



Interview

June 18, 2018 / KHRG #17-133-A16-I1

Hpapun Interview: Naw H---, December 2017

This Interview with Naw H--- describes events occurring in Dwe Lo Township, Hpapun District, during the period between 2015 and 2017, including information about drugs, gambling, sexual assault and rape, arbitrary killing, education and health.

- *The Tatmadaw, Border Guard Force (BGF) and local authorities organise gambling events every year in Lay Hpoe Hta village tract, Dwe Lo Township, Hpapun District in the winter and summer. People from the area have become addicted to gambling.*
 - *Since the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) was signed in 2015, more people have been using yaba. This increase is linked to the fact that yaba can be purchased more easily from armed groups in Lay Hpoe Hta village tract.*
 - *A 71-year-old man named Dtee Kyaw Win was killed with a gun by an unknown armed actor around October 2015 in Wah Tho Hkoh area. Local authorities have not investigated this killing case. The victim's family does not know why he was killed.*
 - *The interviewee testified that a DKBA soldier sexually assaulted and raped her when she was 16 years old. This incident occurred when the DKBA patrolled with the Tatmadaw in Lay Hpoe Hta village before the ceasefire period.*
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Interview | Naw H---, (female, 30), I--- village, Dwe Lo Township, Hpapun District (December 2017)

The following Interview was conducted by a community member trained by KHRG to monitor local human rights conditions. It was conducted in Hpapun District on December 5th 2017 and is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.¹ This interview was received along with other information from Hpapun District, including 15 other interviews and 200 photographs.²

Ethnicity: Karen

Religion: Buddhist

Marital Status: Married

Occupation: Hill Farming

¹ KHRG trains community members in southeastern Burma/Myanmar to document individual human rights abuses using a standardised reporting format; conduct interviews with other villagers; and write general updates on the situation in areas with which they are familiar. When conducting interviews, community members are trained to use loose question guidelines, but also to encourage interviewees to speak freely about recent events, raise issues that they consider to be important and share their opinions or perspectives on abuse and other local dynamics.

² In order to increase the transparency of KHRG methodology and more directly communicate the experiences and perspectives of villagers in southeastern Burma/Myanmar, KHRG aims to make all field information received available on the KHRG website once it has been processed and translated, subject only to security considerations. For additional reports categorised by Type, Issue, Location and Year, please see the Related Readings component following each report on KHRG's website.

Position: Villager

Good morning. I am working for Karen Human Rights Group [KHRG]. I would like to interview you about the situation in your area after the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement [NCA]. What is your name?

My name is Naw H---

How old are you?

I am [censored for security] years old.

Where do you live?

I think my village should not be included in the interview.

We will use the information that you provide for us securely and your name and your personal information will not be published, so you do not have to worry about your security. You can openly give me information according to your understanding. What is your village name?

I--- village.

What is your ethnicity?

Karen.

What is your religion?

I am a Buddhist.

What is your job?

I am a hill farmer.

What is your responsibility in your community?

I am a villager.

What is your village tract, Township, and District?

Lay Hpoe Hta village tract, Dwe Lo Township, Mu Traw [Hpapun] District.



This photo was taken on December 5th 2017 in I--- village, Lay Hpoe Hta village tract, Dwe Lo Township, Hpapun District. This photo shows a local villager, Naw H--- who shared her experiences of the human rights violations committed by Tatmadaw and Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA). [Photo: KHRG]

Are you married?

Yes, I am.

How many children do you have?

I have [censored for security] children.

How old is your oldest child?

My oldest child is [censored for security] years old.

How old is your youngest child?

My youngest child is [censored for security] years old.

How many households are in your village?

There are 56 households in my village.

How many people live in your village?

The population has been increasing gradually so I do not know.

What kind of jobs do people in your village do for a living?

They work on plain and hill farms.

Do they grow enough paddy every year?

No, some people do not grow enough paddy. There are more people who do not grow enough paddy than there are people who do grow enough paddy. Nowadays, we do not yield much paddy from our farms.

How do people who do not grow enough food secure their livelihoods?

They have to work as daily labourers and then they have to buy rice from towns or other villages, like villages in District #1 [Thaton District].

What kind of daily labour do they do?

They have to build fences, work on rubber plantations and some of them have to find jobs in other villages. There are not many job opportunities here.

How much do they earn per day?

They earn about 4,000 kyats [\$2.98 US]³ per day. Even if they earn 4,000 kyats per day, though, jobs are not regularly available.

How has the situation changed before and after the NCA⁴?

³ All conversion estimates for the kyat in this report are based on the April 26th, 2018 official market rate of 1,399 kyats to US \$1.

⁴ 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)

Before the NCA, we could not work safely on our farms because the Tatmadaw attacked and disturbed us by burning our paddy fields, amongst other abuses. Sometimes, we could not tend to our paddy farms during the conflict period so our paddy was eaten by pigs and other animals. After the NCA, we can work on our farms freely, but this year, mice attacked our paddy. There are many hill farmers who could not harvest on their farms this year, including my father [who could not harvest his] hill farm.

What is the biggest challenge you face after the NCA?

The biggest challenge that I have faced since the NCA has to do with drug [yaba]⁵ use, because yaba can be found easily in my community. Many people, including my relatives, use yaba. My husband also abuses yaba, so he doesn't listen to me anymore. Before, when yaba was not available in my area, my community was very peaceful. After the NCA, the number of yaba users and sellers increased. Consequently, our husbands abuse yaba, so they do not listen to their wives and there is no peace within families. Yaba users know where to find yaba very easily. In the past, my family loved each other and listened to each other. After my husband began to use yaba, however, he stopped listening to me and I am concerned that his condition will worsen, so I just have to be quiet and not say anything.

Does he still use yaba?

Yes.

How many young and middle aged people abuse yaba in your village tract?

Most of the villagers in my village do not go out to other areas and they live in peace, but my husband and my siblings regularly go to other villages that the Border Guard Force [BGF]⁶ and Tatmadaw⁷ control. They have been bringing yaba for recreational use to the village for many years and as a consequence, they are unmotivated and have apathy towards work.

was signed between the Burma/Myanmar government and eight of the fifteen ethnic armed groups originally invited to the negotiation table, including the KNU, see "Myanmar signs ceasefire with eight armed groups," Reuters, October 15th 2015. The signing of the NCA followed the January 12th 2012 preliminary ceasefire agreement between the KNU and Burma/Myanmar government in Hpa-an

⁵ Yaba, which means 'crazy medicine' in Thai, is a tablet form of methamphetamine. First developed in East Asia during the Second World War to enhance soldiers' performance, methamphetamine has become increasingly popular in Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Burma/Myanmar where it is typically manufactured. See, [Yaba, the 'crazy medicine' of East Asia](#), UNODC, May 2008; Chapter IV in Truce or Transition? Trends in human rights abuse and local response in Southeast Myanmar since the 2012 ceasefire, KHRG, June 2014; "[Thaton Situation Update: Bilin Township, July to September 2016](#)," KHRG, April 2017; and "[Dooplaya Field Report: A quasi-ceasefire? Developments after the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, from January to December 2016](#)," KHRG, September 2017.

⁶ 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.

⁷ While Tatmadaw and DKBA units had operated together for years, this operational hierarchy became formalised with the DKBA's transformation into a 'Border Guard Force' under control of the Tatmadaw and containing a fixed number quota of Tatmadaw officers. This transformation dates to at least May 2009, when commanding officers stated in high-level meeting of DKBA officers that the DKBA would transform itself into a 'Border Guard Force;' unpublished leaked minutes from the May 2009 meeting are on file with KHRG. Ceremonies attended by Tatmadaw commanders officially announced the transformation of large portions of the DKBA into Border Guard Forces in September 2010; see, for example: "[Border Guard Forces of Southeast Command formed in Paingkyon of Kayin](#)

Where do you think the yaba comes from?

I think the yaba is not from the Kaw Thoo Lei⁸ [Karen National Union⁹ control area]. The yaba is from our enemy's [Tatmadaw and BGF's] area, the gambling area and the area where many people go and enjoy their life and go to parties. This is what I know about yaba. I had never heard about yaba when I was a child, so I honestly can say that yaba has been spreading a lot in my community since Hko Per Baw¹⁰ [when the DKBA was established in 1994].

Does the Border Guard Force (BGF) also prohibit the use of yaba?

I do not know whether they prohibit it or not, but when I ask about yaba they tell me that they forbid yaba as well. From my knowledge, my husband's access to yaba is mostly through the BGF. Yaba is not sold by ordinary shopkeepers in my community, but by the children and wives of the BGF.

Do they still sell yaba?

The number of the people who sell yaba has decreased over the past two years because they were prohibited from selling yaba by the people [local KNU leaders]. Yaba cannot be easily abolished, though, because the BGF are still selling it.

Is gambling present in your community?

Yes, there is gambling. Gambling occurs during the summer when the BGF does fundraising. They hire Burmese traditional show groups and set up several types of gambling activities. They separate gambling activities into groups such as Ah Ni Daw and Aung Ka Lo [Myanmar gambling games] and other card games during the event [Ar War Day]¹¹. The BGF receive taxes from the people who lead these gambling activities. Villagers who live close to the Ar War Day event commit domestic violence, have arguments and get divorced. Women cannot stop their husbands from gambling because husbands become addicted to gambling games such as Ni Daw, Aung Ka Lo and playing cards. They also abuse yaba for the whole summer without

[State](#)," *New Light of Myanmar*, August 22nd 2010; and "[Border Guard Force formed at At Winkwinkalay Region, Myawaddy Township, Kayin State](#)," *New Light of Myanmar*, August 25th 2010.

⁸ The term Kaw Thoo Lei refers to Karen State as demarcated by the Karen National Union (KNU), but the exact meaning and etymology is disputed; see: Jonathan Falla. *True Love and Bartholomew: Rebels on the Burmese Border*, Cambridge University Press: 1991

⁹ The Karen National Union is the main Karen group opposing the government.

¹⁰ Hko Per Baw refers to the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), originally formed in 1994 as a breakaway group from the KNLA. Since its separation from the KNLA in 1994, it was known to frequently cooperate with and support the Tatmadaw in its conflict with the KNLA. The original group underwent major change in 2010 as the majority of the original DKBA was transformed into the BGF, which is under the control of the Burma/Myanmar government. The remainder of the original DKBA formed a smaller splinter group in 2010 and then changed its name in 2012 from the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army to the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army. Following this major change in 2010, the original DKBA is considered to no longer exist as a distinct entity as it has now been submerged within the BGF. This original DKBA (Buddhist) (1994 – 2010) should not be confused with either the DKBA (Benevolent) (2010 – present) which was formed as a breakaway group from the original DKBA, or with the DKBA (Buddhist) (2016 – present) which was formed as a splinter group from the DKBA (Benevolent) (2010 – present) in 2016. For more information on the formation of the DKBA, see "Inside the DKBA," KHRG, 1996.

¹¹ 'Ar Wer' is a term coined by DKBA, BGF and KPC and used to describe special days, hence the expression 'Ar Wer day.' Ar Wer day events typically involve celebrations to mark a special occasion such as the building of a new pagoda or to honour these armed groups. Sometimes people also engage in illicit activities such as gambling and drug use on Ar Wer days. The Ar Wer Day is primarily celebrated by armed groups to serve as a main fundraising activity for them.

thinking to work for their family income. As a result, children who are at the age to go to school cannot access education properly because their fathers are gambling and cannot provide financial support for their children's education.

Who organised the gambling event [Ar Wer Day]?

The people who have authority in the community organised this event. Ordinary local civilians do not have opportunity to organise this kind of Burmese traditional dance event and gambling clubs for the whole summer.

Who are the people in charge? Could you please describe them?

The BGF and Tatmadaw permit gambling clubs like this, and their participants are local opportunists, but the KNU in my community do not participate in the event. Then, they [the BGF and Tatmadaw] receive taxes from the gambling group leaders. For example, if I am an opportunist who gains permission from the BGF and Tatmadaw, then I can set up gambling clubs, but I would not be able to do it if the armed groups did not give me permission. The three groups of the people, then [the opportunists, Tatmadaw and BGF] cooperate so that the gambling clubs are successful. Now we are faced with the negative consequences of gambling. The people who lead the gambling events are the BGF and Tatmadaw, and then the negative consequences and challenges impact the local civilians.

How many days did they hold [Ar Wer Day]?

I do not exactly know how many days they hold the event, but I know that they usually hold it from the beginning of winter to the end of summer.

So, they hold it for the entire winter and summer nonstop, correct?

Yes, it is. The group of Burmese traditional dancing groups rotate again and again for the whole winter and summer because if there were no dancing groups, the gambling clubs would not look grand.

How much do the BGF and Tatmadaw tax those who work at the event?

I do not exactly know how much they tax, but I know that if the gambling group is larger, they tax higher and if the gambling team is small, they tax lower, like that. They also tax the shops in the event as well. For example, if local civilians like me set up a temporary shop in the event, I would pay taxes to them [the BGF and Tatmadaw]. So, if our shops are bigger, they charge us higher, and if our shops are smaller, they charge us less. Their taxation is dependent on the Ar Wer Day event. If the event takes only three days, then they tax for three days, if the event is for a month, they charge a monthly tax and if the event is for the whole winter and summer, then they tax for the whole winter and summer [eight months].

So, you mean the gambling clubs are organised annually by the BGF and Tatmadaw, correct?

Yes, that's correct.

Does the gambling impact or disturb the students and their studies?

Ah la la, of course there are a lot of impacts. Like last year, they held Ar Wer Day at K'Ma Moe Town while the students had to take exams. The sound from the speakers was very loud, thumping 'Doo Doo Doo' so the students couldn't concentrate on their studies. The students are teenagers so some of them were very excited to join the event and some young couples met at

the event. But overall, some students struggled to study since it was noisy. This year, they [the BGF and Tatmadaw] did not hold Ar Wer Day close to the Town, but they moved it a little further to the eastern part of K'Ma Moe Town.

Are there no students in the eastern part of K'Ma Moe Town?

Yes, there are students in eastern part of K'Ma Moe Town.

Did the leaders report this issue [to authorities]?

I do not know much about this, but K'Ma Moe Standard¹² Ten students and teachers reported this issue to authorities so the event was moved to another place. The gambling clubs have been going on regularly since the early winter until now. I received information that they will continue until the end of summer. There will be a lot of women who live close to the event [Ar Wer Day] who will not be able to stop their husbands from gambling.

What is your opinion of the yaba and gambling?

In my opinion, the yaba and gambling have damaging effects. In the past, we could warn our husbands against drinking alcohol. Even when they were drunk, we could ask them to do their jobs. Since they began to use yaba, we cannot control them and they are not thinking to work for their family incomes. Sometimes, they do not even remember their children. I regularly try to stop my husband from using yaba. His current situation has improved compared to last year because he uses yaba less now. In the past, his habits were damaged a lot since he used yaba and so my heart was broken.

Your tears fall when you cannot stop your children from using yaba and you have no way to prevent your children from using yaba. Women struggle and save money for our children's education. We have a big dream for our children to become educated people, but their habits are damaged when they start to use drugs in Standard Ten, so parents' tears are falling. We also want our husbands to work for money to support their children's education, but they use yaba and do not work for their family income, so it impacts their children's education. Thus, husbands who abuse yaba and gambling are mostly causing divorce, and their children and wives are sad. As a result, some children cannot go to school anymore. Many of my neighbours who have experienced this in their families, as have I. Yaba and gambling damage everything in our families, such as education, health and more. The yaba and gambling do not help us and I do not think that yaba and gambling are good for us.

After the ceasefire agreement [NCA], have armed groups entered [patrolled] in your village?

There is only the local armed group, which is KNLA, so they do not cause any problems for us.

Are they giving arbitrary demands and committing forced labour?

No, they do not commit any forced labour in my village tract.

Are there any killing cases committed by armed groups?

¹² A standard refers to a school year in the education system of Burma/Myanmar. The basic education system has a 5-4-2 structure. Primary school runs from Standard 1 to Standard 5, lower secondary school is Standard 6 to Standard 9, and upper secondary school is Standard 10 to Standard 11.

There was one man, Pa Dtee¹³, who was killed with a gun by an unknown armed actor, but until now villagers have not learned which armed group killed him. The local authorities have not investigated this case and have not even looked into this murder. In the village, when people lose a chicken or a pig, they try to find out what happened to their animal, so that they know whether their chicken or pig was stolen or killed. If the local authorities tried to investigate this case, they could learn who the perpetrator is and whether they are Saw Thoo [Saw Black] or Saw Wah [Saw White].¹⁴

What is the name of the Pa Dtee [victim]?

People called him Dtee Kyaw Win.

Which village did he live in?

He lived in Meh Kyi Hta village, Lay Hpoee Hta village tract, but he worked for his livelihood in Wah Tho Hko village. He was killed by an unknown person in Wah Tho Hko village.

How old was he?

He is 71 years old.

Who killed him?

I do not know yet.

Why was he killed, do you think?

He was a religious man and he spent his life according to religious teachings, so I do not think he was killed for stealing. I never lived or ate with him in the same house so I do not know for what reason he angered the people who killed him. I think he may have been misunderstood or and misjudged by the people who murdered him. He was killed with a gun and we villagers do not know which armed group committed this murder.

When did he die?

He died in 2015 but I do not know the exact month. It happened at the end of rainy season in October.

Did his family investigate his killing case and report it to the authorities?

His children had two different perspectives. The village tract leaders asked the daughter about her father's murder, *"What do you want to do with your father's killing case?"* She replied, *"My father has died and it is finished so I just keep it as it is his merit¹⁵ in this world."*

However, his son is dissatisfied with his father's murder. He wants to know why his father was killed because his father never stole. He said his father was killed by a Kaw Thoo Lei [KNLA] soldier. He said, *"If it is true [that a Kaw Thoo Lei soldier killed my father] and accused my father of opposing the Kaw Thoo Lei, then I want to know how much the Kaw Thoo Lei has been destroyed, how many Kaw Thoo Lei soldiers have been killed, and how many of their*

¹³ *Pa Dtee* or *Dtee* is a familiar term of respect in S'gaw Karen attributed to an older man that translates to "uncle," but it does not necessarily signify any actual familial relationship.

¹⁴ *Saw Thoo* or *Saw Wah* is a Karen phrase that is commonly used to indicate when someone does not know a particular person or who they are speaking of.

¹⁵ *Merit* is a Buddhist concept whereby an individual accumulates merit as a result of good deeds or thoughts and may be shared with a deceased loved one in order to help them in their new existence.

ammunitions have been looted by their enemy because of my father. Even when they [the KNLA] arrest their enemy [Tatmadaw], they allow the arrested person to speak. So if my father was really against the Kaw Thoo Lei and their politics, they should have given time to my father to speak and they should not have killed him like this."

So, he is unhappy about his father being killed. He also added, *"If I discover that the Kaw Thoo Lei really killed my father, I won't go against the Kaw Thoo Lei because they are Karen and I am a Karen, so if I am hostile to them, it is like I am hostile to myself."* He said he is dissatisfied, but his younger sister doesn't want him to look into the situation and wants him to stop talking about his father's killing case. Even if he discovers that an armed group killed his father, whether it is the Kaw Thoo Lei or BGF, he won't do anything against them because he just wants to know the reason why they killed his father.

Do they know the armed group that killed their father?

They may know the exact armed group that killed his father, but his younger sister doesn't want him to talk about this case anymore.

Are they at peace with their father's killing case, then?

Based on the way the son speaks, the son is not at peace, but the daughter said she has just let it go. As a Buddhist, she sees her father's murder as a result of her father's merit. She believes that someone did this to him in this life because her father must have committed a murder in his previous life.

Do you know the NCA? If yes, how did you learn about it?

I just learned about it from my neighbours and sometimes from our leaders [the KNU] who held meetings and talked about the NCA.

Do you believe in this ceasefire agreement?

For all of Karen history, the [successive] Burma/Myanmar governments have lied to the Karen people again and again so that I cannot believe in them anymore. Since I was a child, our parents told us the Burma/Myanmar government have been lying to us [Karen people] again and again, so I cannot trust the Burma/Myanmar government.

Has security for women improved since the ceasefire?

If we compare the current security for women now to the security for women in the past, the current situation has improved a little bit because I feel comfortable enough to speak out about the incidents against women that have happened in the past, as well as my experiences.

Could you please describe your experiences?

This was my experience in the period before the ceasefire. When the Ko Per Baw [Democratic Karen Buddhist Army] was founded, the Ko Per Baw soldiers led by Bo Mo Kyo raped a lot of women when they entered into my area. In the past, I thought I would never talk about it because I thought that it was a very shameful thing for us. When I see that other women in other countries do not believe that their experiences are shameful, instead they report their rape cases to the public or media, I feel more comfortable to report my experiences.

One day, my father was working on the sugar cane plantation and my mom told me, *"Daughter, you should take a bath earlier [this afternoon] because Tatmadaw and DKBA soldiers are currently in the village."* At that time, Ko Per Baw and Tatmadaw patrolled together. And then I went to the river for bath. When I was in the river, there was one Ko Per Baw soldier on the river

bank who came to me and took off my sarong and touched my chest and it was a horrible and a painful feeling for me. Even the Karen, they did not tell their soldiers not to rape children. This happened when I was 16 years old so I was beautiful and I had never been in relationship with any man. When I returned to my house, I thought, *“No! I do not dare to tell this to anyone because it is a very shameful thing.”* If I told others, I was worried that no man would fall in love with me. Nowadays, when I think of it, it is not a shameful thing because I did not love him, I did not call him to come to me. He raped me without my consent, but at the time it was a very painful feeling that I experienced.

Did you report the incident to the perpetrator’s leaders?

No, I didn’t dare to speak out because I felt ashamed. They [Tatmadaw and DKBA] also shot my pig for meat. When I was single, as villagers in the mountain villages normally do, my mother was breeding a pig for my wedding. They shot my pig for meat, but they did not pay me any money.

After the ceasefire [NCA], has this kind of abuse happened in your area?

No, it has not happened again after the ceasefire. This abuse happened when Ko Per Baw was founded and the Border Guard Force [BGF] was not formed yet.

After the ceasefire, have women’s rights improved?

Yes, after the NCA, women’s rights have improved so we dare to speak out, not like in the past.

Are there any developments in your area?

No, there are no major developments in my area because local villagers only work on plain farms. In regards to education in my area, children can access schools more freely without disturbance from the Tatmadaw and they do not have to flee anymore. So, if we compare the current situation to the situation in the past, the current situation is better because in the past we regularly had to flee whenever fighting happened between armed groups. Now, we can work freely on our plain and hill farms, but there are no business opportunities in our area. These are all good changes in my area.

Do you have a school in your village?

Yes, we do. The school is up to Standard Four.

How many teachers and students do you have?

We have five teachers and 80 students [not including Kindergarten students]. Most of the students are in Kindergarten, so if we count the Kindergarten students, the number of students is nearly 100.

Is the school a KNU or Burma/Myanmar government school? Do the students have access to any support?

No, the school is a civilian school. The students receive books and pens from the Karen Education Department [KED], but parents have to support their children with other needs. They [the KED] also provide support to teachers once per year.

How much does the [KED] pay teachers?

The KED gave 184,000 kyats [\$138.34 US] per teacher per year this year.

How about food for the teachers? Do the students' parents have to provide support for teachers' food?

The teachers live in the village and they have their own food so we [the parents of students] do not have to provide food for them.

Do you have a hospital in your village?

No, we do not have a hospital.

Where do the villagers access healthcare services when they are sick?

They access treatment from health workers in our village and if they cannot treat the major illnesses, the patients have to go to the hospital in town.

Do the patients have to pay healthcare services fees?

Of course they have to pay medical fees.

Is the hospital a Burma/Myanmar government hospital?

Yes, it is a Burma/Myanmar government hospital, but we still have to pay medical fees.

Are the medical fees and the illnesses proportionate?

Probably, they may be proportionate.

Are the villagers still disturbed by the people [local authorities or armed groups] when they travel?

If we inform them [local authorities or armed groups] whenever we cross checkpoints, like KNU checkpoints, we can travel freely in the area.

Are villagers still interrupted by people [local authorities or armed groups]?

No.

How much does rice cost per big tin¹⁶?

One basket of rice is 15,000 kyats [\$11.90 US], but one big tin of rice costs 8,000 kyats [\$5.97 US].

How much chicken per viss [1.633 kgs]?

One viss of chicken is 6,000 kyats [\$4.48 US].

How much pork per viss [1.633 kgs]?

One viss of pork is 3,000 kyats [\$2.24 US]. Pork is cheaper than chicken.

Do you have any job opportunities for your family income?

¹⁶ A big tin is a unit of volume used to measure paddy, milled rice and seeds. One big tin is equivalent to 10.45 kg or 23.04 lb of paddy, and 16 kg or 35.2 lb of milled rice.

No, there are no job opportunities in order to earn money for our family. We have to work on the plain farms and sesame plantations yearly for our livelihoods. People who harvest more sesame, they can sell it for their family income, but villagers who get less sesame, they do not earn money for their family.

What do you want to see in the future?

I want the local authorities such as the KNU and Burma/Myanmar government to stop the yaba and gambling in my area. If the yaba that can damage people's behaviour is still available in my area, Karen people's lives will never improve and their lives will be worse. If they [the KNU and Burma/Myanmar government] cannot stop the yaba, at least they should gradually decrease the yaba in my area.

Do you have any other information?

I only want yaba to be eliminated in my area. Local authorities should try to find out who the yaba users are, but yaba users abuse yaba secretly.

Is there a drug elimination committee in your village?

Yes, there is a drug elimination committee. The committee was founded by the KNU and BGF in a meeting in Wa Ro Hko village between local authorities. The head of the committee is BGF General Maung Chit.

As you mentioned above, yaba is mostly from [Bo¹⁷ Maung Chit's] children, so why does he not prohibit it?

From my understanding, yaba mostly comes from their [BGF] side. Yaba is not from the Kaw Thoo Lei control area, but I do not know the place where the yaba originates.

What is Bo Maung Chit's battalion number?

I do not know.

What is his position?

He is Battalion Commander.

Do you have any other information that you want to add?

No, I do not.

Can we [KHRG] use the information that you provide for us [KHRG] in the publication or media?

Yes, you can. I reported this information in order to do a good thing [for other people]. I would like to say that, people who sell yaba for their income are destroying their people. I do not use yaba, but I want the situation for people to improve. Perpetrators may not agree with people who do good things for people like me. If more people listen to our voices and cooperate with us, their people who sell drugs for their income will not succeed.

Thank you.

¹⁷ *Bo* is a Burmese title meaning 'officer.'

Thank you.

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

- “Hpapun Situation Update: Lu Thaw Township, February to March 2018,” (May 2018)
- “Hpapun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township and Dwe Lo Township, July to September 2017,” (March 2018)
- “Hpapun Situation Update: Dwe Lo Township, 2016 to February 2017,” (August 2017)
- “Hpapun Interview: Saw A---, July 2015,” (April 2017)
- “Hpapun Interview: Saw B---, October 2016,” (March 2017)

Mu Traw (Hpapun) District



Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)