



Interview

September 26, 2017 / KHRG #17-46-A3-I1

Toungoo Interview: Saw A---, February 2017

This interview with Saw A--- describes events occurring in Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District in February 2017, including education, healthcare, land issues, logging and armed groups activities.

- *Saw A--- stated that no clinic has yet been built in B--- village, Min Lan Ywar village tract, Leik Tho Town, Thandaunggyi Township. Therefore, B--- villagers have to go to the hospital in town to get medical treatment when they are sick. Villagers cannot receive medical treatment if they do not have enough money to pay the medical fees.*
 - *According to Saw A---, the EFI company is planning to confiscate 3,000 acres of villagers' land in Min Lan Ywar village tract, Leik Tho Town, Thandaunggyi Township in order to grow commercial plantations. However, although villagers want to protect their ancestral land from land confiscation, they lack the necessary knowledge of land policy.*
 - *Saw A--- stated that Aye Chan Yay A'pweh and Nyein Chan Yay A'pweh (two armed Thandaung peace groups) gave permission to wealthy individuals but not to villagers to conduct logging in Thandaunggyi Township. If villagers want to conduct logging, they have to bribe Aye Chan Yay A'pweh and Nyein Chan Yay A'pweh.*
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Interview | Saw A--- (male, 30), B--- village, Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District (February 2017)

The following Interview was conducted by a community member trained by KHRG to monitor local human rights conditions. It was conducted in Toungoo District on February 22nd 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 Toungoo, including two other interviews, 69 photographs and one video clip.²

Ethnicity: Keh Bah³

Religion: Christian

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.

³ Keh Bah Karen is a Karen sub-ethnic group which resides in southeast Burma/Myanmar, Toungoo District in the vicinity of Thandaung Town in the Special Area of Leik Tho and Ya Tho. This sub-ethnic Karen group has their own language and culture. Most Keh Bah Karen are animist.

Marital Status: Married
Occupation: Goods Trader
Position: Hundred household leader

What is your name?

Saw⁴ A---

How old are you?

I am 30 years old.

What is your ethnicity?

I am Keh Bah Karen.

What is your religion?

Christian.

Are you married?

Yes.

How many children do you have?

I have two sons.

How old is your eldest child?

My eldest child is six years old.

How old is your youngest child?

Two years old.

What work do most of the people here do to support their livelihood?

Most of the people here work on farms and hill plantations.

What work do you do?

I buy and sell goods.

Do you also work on the garden?

I do not work on the garden. I work on the farmland.

I would like to ask you about the situation in your village. Are there any schools in your village?

Yes. There is a school in my village.

How many standards⁵ are taught in the school?

The school is a post primary school. Currently, seven standards are taught in the school.

Did the Burma/Myanmar government build this school or did villagers build it? Was this school built by a non-governmental organisation?

In the past we just built and ran this school by ourselves but later on the Burma/Myanmar government ran and reconstructed this school and they sent the Burma/Myanmar government's teachers to teach students from this school. In the past, we just hired local teachers from our village to teach students.

⁴ Saw is a S'gaw Karen male honorific title used before a person's name.

⁵ 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.

How long has the Burma/Myanmar government been running this school?

It's been a long time. I do not know exactly. I left this school in 2004 and this year is 2017. So I think the Burma/Myanmar government has been running this school for more than 13 years.

Are there enough teachers in this school?

It has been two years since this school became a post primary school. Now this school teaches up to seven standards. The school teachers have weak points [in teaching]. The headmaster only fulfils his responsibilities as headmaster; he [headmaster] is not involved in teaching. Therefore, this school needs more teachers.

Do the students in your village have to pay any school fees?

The students do not currently need to pay any school fees.

How long has it been since the students needed to pay school fees?

I guess it has been three years since the students needed to pay school fees.

Does the Burma/Myanmar government donate textbooks, writing tools and school materials to the students?

Since 2014 the Burma/Myanmar government has provided those things to the students. They also gave 1,000 kyat [US\$0.73]⁶ in [2014] to each student when the students enrolled in the school but stopped giving [1,000 kyat/US\$0.73] to students this year [2017]. However, the Burma/Myanmar government provided books to the primary school students. In addition, they [Burma/Myanmar government] donated clothes to the students.

Are the things [books and school materials] that they [Burma/Myanmar government] donate sufficient for one year?

I think they [Burma/Myanmar government] just donate as much as they can. The books they [Burma/Myanmar government] donated are insufficient for students because they have to use many different books in order to study all the different subjects in school.

Are there any children in your village who cannot go to school? If so, why? For example, parents who are very poor might not be able to send their children to school.

We do not have any children who cannot go to school in our village but there are some children who cannot go to school in A'Thet Ywar village in this village tract because their parents are poor and work on the hill plantations. Their parents cannot feed them so they [children] cannot live in the village and they have to live together with their parents in the hill plantations. That is why they are away from the school.

Are there any clinics and hospitals in your village?

We do not have any clinics and hospitals in our village. If we have health problems, we must go [to the hospital] in the town.

So you must go to the hospital in the town if you are sick?

Yes.

How far is it from your village to the hospital?

12 miles.

Where do villagers in the village get medical treatment if they are sick or ill?

Currently there is a midwife who is hired by the Burma/Myanmar government in the village but she [midwife] does not have much time [to treat patients] because she has to go back and forth

⁶ All conversion estimates for the kyat in this report are based on the 26 September 2017 official market rate of 1365 kyat to US \$1.

between her home and her office. However, we have a nurse who attended healthcare training in our village so we can go to get medical treatment from her if we are sick. Villagers this year have not usually gone to traditional doctors if they are sick but they used traditional medicine in the past. There are also healthcare workers in the village such as the malaria protection group.⁷ They [healthcare workers] work as hard as they can to cure sick villagers. If villagers are seriously sick, they just go to the hospital in town.

Do you have to pay medical fees if you go to the hospital? Or do you receive medical treatment for free?

Yes. We have to pay medical fees at the hospital. We do not receive medical treatment for free.

So you cannot get medical treatment [at the hospital] if you do not have enough money?

Yes. We cannot get medical treatment if we do not have enough money. Also, the quality of the road is very poor so we have to carry sick people to the hospital. Our village is not very far from the town. I think the road in our area should be improved.

Oh I forget to ask you for the name of your village.

My village's name is B--- village.

Can you also tell me which village tract and Township [your village is located in]?

My village is located in Min Lan Ywar village tract, Leik Tho Town, Thandaunggyi Township.

Most of the people in your area work on the gardens and farms, right?

Yes. Villagers also do logging but not as a business.

Most of the villagers work on the land. Do villagers face any problems regarding the land?

We do not have big issues regarding the land but we also do not get the benefits from the land that we deserve. How can I explain this? We have our own lands but some of our lands are located in the reserved forest. We also do not have land form #7.⁸ That is why we cannot get loans [from the Burma/Myanmar government] for farming and cultivating.

So those lands [in the reserved forest] are not recognised by the Burma/Myanmar government?

Yes.

Have you heard that the Burma/Myanmar government plans to make land form #7 for villagers?

We want to urge the Burma/Myanmar government to make land form #7 for villagers. Our area is administered and governed by Karen state officials [the Karen National Union] but the reserved forest is administered by the Burma/Myanmar government. Therefore, we want the Myanmar government to agree to transfer control of our lands [in the reserved forest] to our Karen state [the KNU]. Also, we want evidence or legal documents that would show that these lands [in the reserved forest] belong to the Karen state [the KNU].

Do you face any problems regarding the reserved forest?

Yes. Our lands are located in the reserved forest. Therefore, even if the development project's budget is drafted with the permission of local officials, the forestry department [in the Burma/Myanmar government] will not allow us to conduct development projects because we do

⁷ It is unclear whether this refers to an official organisation or health workers group that works on malaria issues or if this is a health worker group working with the Burmese government.

⁸ Land form #7 is the land grant required to work on a particular area of land. In Burma/Myanmar, all land is ultimately owned by the government.

not have land form #105.⁹ If we do not have land form #105, we will not be able to construct buildings [as part of development projects]. Although the local officials have given us permission to build clinics on our lands, we cannot build any clinics because we do not have land form #105. Therefore, we want the reserved forest to be excluded [no longer classified as reserved forest]. If we have land form #105, our village will be improved. Otherwise, our villagers will not be able to benefit from our lands.

So you want the reserved forest to be excluded [from being considered as part of the reserved forest]?

Yes.

Have you ever submitted a letter to the Township office or to the District office?

No. However, the land measurement department recently came to record and list the land areas that villagers work on. However, the amount of land that villagers own and the amount of the land that they measured are very different because they [the land measurement department] only recorded the land that villagers work on and did not include the rest of the land in the forest [that villagers own]. For example, if we own 1,000 acres of land but only work on 500 acres of that land, the other 500 acres of land would not be included in the list that they [the land measurement department] made. They must record the right amounts of land. Our villagers lack knowledge regarding land measurement [techniques] so the land measurement department and the forestry department should cooperate with each other to measure the land exactly and draw the boundary [clearly] between villagers' lands and the reserved forest. The land issue will be resolved if they measure the land exactly. If they ask the villagers to list the amount of land [that they own], they should not exclude land that villagers do not work on if villagers are unable to report it [the precise number of acres] to them.

So there is no guarantee [that the villagers' land will be accurately measured]?

Yes.

Do companies or wealthy individuals come to do business in your area?

No. Currently, no companies or wealthy individuals come to do business in our area. Nevertheless, there is EFI company in Kyin Wa area, Bago division. They plant a lot of *Sein Ta Lone* mango trees. It is very far from the place that we live. I am not sure whether they [EFI] are coming to do [mango plantation] in our area or not.

What does EFI stand for?

I do not know.

That's OK. What kind of [commercial] plantation do they [EFI] grow? And whose lands do they use when they grow plantation?

They [EFI] grow mango plantations but they do not grow mango plantations on the land that villagers cultivate. They grow plantations on the vacant and virgin land where villagers do not grow anything.¹⁰ They [EFI] clean bushes on the vacant and virgin land and then they grow plantations.

⁹ Land Form #105 is a non-permanent holding register, and is the first step towards securing full tenure rights. After securing this initial form, land must be cultivated continuously for three years without being left fallow. If the tenure holder has a strong enough relationship with the Settlements and Land Records Department (SLRD), they can then secure a Form 106, which acts as a permanent holding register; see [Burma's Environment: People, Problems, Policies](#), BEWG, 2011, p. 39.

¹⁰ The perpetrator of this abuse may have been claiming authority under one of the Burma/Myanmar government laws that allows rights to land to be transferred from villagers to private entities. The Wasteland Instructions Law (1991) enabled both domestic and foreign investment in large-scale commercial enterprises through transfer of use rights to designated "wasteland" (or "vacant, fallow and virgin land"). This practice was recently reaffirmed by the Vacant, Fallow, Virgin Land Law (2012). As development has increased in southeast Burma/Myanmar since the

Do they [EFI] grow plantations on the villagers' ancestral land?

Yes. They grow plantations on the villagers' ancestral land because some villagers cannot work on their entire plot of land. Therefore, the rest of their land became virgin and wild land. Then the company [EFI] arrived and cleaned the bushes on the villagers' wild land in order to grow the plantation. They [EFI] are a group of businessmen so it is easy for them to establish good relationships with the local authorities. How can I explain this? They [EFI] know how to confiscate villagers' land. Yet, our villagers do not know how to defend their lands because they lack knowledge [regarding land policy].

How many acres of [villagers'] land did they confiscate?

They plan to confiscate 3,000 acres of land. ¹¹

How many acres of confiscated land have they [EFI] been growing plantation?

I do not know exactly.

Does the 3,000 acres of land that they [EFI] have received permission to confiscate in order to grow commercial plantation include the land that villagers cultivate?

No. It does not include the land that villagers cultivate. They [EFI] said they will not take the land that villagers work on but they will take the land which is wild [uncultivated] land.

Do you know the owner of this company [EFI]?

No. I do not know the owner of this company.



This photo was taken on February 22nd 2017 in B-- village, Min Lan Ywar village tract, Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District. It shows a picture of the villager, whose name is Saw A--, who was interviewed by a KHRG researcher. [Photo: KHRG]

How long have they conducted their plantation project?

They have conducted their plantation project for more than four years.

What about logging and gold mining?

I have never heard about gold mining but I heard that logging was conducted.

signing of the government-KNU ceasefire in January 2012, KHRG received an increasing number of complaints of confiscation of "uncultivated land" or "wasteland." For KHRG documentation of land confiscation arising from development projects, see "[With only our voices, what can we do?: Land confiscation and local response in southeast Myanmar](#)," KHRG, June 2015, as well as, "[Losing Ground: Land conflicts and collective action in eastern Myanmar](#)," KHRG, March 2013. For summary and analysis of the legal and policy framework relating to land management in Burma/Myanmar, see: [Legal Review of Recently Enacted Farmland Law and Vacant Fallow and Virgin Lands Management Law](#), Food Security Group - Land Core Group, November 2012.

¹¹ After further follow up by the KHRG Researcher who conducted this interview, some land has already been confiscated but further confiscation is expected continue.

What company came to conduct logging? What year did they come?

I do not know the name of the company but they conducted logging around 2003 or 2004. At that time I was very young so I did not remember what the name of the company was. Yet, I remember one thing: the person who conducted logging. His name is U Win Aung.¹²

Is it Win Aung Company?

Yes. It seems like that.

So Win Aung Company came to do logging?

Yes.

How did they [Win Aung Company] conduct logging?

At that time [2003 or 2004], they did not have chainsaws. They just cut the trees with their saws and then used elephants to transport the logs during the raining season. In the summer, they used cars to transport the logs.

How long has the logging been conducted [in your area]?

The logging has been conducted for two or three years in our area.

Are there any trees left in your area?

At the current time, the trees for logging are almost all gone.

Were there any forests in your area? Was the forest very wild?

Until 2000, there were big trees in the forest. The people did not usually go to the forest because the forest was very wild. The teak trees were very big at that time.

Now there are no more big trees [in the forest]?

Yes. There are no big trees left because of the logging. We will not have any big trees to show the next generation. I think they [the next generation] will not even know that we used to have a forest here before.

Are there any armed groups in your area?

Yes. There are armed groups in our area.

What kind of armed groups are they?

There is the KNU group in our area.

Are you referring to the armed group [[Karen National Liberation Army] who recently signed a ceasefire agreement with the Burma/Myanmar government?

No. The KNU group who made peace with the Burma/Myanmar government.

Which armed group?

The armed group from Brigade 2 [Toungoo District].

How long have they [the armed group from Brigade 2] been living here?

I do not know how long they have been living here. I think they have been living here for a long time.

¹² This is likely to refer to U Win Aung, a prominent Burmese businessman who is the current president of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry and founder of Dagon International, the construction company that won contracts for construction projects in Naypyidaw. Due to his close ties to the Burmese military, he was placed on the US Sanctions list between 2009 and 2015. For more information on U Win Aung, please see, “[‘Crony’ Win Aung Removed From US Blacklist: Who’s Next?](#)”: The Irrawaddy, April 24 2015, and “[U Win Aung, President, UMFCCI](#).”

Do you know who the leaders of the armed groups are?

As far as I know, they are Bo Arr Di, U Ko Gyi and U Kyaw Win.

So they are *Nyein Chan Yay A'pweh* [Karen Peace Force].¹³ Right?

Yes.

Which armed group is U Ko Gyi?

U Ko Gyi is *Aye Chan Yay A'pweh*.¹⁴

Where are they [*Aye Chan Yay A'pweh*] active?

They are active in the northern area of Thandaunggyi Township.

So they are also active in your area?

Yes.

What work do they [*Aye Chan Yay A'pweh*] do to support their livelihoods?

They just make money by selling natural resources. I do not know what other businesses they do. This is what I know.

Do they [*Aye Chan Yay A'pweh*] conduct logging?

Yes.

What about gold mining? Do they [*Aye Chan Yay A'pweh*] conduct it?

No. They do not conduct it.

What about other businesses such as gambling and cockfighting? Do they [*Aye Chan Yay A'pweh*] make money by organising gambling?

They did it [gambling] a lot in the past but I have not seen them organise gambling ever since the new government was elected. They now organise gambling in our village tract less often.

In which village tract do they [*Aye Chan Yay A'pweh*] mostly organise the gambling?

Recently they organised the gambling in Aout Kyin area but they do not conduct it in Toungoo town because most of the people here do not agree with that activity [gambling].

In which area do they [*Aye Chan Yay A'pweh*] mostly conduct the gambling?

Mostly they conduct the gambling in Kyaukkyi [area].

¹³ Karen Peace Force (KPF) was formed in February 1997 after splitting from the KNU/KNLA and surrendering to and signing a ceasefire with the Burmese military government. Significant parts of the KPF merged with the Burma/Myanmar government military into Tatmadaw Border Guard Force #1023 whilst others remained independent. The independent (non-Border Guard) KPF controls some administrative areas in addition to road and river checkpoints in the area of Three Pagodas Pass. Following repeated rejections of Burmese government proposals to reform KPF into the Tatmadaw Border Guard, substantial elements have since reformed in the Tatmadaw Border Guard in 2010 while others remain independent.

¹⁴ *Aye Chan Yay A'pweh*, which translates as 'Peace Group', is a government sponsored militia formed in 1998 and consisting of roughly 30 reserve soldiers and significantly less active members. Field reports indicate that the group is led by U Ko Gyi and operates mainly out of a base in the upper region of the Kyaung Haung area in Leik Tho Township, Toungoo District near the Kayah State border. They also have small camps in the Myat Tha Gone, Tat Sel Chaung, Yay Ni and Myauk Lon Chaung areas in Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District. Researchers in the field have stated that they are involved in the rubber, teak and agarwood industry, and have accused them of illegal land confiscations and cases of forced labour. *Aye Chan Yay A'pweh* should not be confused with *Nyein Chan Yay A'pweh*, which can also be translated as 'Peace Group' but refers to the Karen Peace Army (KPA), aka the Karen Peace Force (KPF), nor *Htanay Pyithu Sitt A'pweh*, another militia also known as the Thandaung Peace Group that has been in conflict with *Aye Chan Yay A'pweh* in Toungoo District. It is also distinct from the KNU/KNLA-Peace Council, which has, on occasion, been referred to as 'Peace Group'.

Kyaukkyi is located in your village tract?

No. It [Kyaukkyi] is situated in Bago region.

Which village is that [Kyaukkyi]?

No. Kyaukkyi is not a village. It is just the name of the area. However, I heard that the people [business men] have drawn a contract to organise the gambling under the name of *Aye Chan Yay A'pweh* because I think they [business men] can report it to the higher officials [Myanmar government] if they use the name of *Aye Chan Yay A'pweh*.

How often do they [business men or *Aye Chan Yay A'pweh*] conduct the gambling? Once a month or once a year?

Not once a month. They organise the gambling once a year for one entire month.

How do they [*Aye Chan Yay A'pweh*] collect the [gambling] tax [from the business men]?

I do not know how they collect the [gambling] tax but they have to discuss the contract to collect the tax.

Do the business activities of *Aye Chan Yay A'pweh* and *Nyein Chan Yay A'pweh* benefit the local villagers?

It does benefit some of the people but some people do not get any benefit.

How come? Why don't some people get any benefit?

How do I explain this? They [*Aye Chan Yay A'pweh* and *Nyein Chan Yay A'pweh*] give favours to wealthy individuals [to do business]. There are natural resources in our area but we do not get full benefit. The wealthy individuals can come to take natural resources because they [*Aye Chan Yay A'pweh* and *Nyein Chan Yay A'pweh*] give favours to wealthy individuals to conduct their business. They do not want to give any favours to local poor villagers. That is why poor local villagers have to face livelihood issues.

So *Aye Chan Yay A'pweh* and *Nyein Chan Yay A'pweh* give permission to wealthy individuals to conduct business activities such as logging?

Yes.

It [logging] is illegal. Do they steal the trees?

Yes. It is illegal.

Do they [wealthy individuals] conduct the logging in your area?

Yes.

What about villagers? Can they conduct the logging?

Villagers are allowed to conduct the logging but they do not actually conduct any logging for two reasons. Firstly, villagers do not have a lot of money to invest. Secondly, they do not know how to communicate with the local authorities [*Aye Chan Yay A'pweh* and *Nyein Chan Yay A'pweh*]. If villagers want to conduct the logging, they have to bribe *Aye Chan Yay A'pweh* or *Nyein Chan Yay A'pweh*. How do I explain this? It is like a tax. Villagers do not have a lot of money like wealthy individuals. Besides, villagers do not know how to trade it [logging]. Therefore, only wealthy individuals come to do logging.

Do they [*Aye Chan Yay A'pweh* and *Nyein Chan Yay A'pweh*] treat villagers badly?

No. They do not treat villagers badly. There is accountability at the current time. They do not dare treat villagers badly.

What about in the past? Did they treat villagers badly?

I lived with my grandmother in the lower part of Myanmar when I was young. So I did not know the situation here [in the past]. I attended a school in the lower part of Myanmar. I moved to stay in this area when I was a high school student. That is why I did not know what actually happened in the past here.

What is your position in your village?

I am a hundred-household leader in my village. My responsibility is to look after the village.

What difficulties do you face as you serve your village as a hundred-household leader?

Our area is included in the Karen state [territory] but it is very far from the Karen state [administrative area in the town where higher government officials live]. Therefore, our budget is often not large enough if we request for a village development project from the Burma/Myanmar government. Our area is far away from the town so higher government officials do not often come to check the situation in our area. That is why our village has not improved a lot. Overall, what we want is equal rights because we want our village's improvements to be the same as the other town's improvements. To improve our country, all places need to be improved. Currently, only towns have improved whereas remote areas have not improved. I do not think this is fair.

Regarding village administration, have Township leaders or higher officials pressured you?

They do not pressure me. As I am a new hundred-household leader, I do not know how to run the village yet and I am still learning about administration matters. They do not pressure me. However, some of the office officials used to work for the previous Myanmar government so they understand the [political] situation and know how to take advantage of the old corruption techniques they used.

Do you get a salary? What about any additional financial support?

Yes. I get additional financial support.

How much do you earn per month?

My office salary is 50,000 kyat. In addition, I get 7,000 kyat.

Has your salary ever been deducted [by the office head]?

Yes. The office [head] deducted our salaries in order to pay for the office newspaper which cost at 3,000 kyat [per person]. In addition, some of the money from our salaries was taken out to pay for sports.

Have your salaries ever been deducted due to a trip by a Myanmar government leader?

No.

What other difficulties do you face when you are working as a hundred-household leader?

It is difficult for us to go to the office during the rainy season because of the poor quality of the road. It does not matter whether the distance in order to attend the meeting in the office is short or long [because the poor-quality road affects everyone equally]. Regularly, meetings [in the morning] start at 10 am. However, if the weather is good, I can go to the office on time from my village. The road should be repaired. If the quality of the road was better, I would regularly be able to go to the office on time. Anyway, sometimes I cannot go to the office on time due to the poor quality of the road.

Have you heard about human rights abuse occurring in your village or outside the village? For example, women rights abuses such as sexual violence?

Women rights abuses have occurred. How can I explain this? Some women lack knowledge because they never studied at school. One time, there was a rape case. A married man raped a young girl and impregnated her but that man threatened her to not tell other people about it.

When she gave birth, nobody took care of her and also nobody took any responsibility to support her baby. This kind of human rights abuse has taken place.

Where did it [rape case] happen?

It happened in our village tract. Umm...

You can tell me about it openly. I will try not to make it public [censor the names of the actors involved] for security reasons.

That rape case happened in this village before I became a hundred-household leader. The victim, the victim's parents and the perpetrator negotiated with each other to solve the case but this young girl's life was ruined. However, I do not want it to be like that. I want the perpetrator to be punished. I want all of the villagers to have more knowledge about how to gain human rights.

So there is no justice regarding this case?

Yes. There is no justice.

What do you think of this perpetrator? Is there anyone who manipulated the perpetrator?

No. No one manipulated the perpetrator. The perpetrator was married to the young girl's aunt. So the perpetrator who committed the rape case was closely connected [to the victim]. There was no one who manipulated the perpetrator. The victim's father and the perpetrator's wife are siblings. Therefore, they [the victim's father, the perpetrator's wife and the perpetrator] discussed and negotiated with each other in order to close this rape case.

OK. I might have forgotten to ask you some questions. I think you might have some feelings that you want to share. Do you want to open your heart?

I want to honestly share [my feelings] with you. I want to talk about the armed groups [*Aye Chan Yay A'pweh* and *Nyein Chan Yay A'pweh*]. Actually, they committed to fight for their nation a long time ago and were supported by the civilians to pursue their dreams [for the nation]. Now, they have gained some autonomy after making peace [with the Burma/Myanmar government]. Therefore, I want them to look after the civilians with this autonomy. Even if they cannot support the civilians directly, they can at least help the civilians indirectly. Unlike us civilians, they are able to talk directly with Burma/Myanmar government authorities. Although we civilians can speak to the Burma/Myanmar government, they [Burma/Myanmar government] might not listen to us. If these armed groups talk to the Burma/Myanmar government, there is a much greater probability that they will be heard. Therefore, even though they [armed groups] cannot support the civilians I think it would be good if they advocate to the Burma/Myanmar government on behalf of the needs and demands of the civilians. The natural resources have almost disappeared because of them [the armed groups]. They have not yet been able to help the civilians. However, I think it would be good if they can work for the civilians at the current time because the Burma/Myanmar government is giving them opportunities to run their own business. The local Burma/Myanmar government authorities in this area do not have full control as these armed groups are also allowed to govern this area. Therefore, I think it will be good if they [armed groups] help the civilians.

Do you have any recommendations?

What recommendations? What do you mean?

I mean do you have any suggestions? Do you have anything else to say?

I want to suggest that human rights groups come and raise awareness about human rights in our area. This is the first time that Karen Human Rights Group [researchers] came to our village. I want many human rights groups to come and give awareness trainings about human rights in our area because everyone has the same rights but our villagers do not know about their rights. I think our village community will be improved if our villagers know about their rights so I want our villagers to be given human rights awareness training often. This is what I would like to request. Our area is very far away from Karen state [KNU] and this area is close to Nay Pyi Taw

and Bago region but this area is not affiliated with Nay Pyi Taw or Bago region. We can only rely on the Karen state [KNU]. If the Karen state [KNU] does not come to our area, our villagers will not have the opportunity to be aware of human rights. Therefore, if our villagers are given human rights awareness workshops, our villagers will know about their rights. If they know about their rights, they will have the motivation and ability to claim their rights. This is what I believe.

Thank you so much for your answer.

Yes. Thank you too. I am also happy to answer.

Do you allow KHRG to use the information that you share?

How will you use [the information]?

KHRG will publish the information on the internet and share the information on an international level and regional level.

It is good. You can have this information and publish it. I give you permission. Yet, as I told you before, I do not want to insult the armed groups. Please consider my security; I would like KHRG to hide my personal information due to this security concern.

Yes. We, KHRG, will responsibly use the information you provided in order to keep you safe. KHRG will not mention your name and your village in the report and will censor the information related to security issues. KHRG will delete [censor] your face if your photo is taken so that no one will be able to recognise who you are. OK. Thank you so much.

Yes.

So do you allow me to take a picture of you?

Yes. You can.

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

- "Toungoo Interview: Saw A---, March 2015", (June 2017)
- "Toungoo Situation Update: Thandaunggyi Township, June to August 2016," (March 2017)
- "Toungoo Interview: Saw A---, January 2016," (February 2017)
- "Toungoo Interview: Naw A---, November 2015," (February 2017)
- "Toungoo Field Report, January 2015 to December 2015: Slow transitions towards real change," (January 2017)

Taw Oo (Toungoo) District



Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)