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District, primary school students have been receiving free education for two years from the Burma/Myanmar government, as of the reporting period. The Burma/Myanmar government provides books, bags, pencils and 1000 kyat (US \$0.75) to each student. However, according to a villager interviewed by a KHRG community member in Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District in January 2015, the current teachers do not try to socialise with villagers—rather, they keep to themselves. Students are also receiving a poor education as school teachers are often absent—they frequently leave the village to visit their homes, which can take up to two weeks per trip. In addition, the teachers told some students, *“I am teaching not because of having good-will [not because I want to], but because I have an obligation to teach.”*¹⁶

A villager from Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District, also mentioned during her interview that the students have failed examinations due to old teachers being replaced with new, young teachers who are not qualified enough to teach. As a consequence, the children do not fully understand school lessons due to the new teachers’ low standard of teaching.¹⁷ Similarly in Thandaunggyi Township, villagers are concerned that teachers appear distracted. Consequently, students are not educated well and face problems when they have to take examinations from the Burma/Myanmar government education department when they enter fourth standard.¹⁸ In addition, in the Burma/Myanmar government schools, students’ parents are asked for money for brooms, drinking water pots, and annual meetings at the schools. Depending on the students, teachers might ask for 1,500 kyat (US \$1.13) per student. Finally, government teachers themselves face difficulties, as once per month they must travel far to collect their salary at the Township Education Office; it takes them a long time to travel.¹⁹

In Toungoo District, there is no sign of significant change to the operation of the Burma/Myanmar government education department, in relation to supporting education in rural

¹⁴ [“Toungoo Interview: Naw A---, January 2015,”](#) KHRG, August 2015.

¹⁵ This information is taken from an unpublished report from Htantabin township, Toungoo District received in December 2015.

¹⁶ [“Toungoo Interview: Naw A---, January 2015,”](#) KHRG, August 2016.

¹⁷ [“Toungoo Interview: Naw A---, January 2015,”](#) KHRG, August 2016.

¹⁸ A Standard refers to a grade in the Burmese education system. Primary school runs from Standard 1 to Standard 4, middle school is Standards 5-8 and high school is Standards 9-10; [“Toungoo Situation Update: Thandaunggyi Township, January to February 2015.”](#) KHRG, October 2015.

¹⁹ This information is taken from an unpublished report from Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District, received in November 2015.

areas. Consequently, since the preliminary ceasefire students from kindergarten to fourth standard are able to study for free and without paying for enrollment, under the Burma/Myanmar government's support. We have also seen instances of United Nations Children's Education Fund (UNICEF) providing support, particularly through repairing schools in order to support the education system. However, villagers still feel that the current education system needs to be changed. This sentiment was reported by a KHRG community member in a Situation Update describing events occurring in Thandaunggyi and Htantabin townships, Toungoo District during the period from November 2014 to February 2015, "[The villagers] receive no special support from the Burma government. The government should change the education [system] so it is better. It needs to be changed a lot because education is one of the most important things for the people."²⁰

Finally, in regard to education, KNU leaders in Toungoo District have built a high school called Thoh Lwee Wah high school near B--- Village, Per Htee village tract, Htantabin Township, Toungoo District in order to support the Karen people's education, and to ensure they are able to read and write Karen language, as well as learn Karen history. In Toungoo District, there are two middle schools led by KNU: one is in Htantabin Township and the other is in Thandaunggyi Township.



The photo on the right was taken on March 17th 2014 at a split in the road near B--- Village, Per Htee village tract, Htantabin Township, Toungoo District. The photo shows the construction of a KNU school built in Toungoo District. The school will open in 2015. [Photos: KHRG]

²⁰ [Toungoo Situation Update: Thandaunggyi and Htantabin townships, November 2014 to February 2015](#)," KHRG, July 2015; "[Toungoo Situation Update: Thandaunggyi and Htantabin townships, July to September 2015](#)" KHRG, July 2016.

Healthcare

In Toungoo District, the main healthcare issues raised by local civilians include: healthcare problems regarding transportation of patients,²¹ lack of medicine in clinics,²² and medics or doctors providing insufficient services, especially at night time in critical situations, as the local healthcare services are only available during the day. In addition, if an incident occurs at night in Thandaung Myo Thit Town, the doctors refer patients to Toungoo District hospital.²³ Therefore, especially for those in remote areas in Toungoo District, villagers who are sick usually try to use traditional herbal medicine as first priority treatment, before they go to the hospital in Toungoo District, where medical treatment is expensive. Sometimes villagers also rely on the one KNU clinic, however, due to the lack of medicine in the clinic, their health problems often remain unsolved.²⁴

Put simply, the Burma/Myanmar government healthcare services are not reaching remote areas in Toungoo District. There is not only a problem with the lack of medicine; villagers also have trouble accessing the Burma/Myanmar government healthcare system itself. According to a situation reported in the period between March and July 2014, *“in H--- village, the government health workers do not go and treat [prevent] the diseases, such as [by] giving vaccines to the children and mothers. Since they [children and mothers] are not being given vaccines, they experience unnecessary symptoms. In Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District, there were [also] a total of 400 villagers who applied [to work] as nurses’ assistants, but only 20 villagers were accepted.”*²⁵

²¹ [“Toungoo Interview: Naw A---, January 2015,”](#) KHRG, October 2015.

²² [“Toungoo Situation Update: Thandaunggyi and Htantabin townships, November 2014 to February 2015,”](#) KHRG, July 2015.

²³ [“Toungoo Interview: Maung A---, April 2015,”](#) KHRG, January 2016.

²⁴ [“Toungoo Situation Update: Thandaunggyi and Htantabin townships, November 2014 to February 2015,”](#) KHRG, July 2015.

²⁵ [“Toungoo Situation Update: Thandaunggyi Township, March to July 2015,”](#) KHRG, March 2016.



The above photos were taken by a KHRG community member and they show the medics from Burma/Myanmar health department coming to test the blood during collection of the list of malaria patients, on March 19th 2015, in Toungoo District, Thandaung Township, I--- Village. They are from Thandaung Township government health department and they arrived in I--- Village around 9:00 am, and announced that they would test for malaria. When the villagers came to have their blood tested, most of them were children who had malaria symptoms. The authorities said that the health programs are only able to take the list of the people who have malaria, and that they are not able to give vaccinations. The local people were unhappy, as they thought that they would be given vaccinations. [Photos: KHRG]

The villagers also reported to the KHRG community members that due to financial problems some pregnant women give birth to their children using a traditional midwife, instead of using a formally-educated midwife. If the Burma/Myanmar government healthcare department finds out the traditional midwives are practicing medicine, the midwives are fined at least 5000 kyat (US \$3.77). If the pregnant women go to the hospital to give birth, they are well taken care of only when they offer the midwives money or property. If they are not given money, for instance if villagers face financial problems, the patients are told they have recovered and are then discharged from the hospital.²⁶

Development projects

Development projects are one of the main issues that lead to land confiscation in reports received by KHRG. In Toungoo District, Thandaunggyi Township, villagers have concerns regarding land confiscation, as they heard from the land surveyor that the Kay Too Ma Tee Development Company and other wealthy individuals will confiscate farmland that does not have land titles. The company is looking for more land to buy in order to extend their business. In response, the local villagers in J--- Village, Bay Ta Nee village tract, Toungoo District, sent a letter to the township administrator stating their objection to the project, as they are afraid their traditional land, for which they do not have land grants, will be confiscated.²⁷ Likewise, there have also been land confiscation cases in villages such as K--- Village, L--- Village, M--- Village, N--- Village, O--- Village and P--- Village, for the purpose of establishing a new industrial zone.

²⁶ This information is taken from an unpublished report from Thandaunggyi township, Toungoo District, received in November 2015.

²⁷ [“Toungoo Interview: Naw A---, January 2015,”](#) KHRG, October 2015.

The local civilians are sending a complaint letter to Naypyidaw,²⁸ through government officials in Toungoo. At the time KHRG received the villager's interview, the Naypyidaw government had not replied.²⁹



The above photo was taken by a KHRG researcher and it shows the bulldozer that carried the truck taken to Thandaung Myo Thit Town, Toungoo District on August 6, 2015, for the purpose of a development project. The truck is the property of Ngew Sin Phyo Company. In Toungoo District, road and bridge construction by companies has increased. Since the preliminary ceasefire, the companies are able to work more on construction projects with fewer restrictions. [Photo: KHRG]

Additional development project activities are occurring in Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District. Chan Mya Way Si Company has been constructing roads and bridges, such as the construction of a road from Q--- village to R--- village, and buildings were built in the town via permission from the Burma/Myanmar government. In addition, the road from S--- Village to T--- village in Thandaunggyi Township was paved with stones. La Thitsa Pan Ka Maing Nin Company also constructed a road in Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District, which goes through U---, V---, W---, and X--- villages.³⁰

²⁸ *Naypyidaw* (also spelled *Nay Pyi Taw*) is the capital city of Burma/Myanmar. In 2005 the military regime moved the capital from Rangoon to a greenfield at its present location, 320 kilometers (200 miles) north of the city. See "[Nay Pyi Taw now less of a ghost town](#)," *Bangkok Post*, December 11th 2013.

²⁹ "[Toungoo Interview: Naw A---, January 2015](#)," KHRG, August 2015.

³⁰ "[Toungoo Situation Update: Thandaunggyi Township, March to July 2015](#)," KHRG, March 2016.



The first photo shows a signboard regarding road construction that was erected by Chan Mya Way Si Company, in Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District, taken on July 11th 2015. The signboard reads that the company is constructing the road between T--- and S--- villages. The second photo was taken on July 6th 2015 between T--- and H--- villages, Thandaunggyi Township. The photo shows one of the bridges and roads that were constructed by La Thitsa Pan Ka Maing Nin Company in the summer of 2015. [Photos: KHRG]

Military activity

Military activities, such as sending military rations and rotating battalions are ongoing in Toungoo District; they happen every four months as normal. There is also the issue of Tatmadaw trespassing into KNU's territory within KNU controlled areas. In early 2015, Tatmadaw who live in Kler La army camp went to villages to give medicine to the villagers located near Kler La area. They also gave bread and milk to the children. The villagers are concerned that these offerings are tactical, used by the Tatmadaw to draw the local civilians onto their side. The Tatmadaw also travel with their military equipment in local areas when they are patrolling or travelling to other remote camps.

In addition, when the Tatmadaw send rations the military set up security along the road. This military activity causes the villagers who live beside the road to doubt the effectiveness or reality of the ceasefire. The Tatmadaw group based in Toungoo District is Military Operation Command (MOC) #5.³¹ The battalions under MOC #5 are Light Infantry Battalion (LIB)³² #371, LIB #372, LIB #373, LIB # 374, LIB #376, LIB #377, LIB #378 and LIB #379. Permanent army bases are also located in Thandaunggyi Town, such as LIB #124 and LIB #930. In Leik Tho Town, LIB #603 and Infantry Battalion³³ (IB) #73 are based there and are operating in Leik Tho. One militia headquarters is based in Pya Sa Khan and another sub-militia headquarters is based in Leik Tho. The front-line army camp is based in Y--- and Z--- Villages. Bu Yin Naung Tat Myo

³¹ Military Operations Command (MOC) is comprised of ten battalions for offensive operations. Most MOCs have three Tactical Operations Commands (TOCs) made up of three battalions each.

³² A Tatmadaw Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) comprises 500 soldiers. However, most Light Infantry Battalions in the Tatmadaw are under-strength with less than 200 soldiers. LIBs are primarily used for offensive operations, but they are sometimes used for garrison duties.

³³ An Infantry Battalion (Tatmadaw) comprises 500 soldiers. However, most Infantry Battalions in the Tatmadaw are under-strength with less than 200 soldiers. They are primarily used for garrison duty but are sometimes used in offensive operations.

Tatmadaw military training camp fires heavy weapons once every three months; when they conduct the exercise, the heavy weapon shells fall into the villagers' plantations.³⁴



These photos were taken on March 1st 2015. They show the Tatmadaw Transportation and Support Unit #930, which is situated in Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District and transports rations to army camps and the frontline troops that are under the Southern Command Headquarters. These rations are transported once a month using 10 to 15 army trucks. These truck columns do not face any obstacles as they did prior to the preliminary ceasefire, so they can transport their cargo easily, without setting up security troops. As a result, villagers expressed great concern for their security; these concerns are greater than before the preliminary ceasefire agreement, when they did not have to worry about Tatmadaw trucks passing through. [Photos: KHRG]

The military training school in Bu Yint Naung Tat Myo Town, Toungoo District, practices shooting artillery once or twice a month. When they shoot artillery, they shoot into villagers' plantations, making it dangerous for the villagers to harvest crops, such as cardamom. Shooting into the villagers' plantations not only destroys the plantation, it is also dangerous for the villagers.³⁵

The soldiers of LIB #563, under the control of MOC #5, situated in T--- Village, survey the activity of the civilians and the activity of KNLA (Karen National Liberation Army) soldiers. Local villagers are concerned about fighting between KNLA and Tatmadaw, when the groups meet by chance in the village. In August 2015, KNLA soldiers wanted to meet with T--- villagers to discuss the signing of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement,³⁶ and to hear the opinions of the

³⁴ This information is taken from an unpublished report from Htantabin Township, Toungoo district received in July 2015.

³⁵ This information is taken from an unpublished report from Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District, received in November 2015.

³⁶ 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. Despite the signing of the NCA prompting a positive response from the international community, see "[Myanmar: UN chief welcomes 'milestone' signing of ceasefire agreement](#)," *UN News Centre*, October 15th 2015, KNU Chairman General Saw Mutu Say Poe's decision to sign has been met with strong opposition from other members of the Karen armed resistance and civil society groups alike, who believe the decision to be undemocratic and the NCA itself to be a superficial agreement that risks undermining a genuine peace process, see "[Without Real Political Roadmap, Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement Leads Nowhere...](#)," *Karen News*, September 1st 2015. The signing of the NCA followed the January 12th 2012 preliminary ceasefire agreement between the KNU and

villagers. However, while they were on their way they were informed by the villagers that LIB #563 were present on the road they were using to travel to T--- Village, so the KNLA soldiers used another road to avoid the Tatmadaw. A local villager said, *"If the KNLA soldiers do not use the other road and use the road that they want to use, fighting could happen."*³⁷

Drug issues

A drug dealer who was transporting methamphetamine³⁸ for Tatmadaw was arrested by KNLA on August 12th 2015 in Toungoo District, Htantabin Township, Hkler La area, AB--- Village. He was transporting methamphetamine from Taw Oo Town to Kler La area, where a Tatmadaw army camp is based, as Tatmadaw soldiers from Kler La army camp, Sergeant So Paing and Captain Nay Aung, promised to pay him 15,000 kyat (US\$10.99) for transportation. The drug dealer was arrested by KNLA soldiers, who sent him to the KNU operations camp, and then to the district headquarters. At the time of writing this report, he was in prison.³⁹

Discrimination against Muslim people

Muslim people who live in Thandaung Myo Thit Town, Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District, are discriminated against by U Myo Tint, who is a self-appointed chairman of religious affairs and Thandaung Myo Thit Town administrator. He has been attempting to drive Muslim people out of Thandaung Myo Thit Town. These officials have been working together to find mistakes the Muslim people had made, because they do not want Muslim people to come and stay in their administration area in Thandaunggyi Township. They summoned them to come to the immigration office and threatened them, to make it difficult for them to stay in the town.⁴⁰ The Muslim residents who were most affected were AC--- and his siblings, who live in Thandaung Myo Thit Town. In 2015, Myo Lwin Oo was not given a guest permission letter, which is the document required to have guests to stay overnight in the town; at the time of reporting, he had still not received it. The head of the immigration department and the head of the town targeted AC--- by no longer giving him permission to be a resident in the town, and later his siblings were also targeted.⁴¹ According to an interview with AC--- conducted by a KHRG community member in Toungoo District on April 6th 2015, *"at first, [in 2009], he tried to attack us by [interfering with our] businesses, and after he failed [to make us move out of town], [in 2015] he turned to [attacking us in a] racial way."*⁴²

Burma/Myanmar government in Hpa-an. For KHRG's analysis of changes in human rights conditions since the preliminary ceasefire, see [Truce or Transition? Trends in human rights abuse and local response since the 2012 ceasefire](#), KHRG, May 2014.

³⁷ This information is taken from an unpublished report from Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District, received in November 2015.

³⁸ This drug is commonly referred to as *yaba*, which means "crazy medicine" in Thai. First developed in East Asia during World War II to enhance soldiers' performance, methamphetamine has become increasingly popular in Thailand, Laos, Cambodia Vietnam, and in Burma/Myanmar where it is typically manufactured. See, "Yaba, the 'crazy medicine of East Asia,'" UNODC, May 2008 and "Woman raped and killed in Pa'an District, October 2012," KHRG, December 2012, and "Chapter: Drug production, use and the social impacts in Southeast Myanmar since the January 2012 ceasefire," KHRG, June 2014. - See more at: [Growing drug use and its consequences in Doooplaya and Hpa-an districts, between February and December 2015](#), KHRG, May 2016.

³⁹ "Toungoo Situation Update: Thandaunggyi and Htantabin townships, July to September 2015," July 2016.

⁴⁰ KHRG has previously received reports of religious discrimination against Muslim people in Thandaung Myo Thit town by immigration officer U Myo Tint. See, "Toungoo Interview: Maung A---, April 2015," KHRG, January 2016 and "Toungoo Situation Update: Thandaunggyi Township, January to February 2015," KHRG, October 2015.

⁴¹ "Toungoo Situation Update: Thandaunggyi Township, March to July 2015," KHRG, March 2016.

⁴² "Toungoo Interview: Maung A---, April 2015," KHRG, January 2016.

Conclusion

In conclusion, issues such as land confiscation, military activities and development project activities still significantly impact villagers, leading to community insecurity and livelihood problems. In the reports received from Toungoo District in 2015 it is evident that the healthcare services provided by the Burma/Myanmar government in rural areas are still weak. The poor quality leads villagers to rely on traditional medicine and KNU clinics, which also provide poor service, particularly as they do not have enough medicine in the clinic.

In addition, the concerns that local residents have in relation to land confiscation, healthcare services, education services, and military activities are ongoing, and in many circumstances these concerns are still being ignored by the Burma/Myanmar government. Despite the signing of the ceasefire agreement, military activities are happening as normal. Such activities particularly include troop rotation, ration transportation, and conducting military target practice.

Overall, villagers remain concerned about the situations they are facing. In Toungoo District, villagers particularly face problems from military activities which lead to security issues and restriction on freedom of movement, disruptive development projects, trouble accessing healthcare services, and land confiscation. Under these circumstances, the villagers responded by sending complaint letters to high level authorities to stop the land confiscation for proposed development projects. Regarding healthcare, due to financial and transportation problems, the villagers relied on local traditional medics. However, the struggles and difficulties of rural villagers were usually ignored by the authorities from the Burma/Myanmar government.

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

- “Toungoo Interview: Saw A---, December 2015,” (November 2016)
- “Toungoo Interview: Saw A---, October 2016,” (November 2016)
- “Toungoo Interview: Ma A---, April 2016,” (October 2016)
- “Hidden Strengths, Hidden Struggles: Women’s testimonies from southeast Myanmar” (August 2016)
- “Toungoo Situation Update: Thandaunggyi and Htantabin townships, July to September 2015,” (July 2016)

Taw Oo (Toungoo) District



Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)