



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Interview

June 14, 2017 / KHRG #16-84-A4-I1

Toungoo Interview: Naw Ka---, October 2016

This Interview with Naw Ka---describes her perspective and experience in Ei Tu Hta IDP camp, Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District in October 2016. Naw Ka--- is originally from Htantabin Township Township, Toungoo District.

- *Naw Ka--- discusses potential return from the IDP camp to her original village and her basic needs if she does chose to return, and additional problems including land and flood damage from the construction of Toh Boh dam in her original township.*
 - *Naw Ka--- states her opinion on the return process and says that the social services she will need if she returns are employment opportunity, basic healthcare and education.*
 - *Naw Ka--- also describes the concern that that if she returns to her original village she has no land as her land was flooded by Toh Boh dam in 2012.*
 - *Naw Ka--- also expresses that she has concerns for her own security if the return and resettlement process is carried out due to the ongoing presence of armed actors and unstable of current political situation.*
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Interview | Naw Ka---, (female, 41), K--- village, Htantabin Township, Toungoo District (October 2016)

The following Interview was conducted by a community member trained by KHRG to monitor local human rights conditions. It was conducted in an IDP camp in Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District¹ with a villager originally from Htantabin Township, Toungoo District on October 12th 2016 and is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.² This interview was

¹ Ei Tu Hta IDP camp was set up in 2006 in Hpapun district, on the banks of the Salween River next to Thailand. As of early 2017, the camp housed 475 households, totalling 3352 people. The IDPs largely originally fled from Toungoo and Nyaunglebin districts due to the Myanmar government military (Tatmadaw) launching offensives in Karen National Union-controlled areas. The Border Consortium (TBC) is the main donor that provides rations to IDPs in Ei Tu Hta camp. TBC has announced it is only able to secure budget to provide basic supplies until September 2017. After this the camp will be closes. Since December 2015, discussion and surveys have been taking place by funders and Karen CBOs about the return and resettlement of the IDP community, and a focal preparatory committee on the return was formed with representatives from Karen CBOs and local KNU officials. Some IDPs have expressed great concern about the resettlement and return process as there are Tatmadaw and other armed actors present in the area where they were originally from. See, "[END OF FUNDING WILL FORCE EI TU HTA KAREN DISPLACED PEOPLES' CAMP TO CLOSE](#)," Karen News, February 16th 2016.

² 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.

received along with other information from Hpapun District, including six other interviews and 62 photographs.³

Ethnicity: Karen

Religion: Christian

Marital Status: Married

What is your name, Aunty?⁴

[Naw]⁵ Ka---

Age?

41 years old.

What is the name of your [original] village [that you displaced from]?

K--- village.

Which village tract, township and district is your village located in?

K--- village, Maw Nay Pwah village tract, Htaw Ta Htoo [Htantabin] Township, Toungoo District.

What is your position [of responsibility] in the IDP [Internally Displaced Persons] camp?

No, I do not have any position.

So you are just an ordinary IDP?

Yes.



This photo was taken in Ei Tu Hta IDP camp, Hpapun District, on October 11th 2016. It shows the interviewee, Naw Ka---, who is a resident in the camp. Naw Ka--- explained about her perspectives on the return and



This photo was taken on October 11th 2016 during a discussion held by Karen community based organisations and local IDP leaders about the resettlement and return process in Ei Tu Hta IDP

³ In order to increase the transparency of KHRG methodology and more directly communicate the experiences and perspectives of villagers in southeast Burma/Myanmar, KHRG aims to make all field information received available on the KHRG website once it has been processed and translated, subject only to security considerations. For additional reports categorised by Type, Issue, Location and Year, please see the Related Readings component following each report on KHRG's website.

⁴ 'Aunty' is used to express a respect for an older female in this context and does not imply a familial relation.

⁵ Naw is a S'gaw Karen female honorific title used before a person's name.

resettlement process which is being discussed in the IDP camp. *[Photo: KHRG]*

camp hall. *[Photo: KHRG]*

What is your ethnicity?

I am Karen.

What about your religion?

Christian.

Are you married?

Yes I am married.

Have you received any information related to the return and resettlement process [of IDPs back to their original villages]?

I only heard about it from the IDP's camp leaders.

What is your opinion on [IDPs from Ei Tu Hta] returning and resettling [back to their original villages]? Do you think it is the right time to go back? If not, why?

It is better to stay in your own [original] place but currently the [political] situation is not stable or guaranteed.

Do you think there will be any problems if you return?

What kind of problems? Do you mean security?

Yes.

I will say we need safety and security, healthcare, and education.

Do you want the return process to happen and to be implemented?

I do not know.

When you [decide] to return [to your original place] what will be the basic needs that you will have?

My most important basic needs are work [livelihood opportunities], healthcare, and education.

What are the important things for your future?

[We] should have work.

What kind of work you would like to do?

[We] always need to work for our livelihood.

What should the KNU [Karen National Union] or the Burma/Myanmar government do to support you in order to have the return go well?

Many people have mentioned this already so I do not know what to say.

What services do you want to have in the place where you will return? For example: education, work, healthcare or anything else.

We want all of them such as healthcare, education and work [livelihood opportunities].

How do you feel about leaving Ei Tu Hta camp?

[I] feel a little bit sad.

How long have you been living in Ei Tu Hta camp?

More than ten years already.

Do have any information about services such as healthcare and education at the place where you will return to?

No, I don't.

Have you able to visit your [home] village recently?

It has been quite a long time since I have visited my village.

When did you visit it?

Two or three years ago. I went back to my village once when my father passed away.

Do you own any land in your original village?

No, but I used to own a plot of land but due to dam construction it was all flooded and submerged, under the water.

Which dam?

Toh Boh [dam].⁶

Did you have or know any information about the return process?

The process of returning people [from the IDP camp to their original village]?

[Has there been] any discussion held with IDPs about the return process?

I heard it from the camp leader and [camp] committees.

Did they discuss with you about this?

Not directly with me. They mentioned it in the meeting.

Did you heard about the return issue only through the [camp committee] meeting?

Yes.

Is there any information that I missed which you want to mention?

I do not know what to say.

Don't you know what to say or you cannot say?

⁶ For more information on the impact and construction of the Toh Boh dam, see "[Toungoo Interview: Saw H---, April 2011](#)," KHRG, September 2012; see also "[Photo Set: More than 100 households displaced from Toh Boh Dam construction site in Toungoo](#)," KHRG, August 2012. The Toh Boh dam is also a project under observation in the KHRG thematic report, "[Losing Ground: Land conflicts and collective action in eastern Myanmar](#)," KHRG, March 2013, which analyses the trends, collective responses and consequences related to land confiscation and development issues in Karen State.

I do not know what to say. I am afraid that I might give you the wrong information.

Would you allow me to use your information?

It is up to you. I did not speak much.

Thank you so much. Good night.

Thank you.



This photo was taken on October 12th 2016 by a KHRG researcher at Ei Tu Hta IDP camp in Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District. The photo shows residents' housing in the IDP camp. The camp is projected to close in September 2017 due to funding restrictions. 475 households, totalling 3352 residents, were still resident in the IDP camp in early 2017. [Photo: KHRG]

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

- "Toungoo Interview: Saw A---, January 2016," (February 2017)
- "Toungoo Interview: Naw A---, November 2015," (February 2017)
- "Toungoo Field Report: Slow transitions towards real change, January to December 2015" (January 2017)
- "Toungoo Interview: Saw A---, December 2015," (November 2016)
- "Toungoo Interview: Saw A---, October 2016," (November 2016)

