



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Dooplaya Field Report: A quasi-ceasefire? Developments after the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, from January to December 2016

August 19th, 2017





Field Report

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Dooplaya Field Report: January to December 2016

This field report provides the analysis of the regional situation in Dooplaya District, southeast Myanmar, between January and December 2016. It includes information submitted by KHRG community members on a range of human rights violations and other issues including the military situation and ceasefire concerns, violent abuse, drug usage, development projects, land issues, health and education, and refugee issues.

- *According to the information listed in a number of reports, during 2016 villagers in Dooplaya District are still concerned about the military situation due to the resurgence of military movement and on-going fighting between the Tatmadaw and Karen ethnic armed groups after the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement [NCA]. Villager's trust in the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) has decreased since the signing of the NCA.*
- *In terms of the human rights situation in Dooplaya District, villagers are still facing a lack of justice when they experience violent abuse such as torture, rape and killing. The information received highlighted that villagers need more knowledge and awareness on human rights issues given by organisations such as KHRG in order to protect themselves.*
- *Regarding drugs, villagers reported in numbers of situation updates that the illegal trade in yaba [methamphetamine] has rapidly increased in all townships of Dooplaya District; consequently there have been negative social impacts. Many young people, including children and married women became addicted to yaba and they are no longer interested in their education or working for their livelihood which creates burdens for their family. Therefore, villagers are seriously concerned for their future generations.*
- *Regarding health, education and development projects, key stakeholders such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community based organisation (CBOs), including the Karen National Union (KNU) and the Burma/Myanmar government, should ensure that the services that they have provided for the local villagers are both accessible and available. Villagers in Dooplaya District reported that although there have been many services which were provided by the relevant actors, some villagers could not access these services properly. Moreover, there have been ongoing issues which needed to need to be addressed after these services were provided.*

Dooplaya

Dooplaya District is an area of mixed-control, split between the KNU and the Burma/Myanmar government, located according to Burma/Myanmar government defined territory, in the southern-most part of Kayin State. The townships in Dooplaya District are defined differently according to the administration of the KNU and the Burma/Myanmar government. There are four townships in Dooplaya District according to KNU-defined territory as described below. They are Kawkareik (central-north), Kyainseikgyi (south of Kawkareik), Kyonedoe (central-north), and Win

Yay (south-west). KHRG researchers can access the majority of the areas in Dooplaya District in order to document the human rights abuses.

Military situation and the concerns following the ceasefire

According to a number of reports received during the 2016 reporting period, KHRG analysed and identified three main themes regarding the resurgence of military movement after the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA)¹; on-going fighting between Karen ethnic armed groups and the Tatmadaw including the Border Guard Force (BGF),² villagers concerns regarding the ceasefire and that villagers trust in the KNLA has decreased because of the KNLA's actions.

The resurgence of military movement after the NCA

According to the reports received, villagers reported that in Dooplaya District, armed groups such as the Tatmadaw, BGF, DKBA³ and the KNLA were more active in 2016, despite this being after the signing of the NCA. Villagers expected that military activities would cease after the signing of the NCA but instead they continue to see military movements.

Amongst reports that KHRG analysed, there were four situation updates covering on-going military movements. Villagers from Win Yay Township reported that on February 23rd 2016, Tatmadaw Operations Commander, Aung Kyaw Tat from Strategic Operations Command #1 assigned his soldiers to question villagers from K--- village about how many people and houses were in the village while they were active on the ground.⁴ On April 24th 2016, the Tatmadaw

¹ 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 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.

² Border Guard Force (BGF) battalions of the Tatmadaw were established in 2010, and they are composed mostly of soldiers from former non-state armed groups, such as older constellations of the DKBA, which have formalised ceasefire agreements with the Burma/Myanmar government and agreed to transform into battalions within the Tatmadaw. BGF battalions are assigned four digit battalion numbers, whereas regular Tatmadaw infantry battalions are assigned two digit battalion numbers and light infantry battalions are identified by two or three-digit battalion numbers. For more information, see "[DKBA officially becomes Border Guard Force](#)" *Democratic Voice of Burma*, August 2010, and "[Exploitation and recruitment under the DKBA in Pa'an District](#)," KHRG, June 2009.

³ The Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) was re-formed on January 16th 2016 as a splinter group from the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (2010 – present), and is also referred to as Na Ma Kya ('Deaf Ear'). During fighting between the Tatmadaw and DKBA Benevolent throughout 2015, there was internal disagreement within the DKBA Benevolent which resulted in a number of commanders being dismissed in July 2015. These former commanders then issued a statement in January 2016 declaring the formation of a new splinter group. This organisation has phrased the formation of this group as the revival of the original Democratic Karen Buddhist Army which was formed in 1994 until it was broken up in 2010 into the BGF and the still-active DKBA Benevolent. The group is led by General Saw Kyaw Thet, Chief of Staff and General Saw Taing Shwe aka Bo Bi, Vice Chief of Staff. Other lower ranking commanders in the DKBA Buddhist splinter group are San Aung and late Kyaw Moh aka Na Ma Kya (reportedly killed on August 26th 2016). The group is currently based in Myaing Gyi Ngu area in Hlaing Bwe Township, Karen State. This DKBA Buddhist (2016 – present) should not be confused with the DKBA Benevolent (2010 – present) from which it broke away in January 2016, or with the original DKBA (1994 – 2010) which was broken up in 2010 into the BGF and the DKBA Benevolent. Importantly, the DKBA Buddhist has not signed the preliminary or nationwide ceasefire with the Myanmar government whereas the DKBA Benevolent has signed both agreements.

⁴ "[Dooplaya Situation Update: Win Yin Township, January 2016 to March 2016](#)," KHRG, December 2016.

from Light Infantry Battalion (LIB)⁵ # 591 asked villagers in A--- village if they have seen KNLA soldiers.⁶ These Tatmadaw activities significantly concerned the villagers and villagers wondered why the Tatmadaw were asking questions like this in the post ceasefire period. As well as this, in Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District, villagers reported that on April 4th 2016 Tatmadaw troops from Tactical Operations Command #3 trespassed into a KNU controlled area,⁷ where they are not permitted to enter. While they were there, on the front line, the Tatmadaw feared that the KNU soldiers were going to shoot them, so they grabbed the villagers that they saw and used the villagers as human shields.⁸ Likewise, villagers from J--- village to K--- village on the Thai-Myanmar Border in Kawkareik Township in June 2016 reported that there was forced recruitment by KNLA Battalion #18. According to villagers in those areas, between 2015 and 2016, the KNLA's military's activities were getting less frequent but there was still some activity.⁹

On-going fighting between Karen ethnic armed groups and Tatmadaw including BGF and villagers concerns on the ceasefire

The testimonies of villagers regarding on-going fighting and their concerns revealed the 2012 preliminary ceasefire¹⁰ and the 2015 NCA to be in fact a quasi-ceasefire because although ending the armed conflict is stated in the code of conduct of the ceasefire agreement, fighting has continued. Throughout 2016, there have been a number of incidents of fighting which happened across Dooplaya District. There were six incidents of fighting during 2016 between the Border Guard Force (BGF)¹¹ and the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA)¹² within Kawkareik (Kaw T' Ree) Township, Dooplaya District.¹³

⁵ 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.

⁶ This information is taken from an unpublished report from Win Yay Township received in May 2016.

⁷ As per the 2012 preliminary ceasefire agreement between the KNU and the Burma/Myanmar government, the Tatmadaw are only allowed to operate and travel up to 50 yards from either side of roads that connect their army camps through KNLA territory, and only within a 150 yard radius around their own army camp.

⁸ Further information on the mental and physical impact of villagers being used as human shields is currently unavailable. "[Dooplaya Situation Update: Kawkareik Township and Noh T'Kaw Township, April to May 2016](#)," KHRG, March 2017.

⁹ "[Dooplaya Situation Update: Kawkareik Township, June 2015 to August 2016](#)," KHRG, December 2016.

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ Border Guard Force (BGF) battalions of the Tatmadaw were established in 2010, and they are composed mostly of soldiers from former non-state armed groups, such as older constellations of the DKBA, which have formalised ceasefire agreements with the Burma/Myanmar government and agreed to transform into battalions within the Tatmadaw. BGF battalions are assigned four digit battalion numbers, whereas regular Tatmadaw infantry battalions are assigned two digit battalion numbers and light infantry battalions are identified by two or three-digit battalion numbers. For more information, see "[DKBA officially becomes Border Guard Force](#)" *Democratic Voice of Burma*, August 2010, and "[Exploitation and recruitment under the DKBA in Pa'an District](#)," KHRG, June 2009.

¹² The Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) was re-formed on January 16th 2016 as a splinter group from the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (2010 – present), and is also referred to as Na Ma Kya ('Deaf Ear'). During fighting between the Tatmadaw and DKBA Benevolent throughout 2015, there was internal disagreement within the DKBA Benevolent which resulted in a number of commanders being dismissed in July 2015. These former commanders then issued a statement in January 2016 declaring the formation of a new splinter group. This organisation has phrased the formation of this group as the revival of the original Democratic Karen Buddhist Army which was formed in 1994 until it was broken up in 2010 into the BGF and the still-active DKBA Benevolent. The

Furthermore, on August 21st 2016 an unknown group planted four roadside bombs between Nine Mile area and Eight Mile area between Kawkareik Town and Kyonedoe Town in Kyonedoe Township in order to attack one truck belonging to the Tatmadaw which carried rations. Nobody in the truck was injured but the truck was hit and slightly damaged by the roadside bombs. After the incident happened the Tatmadaw came to clear the area, therefore the road was closed and the people [villagers] could not travel. Therefore, this irritated the people who were trying to travel. Similarly, on September 10th 2016, *Na Ma Kya*¹⁴ group [DKBA splinter group] led by Bo¹⁵ San Aung hid beside the road from Maing K'laing village to Kawkareik Town, between B--- village to C--- village in Kyonedoe Town in Kyonedoe Township in order to ambush the KNLA Battalion Commander's car from Battalion #17, Brigade 6 [Dooplaya District]. Three KNLA soldiers from Battalion #17 were injured and the car was hit by gun fire.¹⁶ Because of these incidents of on-going fighting, villagers faced many consequences such as restrictions upon their freedom of movement and travel which impacted upon their livelihood. Villagers were also threatened by armed groups. One of the most serious implications was that because of the fighting, several villagers were seriously injured by shrapnel. Problematically, they were not able to get access to medical treatment because of the high cost of medical fees:

"In total there were four villagers who were injured. Me, my husband and another [pregnant] woman was a little injured but my daughter was seriously injured and she cannot see anything to date. We [my husband and I] discussed [the problem] with Pastor O---. I told my husband, "The people [the doctor] did not take out the shrapnel from our [daughter's eye] and they told us to go to Phitsanulok [provincial hospital] but we do not speak Thai and do not have enough money so how will we do this?" [Pastor O---] contacted Doctor P--- [in Way Ta Ku/Yangon] for us. Doctor P--- said he will arrange it for us. He replied, "Daughter, It will cost five million [5,000,000] kyat [US \$3861.55¹⁷]" [It costs a lot] because his hospital [in Way Ta Ku/Yangon] is a private hospital. I asked my husband "It will cost five million [5,000,000] kyat [US \$3861.55] so what will we do?" He replied "We cannot do [pay] anything so we just have to keep her like this". And then I said "How can we keep her like this?"

Naw G---, (Female, 45), D--- village, Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District
(Interviewed in September 2016)¹⁸

Additionally, another villager from Kawkareik Township who was interviewed by a KHRG field researcher also reported that villagers faced restrictions in their freedom of movement as a consequence of the fighting that happened in February 2016 in Kawkareik Township. Moreover, they [villagers] were ordered in a threatening manner not to flee from their village by the BGF:

group is led by General Saw Kyaw Thet, Chief of Staff and General Saw Taing Shwe aka Bo Bi, Vice Chief of Staff. Other lower ranking commanders in the DKBA Buddhist splinter group are San Aung and late Kyaw Moh aka Na Ma Kya (reportedly killed on August 26th 2016). The group is currently based in Myaing Gyi Ngu area in Hlaing Bwe Township, Karen State. This DKBA Buddhist (2016 – present) should not be confused with the DKBA Benevolent (2010 – present) from which it broke away in January 2016, or with the original DKBA (1994 – 2010) which was broken up in 2010 into the BGF and the DKBA Benevolent. Importantly, the DKBA Buddhist has not signed the preliminary or nationwide ceasefire with the Myanmar government whereas the DKBA Benevolent has signed both agreements.

¹³ ["Dooplaya Interview: Naw A--- February 2016,"](#) KHRG, August 2016. See also ["Dooplaya Situation Update: Kawkareik Township, June 2015 to August 2016,"](#) KHRG, December 2016.

¹⁴ *Na Ma Kya* is a Burmese phrase which directly translates as Deaf Ear". *Na Ma Kya* in this context refers to the name of a Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA) unit based in Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District. According to local villagers, this group often acts with impunity, ignoring both the local people's input as well as the higher DKBA authorities' orders.

¹⁵ Military title meaning 'officer.'

¹⁶ This information is taken from an unpublished report from Kyonedoe Township received in November 2016.

¹⁷ All conversion estimates for the kyat in this report are based on the July 1, 2017 official market rate of 1355 kyat to US \$1.

¹⁸ ["Dooplaya Interview: Naw G---, September 2016,"](#) KHRG, December 2016.

“All of the villagers stayed in the village. We were not allowed to flee because they [BGF] threatened us that if we fled from the village, they would set our houses on fire. If they keep speaking to us like this in the future, we will not listen to them anymore because we only ever see them fire guns at the villagers. They do not fire against their enemy [the other armed groups].”

Saw A---, (male, unknown age), B--- village, Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District (Interviewed in February 2016)¹⁹

Therefore, many villagers, especially those who suffered the impact of the fighting do not have trust in the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement and questioned why military movement and fighting have continued after the signing of the NCA. Moreover, they [villagers] were very concerned about their livelihood, for their freedom of movement and for their future prosperity.



The first photo was taken by a KHRG field researcher on July 22, 2016 in Kyainseikgyi Township, Dooplaya District. The photo shows Light Infantry Battalion #591 [Tatmadaw] making a trip to G--- village, Kyainseikgyi Township, Dooplaya District in order to be militarily active there. The leader of LIB #591 is Major Kyaw Myo Aung. There are 17 Tatmadaw soldiers in LIB #591. The person who guides the way is Captain Tel Nis from KNU liaison office in Three Pagodas Pass; he is also second in charge of the KNU liaison office.

The second photo was taken by a KHRG field researcher on February 24, 2016 in A’nan Kwin village, Win Yay Township, Dooplaya District and the photo shows five military trucks and two cars with Tatmadaw troops, inside a monastery. They came to change their military strategy. The two ordinary [unmarked] cars carried rations. They [cars] seemed to have been taken from Than Phyu Za Yet Town. The military base of operations has changed from Military Operations Command Headquarters in Maw Ka Ne.

The third photo was taken by a KHRG field researcher on March 23th 2016. The photo shows a Tatmadaw RPG [rocket propelled grenade] that did not explode and which was left after the fighting that happened in February 2016 between the DKBA [Democratic Karen Benevolent Army] *Na Ma Kya* and the BGF [Border Guard Forces]

¹⁹ [“Dooplaya Interview: Saw A---, February 2016,”](#) KHRG, November 2016.

in Kaung Moo village in Kawkareik Township Dooplaya District.

The last photo was taken on September 1st 2016 in H--- village, KawT' Ree [Kawkareik] Township, Dooplaya District. The photo shows a woman interviewed by a KHRG field researcher after the DKBA Na Ma Kya and the BGF fought against each other in her village, causing injury to her husband, her daughter and herself. On August 4th 2016 around 5:00 PM, the fighting occurred at I--- village. The shrapnel from artillery hit Naw L---, her husband (Saw M---) and her 14 year old daughter named Naw N---. The shrapnel from artillery hit Naw N---'s [left] eye and she still cannot see anything. During the time when the fighting occurred, a pregnant woman named Naw O---, 20 years old, was also injured when she went outside. [Photos: KHRG]

Villagers' loss of confidence in the KNLA

There are many commitments listed in the code of conduct in the NCA for the KNLA. These include improving relationships with civilians by helping, protecting and standing up for them. Therefore, having good relationships with civilians is both important and required for all armed actors. However, in many KHRG reports²⁰ villagers frequently reported a negative relationship between civilians and armed groups, as many armed groups continue to commit human rights violations and abuse their power. Although the NCA was dedicated to improving the relationship between armed groups and civilians some Karen villagers do not have confidence in Karen armed groups after the NCA. For example in A'Nan Kwein village, Win Yay Township, a checkpoint officer of the KNLA and a businessman worked together and exploited the villagers for their own benefit. They did this by removing sand and stone from the ground and when villagers needed the sand and stone they had to buy it back from them [KNLA and businessman]. According to a KHRG community member, a villager asked:

“Are they [KNLA soldiers] giving the Karen people’s history a bad name [through their actions]?” However, they [villagers] do not dare to speak to the KNLA about this. According to the villagers, *“The armed group [KNLA] who used to help people, now they torture [cause problems for] the people. Why? Do not give trouble to us if you [KNLA] cannot help us”*

Situation Update written by KHRG community member in Win Yay Township, Dooplaya District (published in December 2016)²¹

Therefore based on the information presented above, KHRG perceived that although the NCA had been signed in 2015, the code of conduct was not effectively applied on the ground within 2016. The resurgence of Tatmadaw military movement across Dooplaya District occurred and, of serious concern, in one case Tatmadaw used villagers as human shields while they were active on the ground.²² There were also cases of frequent fighting between the BGF and the DKBA [splinter group] in Kawkareik Township and abuses of power and forced recruitment committed by the KNLA in Win Yay Township and Kawkareik Township. These combine to show the unstable military situation and the poor result of the ceasefire. This highlighted that the ceasefire agreement must be effectively monitored and action taken accordingly so that genuine peace and stability will emerge and the country's development can move forward smoothly towards a sustainable and peaceful democracy.

Violent abuse and rape

KHRG found that incidents of violent abuse such as rape, killing and torture continued to occur in Dooplaya District during 2016. KHRG received two reports of women being raped and killed in Kawkareik Township and one report of a torture case in Noh Tar Khaw village tract, Noh T'Kaw [Kyainseikgyi] Township. According to one situation update submitted by a KHRG field researcher in Kawkareik Township, on March 10, 2016 a 17 year old girl from E--- village, Kawkareik Township was raped and killed by a Burmese man. Villagers reported that the

²⁰ *“We do not want to support any armed groups, we just want to live simply as villagers”*. [“Dooplaya Interview: Saw A---, February 2016,”](#) KHRG, November 2016.

²¹ [“Dooplaya Situation Update: Win Yin Township, January 2016 to March 2016,”](#) KHRG, December 2016.

²² [“Dooplaya Situation Update: Kawkareik Township and Noh T'Kaw Township, April to May 2016,”](#) KHRG, March 2017. In this case, villagers who were used as human shields were released unharmed.

perpetrator was under the influence of drugs [yaba²³] when he committed the rape and murder. The perpetrator was arrested by Myanmar police and kept in jail in Kawkareik Township. According to the KHRG field researcher in Kawkareik Township the perpetrator was later sent to Mawlamyine prison.²⁴ There was no compensation or support given to the victim's family.

Another brutal incident of rape and killing happened on August 23, 2016 in X--- village, Mi Nan Ah village tract, Kawkareik Township. A 16 year old girl was raped and stabbed to death by a 33 year old man named Nay Naing Oo while she was collecting betel from her betel-nut plantation. The case was reported by the villagers and when Myanmar police investigated the case it was revealed that the perpetrator also was under the influence of drugs. Evidence for this was found nearby, including a pipe and a cup made from the aluminium lining of a cigarette case which was used for smoking Yaba out of. Evidence of her being raped is based upon the fact that when her body was found her sarong and underwear had been removed.

There was also a case of violent abuse and torture which happened in Noh Tar Khaw village tract, Noh T'Kaw [Kyainseikgyi] Township, Dooplaya District on October 12, 2016. An unknown group of three people wearing a uniform similar to a military uniform beat a villager named Saw A--- from 19 Mile village close to R--- Town while he was working in his wild elephant yam plantation. These three people who were holding three AK47s, pushed Saw A--- down on the ground and beat him, they then asked him about the location of his parent's in-law. When he replied that his parents in-law were in R--- Town the three attackers continued to violently abuse him. They hit his back three times with the butt of gun, punched his face two times and slapped his face furiously twice. There might be a problem between his parents-in-law and these three people but he has no idea why they beat him. According to the villagers, there are only two armed groups situated near the place where the incident happened. The KHRG field researcher tried to ask many villagers to find out who these perpetrators belong to but they [villagers] are not sure whether are they belong to the DKBA, BGF or another group.²⁵

These on-going violent abuses in Dooplaya District were highlighted by KHRG's yearly record of reporting on the human rights situation. Despite these violent abuses not happening in all townships of Dooplaya District like in previous years, they still happened in two townships during 2016 and villagers still face a lack of justice such as cases being taken to court, and fair investigation, when they suffer from abuse. It means that villagers need more knowledge on human rights issues and awareness given by organisations such as KHRG so that they know how to protect themselves.

Drugs

KHRG has previously published a number of reports on drug related issues.²⁶ Yaba is one particular drug that has a wide spread of negative impacts over the local community. This drug problem has been increasingly emerging throughout KHRG's documentation areas since the preliminary ceasefire in 2012, especially in four districts which are Toungoo, Hpapun, Dooplaya and Hpa-an.

²³ *Yaba*, which means "crazy medicine" in Thai, is a tablet form of methamphetamine. 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.

²⁴ This information is taken from an unpublished report from Kawkareik Township Dooplaya District received in November 2016.

²⁵ This information is taken from an unpublished report from Kyainseikgyi Township and Waw Raw Township, Dooplaya District received in January 2017.

²⁶ "[Growing drug use and its consequences in Dooplaya and Hpa-an districts, between February and December 2015](#)" KHRG, May 2016.

During the 2016 reporting period, villagers in Dooplaya District reported in a number of situation updates that yaba is one of the most concerning issues because yaba consumption has had many negative consequences in the communities. Communities perceived that crimes such as violent abuse and killings are affiliated with yaba and have increasingly occurred and caused complications to local security. Some villagers reported that the number of social problems have increased with the availability of yaba in the community. As the illegal trade in yaba has rapidly increased in all townships of Dooplaya District, consequently there have been negative social impacts. Many young people including children and married women became addicted to yaba and they are not interested in their education and livelihood work which can create burdens for their family. Therefore, villagers are seriously concerned for the future generation. This yaba problem is challenging the rule of law in the local community. Local authorities such as the KNU department of administration, including other authority holders such as the Myanmar government have tried to handle this drug problem but they could not eliminate the problem entirely.²⁷ Moreover, some villagers in Kyonedoe Township, Win Yay Township and Kawkareik Township are involved in the yaba trade as opposed to working an ordinary job because of the high amount of money available. They also do not have to pay tax on any money made in the illegal yaba trade.²⁸



This photo which was taken on September 10th 2016 in Dooplaya District; Win Yay Township, Met K' Tha village tract, shows a signboard posted by the KNU and Tatmadaw from Battalion #16 intended to inform the local civilians in Win Yay Township. The signboard's message is about a statement released by the KNU and Tatmadaw on July 10th 2016 and explains the need to reinforce the rule of law for local safety. The statements declare that although the situation in Win Yay Township seems peaceful and stable in fact it is a township that has faced many challenges after the ceasefire agreement. Among the challenges the township faces, drug abuse is one of the major threats to the local communities' wellbeing. Though the drugs have still not been eradicated, the KNU and Myanmar government are collaborating to reduce the use of drugs.
[Photo: KHRG]

The illegal trading and usage of yaba in Dooplaya District has reportedly increased because villagers can earn income more easily and quickly when they trade yaba and users also have more access to drugs as it is now more easily available in the community. In fact, villagers are claiming that the main source of the increased supply in yaba is from regional armed groups. The drug dealers have connections with the armed groups to distribute drugs in the community. In addition, according to one previously published KHRG report, some of the yaba dealers are family members of the armed groups.²⁹ However, it is very risky for villagers to report which armed groups are involved in drug distribution although they know exactly which armed group is the perpetrator. This is because if the armed actors find out that villagers reported about the

²⁷ [“Dooplaya Situation Update: Kawkareik Township, January to October 2016”](#) KHRG, July 2017. Also see [“Dooplaya Situation Update: Kawkareik Township, June 2015 to August 2016”](#) KHRG, December 2016 and [“Dooplaya Situation Update: Kyonedoe Township, April 2016 to July 2016”](#) KHRG, February 2017.

²⁸ This information is taken from unpublished report from Kyonedoe Township received in November 2016.

²⁹ [“Growing drug use and its consequences in Dooplaya and Hpa-an districts, between February and December 2015”](#) KHRG, May 2016.

issue, the villagers fear that they would face serious threats to their safety and could even be killed. In addition, local authorities such as the KNU were not able to stop the drug distribution in the community since regional armed groups such as Karen ethnic armed groups are beyond formal control. These complicated situations highlight that yaba is very difficult to eliminate as villagers themselves are involved in drug trading for their livelihood and to create income, and powerful armed groups oversee the illicit trade. Thus, yaba usage and its supply and distribution continue to grow in the community and it is a serious concern for the future generations of villagers and for the well-being of village life.

Development projects and land issues

Since extensive development activities have been taking place across seven districts of KHRG documenting areas after the 2012 preliminary ceasefire, KHRG has regularly received information on development issues in each reporting year. In addition, issues such as development, livelihood, health and education were always reported in every situation update that KHRG published, so the situation of these issues are tracked case by case when received and published by KHRG.

As development activities are on-going like in previous years, there is no significant change in Dooplaya District in terms of development projects during the 2016 reporting period. However, it is important to update the main theme of the development projects that have impacts on the local community because when talking about development issues the negative and positive impacts are related to many sectors such as livelihood, health and education.

According to four situation updates, development activities took place in all townships of Dooplaya District during the 2016 reporting period. Development projects related to transportation and communication, infrastructure and support for basic household items were conducted and provided in Kawkareik Township,³⁰ Kyainseikgyi Township, Win Yay Township³¹ and Kyonedoe Township.³² These were implemented by NGOs, CBOs, companies, local authorities such as the KNU and staff of government departments. Support for the provision of basic household items such as solar panels for the generation of electricity and water supplies brought advantages and supported community development.

However, large scale road and bridge construction and infrastructure such as schools, clinics, libraries and hospitals did not only bring advantages but also some disadvantages for the villagers. Because infrastructure such as clinics and libraries were built but not run or maintained, services remained limited for some communities. Further, the large scale of road and bridge construction caused a huge impact and the destruction of local land and plantations. Villagers raised different perspectives regarding damage to land and plantations caused by road construction.

Despite the negative impact of the road construction a female villager from Kyainseikgyi Township still has a positive view of this construction:

“We will be able to travel if the road is getting better. I do not mind although my trees have been destroyed. I will plant them again.”

Situation update written by KHRG community member in Kyainseikgyi Township, Dooplaya District (received in March 2016)³³

³⁰“[Dooplaya Situation Update: Kawkareik Township, June 2015 to August 2016](#)”, KHRG, December 2016.

³¹“[Dooplaya Situation Update: Win Yin Township, January 2016 to March 2016](#)”, KHRG, December 2016.

³²“[Dooplaya Situation Update: Kyonedoe Township, April 2016 to July 2016](#)”, KHRG, February 2017.

³³ This information is taken from an unpublished report from Kawkareik and Kyainseikgyi township received in March 2016.

However, in one interview that a KHRG community member conducted in September 2016 with a villager from Win Yay Township, the villager raised his experience of the negative impact of the development project. He reported that constructors of the road never held consultations with local villagers when they implemented the construction and that he had many concerns:

“My views are the same as most of the other villagers. How do I say? Local Karen villagers who live beside the road, starting from G--- village to Three Pagodas Pass, have concerns that their lands, houses and plantations will be confiscated and damaged if the road is widened.”

Saw A---, (male, 43), B--- village, Win Yay Township Dooplaya District (interviewed in September 2016)³⁴



The first photo was taken by a KHRG community member in June 2016 and it shows the sign post set up on the road between Than Pu Yar village tract and A'n'an Kwin village tract, Win Yay Township, Dooplaya District. This sign post is about the Burma/Myanmar government's Ministry of Construction's plans to construct a road between Than Phyu Za Yet and Three Pagodas Pass in Win Yay Township which will be up to 230 feet wide. Most of the local people and some of the Township and District leaders did not know about this project. The civilians did not get any compensation for the destruction although the Asia Highway road has currently been constructed 60 feet wide. Now they are going to widen the road and the villagers will be facing many challenges.

The second photo was taken at a village head's house in P--- village, Noh T' Kaw Township, Dooplaya District on September 21st 2016 by a KHRG community member. It shows the village head and a villager discussing about how to develop their community. The village head told villagers that they have to find a way to construct a road and also that they need land to build a school. The villagers have reported it [their needs] to both the KNU government and the Burma/Myanmar government since 2014 but they did not received any reply from either of them by 2016. [Photos: KHRG]

Land problems, especially land confiscation have been very important issues in KHRG documentation areas in previous years. But, in 2016, the number of reports received relating to land confiscation by military actors and private companies for military and business purpose declined.³⁵ However, during 2016 in Dooplaya District, land problems affiliated with development projects such as road construction were amongst the most prevalent concerns on the ground. As mentioned above, the large scale of road construction has been reported to have common negative impacts among development projects. In multiple cases, the roads are crossing through local people's hedges and farm lands; and the constructions of the roads are often of a low quality. The actors didn't give compensation for damaged land when requested by villagers. Those who have and rely on small plots of land were more adversely affected by the loss of land and were left with the perception that no one cared. Some villagers said, if they had received compensation, they would keep it for funding the village's development therefore they asked for compensation. As a result, villagers are really concerned about how the KNU would

³⁴ [“Dooplaya Interview: Saw A---, September 2016,”](#) KHRG, June 2017.

³⁵ [“Dooplaya Field Report: Military conflict, violent abuse, and destruction caused by development projects, January to December 2015,”](#) KHRG, October 2016.

handle the protection of the villagers from the problematic consequences of development.³⁶ Thus, regarding land confiscation during the 2016 reporting period, villagers in Dooplaya District have more concern for land destruction or losing their land to the so-called development projects compared to land confiscation by private companies, wealthy individual or armed actors including the Tatmadaw.

Health and Education

As mentioned in the development section, health and education are also issues that are regularly reported in KHRG situation updates. Thus, KHRG can report about the situation on these issues when information is received from community members. During the 2016 reporting period in Dooplaya District, the situation of healthcare moderately improved. The government health care organisation Mother and Childcare Association, as well as non-governmental health care groups such as Free Burma Ranger [FBR], Shoklo Malaria Research Unit [SMRU], Backpack Health Worker Team [BPHWT] and the Karen Department of Health and Welfare [KDHW] were active in providing healthcare services on the ground in all Dooplaya townships. Therefore, throughout the 2016 reporting period, the situation of access to healthcare can be said to have improved, especially in Win Yay Township³⁷ and Kawkareik Township.³⁸ This is because there were many health care activities in Dooplaya District such as the construction of more buildings for healthcare services, health awareness raising workshops and activities, conducting an increased number blood tests at drop-in events, providing treatment for malaria, the donation of mosquitos nets and the donation of good food for a nutritious diet such as eggs, yellow beans and oil to pregnant women.

Despite the provision of these healthcare services, which were provided throughout 2016, villagers in Dooplaya District pointed out that there are still many requirements or problems related to healthcare that need to be addressed. For example, in Kyonedoe Township, many medical groups, such as the Mother and Childcare Association, came to a clinic and gathered villagers to the clinic to raise health awareness. After the health awareness camp was conducted the medical groups locked up the clinic and left. The clinic did not continue to deliver the health care service, and was only opened when medical groups came and conducted health awareness camps.³⁹ Similarly, although the Burma/Myanmar government built clinics for local villagers, there were not enough medics or sufficient medicine supplied, so villagers could not experience high quality health services effectively.⁴⁰ Moreover, when health workers from Mother and Child Healthcare, who are employed by the Burma/Myanmar government, came to provide health services such as medicine distribution for free to the village in Kyonedoe Township, they just did it perfunctorily without proper explanation about how to take the medicines.⁴¹

³⁶ This information is taken from an unpublished report from Win Yay Township received in November 2016.

³⁷ [“Dooplaya Situation Update: Win Yin Township, January 2016 to March 2016”](#), KHRG, December 2016.

³⁸ [“Dooplaya Situation Update: Kawkareik Township, June 2015 to August 2016”](#), KHRG, December 2016.

³⁹ The problems of newly built Burma/Myanmar government clinics with limited medics, limited medicine and locked doors have been reported several times to KHRG across Dooplaya District. See, [“Dooplaya Situation Update: Kawkareik Township, June 2015 to August 2016,”](#) KHRG, December 2016, and, [“Dooplaya Situation Update: Kyonedoe and Kawkareik townships, July to November 2014,”](#) KHRG, January 2016.

⁴⁰ [“Dooplaya Situation Update: Kyonedoe Township, April 2016 to July 2016”](#), KHRG, February 2017.

⁴¹ This information is taken from an unpublished report from Kyonedoe Township received in November 2016.



The first photo was taken on June 15th 2017 by a KHRG field researcher. The photo shows the hospital that was established successfully on June 13th 2016 in the field to the east of Q--- village, A'nan Kwin village tract, Win Yay Township, Dooplaya District. *"It is very good for the people because we do not need to go to the hospital in the town if an emergency happens"* said the villagers around Q--- village. The second photo was taken by a KHRG field researcher on September 10th 2016 in Dooplaya District, Kyainseikgyi Township, Lay Hpa Hta (Zee Pin in Burmese) village, and shows a Buddhist building's hall (Dan Ma Hall) [being used as a school]. It shows children who do not have a proper school building. There are classes from kindergarten to 4th standard with 110 total students, 53 females and 57 males. [Photos: KHRG]

Access to education also encounters similar issues as healthcare because although the situation of education seemed to improve in all townships of Dooplaya District, there are still many barriers that need to be addressed. According to two unpublished KHRG situation updates, the situation of education has improved in Win Yay Township and Kawkareik Township, because non-governmental organisations such as the Nippon Foundation (commonly known amongst villagers as the Japan Foundation)⁴², religious organisations and Save the Children provided primary support for education by building more schools in villages located in rural areas. The Karen Education Department (KED) also co-operated with other village volunteer groups to develop schools.⁴³

However, according to three published situation updates, although education in three townships, Kawkareik Township⁴⁴, Win Yay Township⁴⁵, and Kyonedoe Township⁴⁶, has improved there are still issues relating to insufficient support and service. For example, regarding school supplies for the primary schools in Karen villages, one KHRG community member estimated that only 30% were provided by KNU and the other 70% were provided by the villagers themselves. Moreover, in 2016 in Kawkareik Township, because the numbers of students increased, the existing number of chairs and tables are no longer sufficient for all students so the village leader asked for money from the students' parents to buy enough chairs and tables. In addition, Karen language is not allowed to be taught in school time in many schools in Kyonedoe Township. Similarly in Kawkareik Township, Karen language is allowed to be taught only one period per week in Burma/Myanmar government schools.⁴⁷

⁴² [The Nippon Foundation](#) is a Japanese NGO currently implementing social innovation and development projects in Burma/Myanmar. KHRG has received several reports from community members on The Nippon Foundation's recent activities in Thaton and Hpa-an Districts, see more at ["Hpa-an Situation Update: Hlaingbwe and Nabu townships, December 2014 to January 2015,"](#) KHRG, July 2015; and ["Thaton Situation Update Bilin and Hpa-an townships, June to November 2014,"](#) KHRG, February 2015.

⁴³ This information is taken from an unpublished report from Kawkareik Township and Win Yay Township received in May 2016.

⁴⁴ ["Dooplaya Situation Update: Kawkareik Township, June 2015 to August 2016"](#), KHRG, December 2016.

⁴⁵ ["Dooplaya Situation Update: Win Yin Township, January 2016 to March 2016"](#), KHRG, December 2016.

⁴⁶ ["Dooplaya Situation Update: Kyonedoe Township, April 2016 to July 2016"](#), KHRG, February 2017.

⁴⁷ ["Dooplaya Situation Update: Kawkareik Township, June 2015 to August 2016"](#), KHRG, December 2016.

During the period between January 1st 2016 and March 6th 2016, KHRG community members met with some female teachers and school committee members in Dooplaya. According to a consultation meeting about education with people from five different village tracts, a local Burma/Myanmar government teacher in Win Htaung village, reported:

“If the KNU [Karen National Union] and the Burma/Myanmar government cooperate to work together to promote education for the sake of all ethnic people, then they will be well-educated. Moreover, they will become good citizens and they will be able to build a well-disciplined and developed country [in Burma/Myanmar].”

Situation update written by KHRG community member, Win Yay Township, Dooplaya District (published in December 2016)⁴⁸

Therefore, according to the information received during the 2016 reporting period, although key stakeholders of health and education have tried to provide and increase these services on the ground, there are still many issues that need to be addressed. This highlights that it is very important to know and see the real situation on the ground in order to be able to properly and effectively offer service delivery. The situation updates that KHRG received provide accurate information regarding villagers’ reflections on the services that they received. By accessing information from KHRG reports, service providers can identify what needs to be done on the ground so that they can properly improve their work.

Refugee return

One of the most serious issues that happened during the 2016 reporting period relates to refugee return. This concerns refugees living along the Thai-Myanmar border in Noh Poe refugee camp in Thailand. According to an article in The Irrawaddy newspaper, the reason why this refugee return has emerged was that after the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, the Burma/Myanmar government has a plan for the refugees to return to their country and the government will provide food, shelter and job opportunities to them.⁴⁹

KHRG was not active in collecting detailed information on refugee return in 2016. Karen community based organisations (KCBO) such as Karen Women Organisation (KWO) and Karen Environment and Social Action Network (KESAN) were active on issues relating to refugee return. However, these organisations as well were not well informed of the detailed information on refugee return. Thus, there were many amongst the KCBOs who were critical about the return plans as KCBOs expressed that they were being ignored and excluded from their role as stakeholders in the dialogue for refugee return. Therefore, according to the Karen News, the KCBOs released a statement regarding their position on the refugee return that they should be recognised as a significant stakeholder in this process.⁵⁰

According to the spokesperson of KCBO, Naw Dah Eh Kler, who is a secretary of KWO, said:

“We’ve been hearing rumours that refugees would be sent back but when we make inquiries, no one seems to know for sure. We want to say that whenever this does happen we, the KCBOs, must be recognised as a stakeholder and be allowed to take part in the [dialogue] process.”⁵¹

Of concern, refugees living in the camps along the Thai-Myanmar border state that they have not received clear or complete information regarding the repatriation process. Therefore, the refugees have many concerns regarding their livelihood, access to health and education, and

⁴⁸ [“Dooplaya Situation Update: Win Yin Township, January 2016 to March 2016.”](#) KHRG, December 2016.

⁴⁹ [“Refugees Could Go Back Within One Year: Thailand.”](#) The Irrawaddy, September 2012.

⁵⁰ [“Karen community groups critical to refugee repatriation.”](#) Karen News, September 14, 2012.

⁵¹ [“Burma Thailand:KWO and Karen Community Based Organizations\(KCBO\) Position Paper on Refugees’ Return.”](#) Democracy for Burma, September 14, 2012.

security if they have to return. They also do not have any confirmed information regarding these wide spread rumours about return, especially about when, where and how they will return. Burma Partnership/Progressive Voice has produced a short documentary to highlight refugee's voices regarding the wide spread rumour of uncertain repatriation.⁵²

Despite this uncertainty, in 2016 the situation was getting a little bit better after the NCA was signed and as an outcome of the NCA there were developments relating to preparation for refugees to return. According to two unpublished KHRG situation updates, during the 2016 reporting period, in F--- village, Kyainseikgyi Township, Dooplaya District, 300 houses (for refugees) were built, as organised by Dooplaya District leaders and Burma/Myanmar government. There were no refugees in these houses yet because leaders did not allow anyone to settle in them just yet.⁵³

Some refugees thought that by living in the refugee camp, their safety and living situation would be no different for them if they returned to Burma/Myanmar, so they reported to the UN (United Nations) that it would be easier for them to return if the UN made a plan for them. Therefore, 53 households from Noh Poe refugee camp in Thailand submitted a list of their names to the UN for their return. Then, the UN came to meet and interview them several times in order to make sure everything was prepared for them if they went back to Burma/Myanmar. We know that the refugees had an opportunity to go back to Burma/Myanmar on October 25th 2016. The refugees left Noh Poe camp and went to stay at Kyout Bu's place in Myawaddy in Kawkareik Township temporarily and then they returned to their own places or villages in Burma/Myanmar in accordance to the UN's plan.⁵⁴

Therefore according to the information described above, KHRG perceived that the Burma/Myanmar government and key stakeholders such as UNHCR should include other relevant stakeholders when they plan and act on this refugee issue. This will mean there would be more transparency and a clearer process for the whole repatriation plan and mean that refugees can access necessary information such as where the location of potential resettlement sites are, if there is land available for the refugees, as well as the location of primary services for health and education, in order to make an informed decision as to whether they will return or not. In addition, key stakeholders who act on refugee return should hold proper consultations with refugees before they implement the repatriation plan so that refugees will be able to make a clear and informed decision whether they want to return and to ensure that they will be well prepared for the repatriation process.



⁵² See the documentary at: “[Nothing About Us Without Us](#),” Burma Partnership/Progressive Voice, December 10, 2012.

⁵³ This information is taken from an unpublished report from Kyainseikgyi Township and Win Yin Township received in November 2016.

⁵⁴ This information is taken from an unpublished report from Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District, received in November 2016.

These two photos were taken by a KHRG community member in October 2016. These refugees from Noh Poe camp are the first group that have gone back to Burma/Myanmar. They have to go back to different places and different villages in Burma/Myanmar. Each of them received 8,000 baht [US \$238]⁵⁵ from the Thai government to go back to Burma/Myanmar. It is not clear if they would get a donation from the Burma/Myanmar government side but there were suggestions from Thai government officials who said that the Burma/Myanmar government will donate 300,000 kyat [US \$220] for each household on return. These refugees are the first group who returned to Burma/Myanmar from Noh Poe camp, so the leader of Noh Poe camp wanted leaders in Burma/Myanmar to help and support these returnee refugees. [Photos: KHRG]

Conclusion

This field report covered information from 26 raw data reports that were received by KHRG in 2016 from KHRG community members in Dooplaya District. Based on the information demonstrated in this field report, KHRG perceived that in terms of the military situation, both parties (Myanmar government and ethnic armed groups) especially within the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) should monitor the troops that are active on the ground effectively, in order to make sure that all armed groups follow the code of conduct stipulated in the NCA. If there are no restrictions or effective monitoring on the ground, villagers are concerned that they will continue to suffer human rights violations and other forms of abuse committed by armed groups in their area.

Regarding human rights violations, villagers continue to face challenges and would benefit from more information about how to protect themselves. Similarly, in terms of development projects such as health and education projects, relevant stakeholders including private companies, NGOs, CBOs, the KNU and Myanmar government should ensure that services they have provided such as donations, the distribution of medical supplies, infrastructure, medical treatments, and the provision of school supplies are accessible and available for the local villagers. In addition, it is important that all stakeholders should hold a proper consultation with local villagers before they implement such projects so that villagers are able to express their needs and that projects take villagers' needs into account.

Regarding the refugee return issue, key stakeholders such as the UNHCR and the Myanmar government should engage in the dialogue of refugee return transparently and inclusively with other relevant stakeholders, such as KCBOs, so that refugees can access the important information before they decide to return. Moreover, it is very important for the refugees to have a clear understanding about the return process so they can make an informed decision about repatriation.

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

- "Dooplaya Interview: Saw A---, September 2016," (May 2017)
- "Dooplaya Situation Update: Kawkareik Township and Noh T'Kaw Township, April to May 2016," (March 2017)
- "Dooplaya Situation Update: Win Yay Township, June to July 2015," (March 2017)
- "Dooplaya Interview: Saw A---, August 2015," (February 2017)
- "Dooplaya Situation Update: Kyonedoe Township, April 2016 to July 2016," (February 2017)

⁵⁵ All conversion estimates for the baht in this report are based on the 26 July 2017 official market rate of 33.51 THB to US \$1.

Dooplaya District



Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)