



**Karen Human Rights Group**

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

---

### **Situation Update**

December 5, 2017 / KHRG #17-58-S1

---

## **Toungoo Situation Update: Thandaunggyi Township, March to May 2017**

---

*This Situation Update describes events occurring in Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District during the period between March and May 2017, including education, healthcare, livelihoods, development projects, military activity and researcher's opinion.*

- *From March to May 2017, regarding the educational situation in Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District, in local areas there were not enough teachers, school materials or supplies to allow everyone access to educational opportunities. Students also have to deal with the absence of teachers and a poorly planned school system.*
  - *Patients were treated with expired medication at the hospital in Thandaunggyi Town, Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District after Burma/Myanmar government health workers distributed expired medication to the medical staff.*
  - *Chang Mya Way Si Company's road construction in 2016 damaged multiple villagers' plantations in Leik Pyar Gyi village, Leik Pyar Gyi village tract, Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District. A year later the company has yet to compensate for the damage to villagers' possessions. They also underpaid a local villager who worked for the company and plotted the route of the road.*
  - *In March 2017 the Tatmadaw Light Infantry Battalion #599 Commander, under command of MOC #13, went to a young woman's house and drank beer without paying for it. No one dared to tell him to go back to the camp even though the young woman felt at risk.*
- 

## **Situation Update | Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District (March to May 2017)**

*The following Situation Update was received by KHRG in June 2017. It was written by a community member in Toungoo District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. It is presented below translated exactly as originally written, save for minor edits for clarity and security.<sup>1</sup> This report was received along with other information from Toungoo District, including 14 interviews, 97 photographs and 1 video clip.<sup>2</sup>*

### **Situation Update**

---

<sup>1</sup> KHRG trains community members in southeast Burma/Myanmar to document individual human rights abuses using a standardised reporting format; conduct interviews with other villagers; and write general updates on the situation in areas with which they are familiar. When writing situation updates, community members are encouraged to summarise recent events, raise issues that they consider to be important, and present their opinions or perspective on abuse and other local dynamics in their area.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

This Situation Update describes human rights concerns that took place between March and May 2017 in Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District. It also includes issues relating to education, healthcare, livelihood, development, and military activity.

## Education

Regarding the education sector in Mate Tha Lin Taung village, Leik Tho Town, Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District, students do not have access to sufficient educational support and there is a shortage of teachers. In some local areas, while enough teachers were provided for schools a majority of those teachers were not available to teach classes, due to the large distance between their homes and the schools. As a result, this lack of teachers affects the quality of the students' education. A self-funded school located in the lower part of Mate Tha Lin Taung village, Mate Tha Lin Taung village tract, Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District was shut down due to nearby road construction. In 2017, local militia [*Htanay Phyithu Sitt A'pweh* or Thandaung Peace Group<sup>3</sup>] Lieutenant Bo<sup>4</sup> Kyaw Win, the owner of the Way Hpone Kyaw Company, constructed a road which went straight towards the school. As the school was situated in the path of the planned road, the school was destroyed and the road was constructed through the area where the school had previously stood. After this there were challenges to rebuild the school. Students faced difficulties in studying because they did not have school buildings or facilities.

In some places in Thandaunggyi Township, especially Taung Pat Leh village, contracted teachers were not attending school, even though the students were already suffering from a lack of teachers. Although the village chairperson reported this to the Burma/Myanmar Township Education Department Office, they did not take any effective action against the teachers.

However some schools have a lot of teachers in comparison to the number of students. There are ten students and six teachers in a school located in Heh Mo village. There are five students and five teachers in the school in K'Yar Chee village, Thandaunggyi Township. In K'Yar Chee school, five teachers are rotating the teaching of the students on a month by month basis. When one is teaching, the other four stay at their home and engage in other work to gain more income. This is done even though they each continue to receive a salary from the school every month. Even though Myint Myat [Than Lwin] Company came to build a primary school in Leik Pyar Gyi village, Leik Pyar Gyi village tract, Thandaunggyi Township in 2015-2016, to date the constructor has not finished construction of the school. In Heh Mo, there are only 12 students in the school that is located in Than Moe Taung village tract, Leik Tho Town, Thandaunggyi Township but [Burma/Myanmar government] budgeted 36,000,000 [US\$26,596]<sup>5</sup> kyat for school construction in the 2016-2017 academic year.

---

<sup>3</sup> Thandaung Special Region Peace Group' is also known as *Htanay Phyithu Sitt A'pweh*, or 'Thandaung Peace Group', is a local militia located in Toungoo District. The group split from the Karen National Union in 1997 and was initially led by Khe R'Mun. Reports from the field claim that they are currently led by General Bo Than Myit, have around 300 troops stationed at Leik Tho Base (Battalion Commander Bo Kyaw Win), in Leik Tho Township, and an additional 40 soldiers at Pya Sa Khan Base (Battalion Commander Khin Maung Lwin), near Thandaung town. It has been reported that they control a number of different illicit operations, including gambling and black market car licencing. They are also allegedly employed as security personnel by local companies and wealthy individuals involved in logging and mineral resource extraction, in addition to having direct involvement in the lumber and mineral business. *Htanay Phyithu Sitt A'pweh* should not be confused with *Nyein Chan Yay A'pweh*, which is occasionally translated as Peace Group but refers to the Karen Peace Army (KPA), aka the Karen Peace Force (KPF). Nor should it be conflated with *Aye Chan Yay*, another small militia group also operating in Toungoo District that the Thandaung Peace Group has come into conflict with. It is also distinct from the KNU/KNLA-Peace Council, which is also sometimes translated as 'Peace Group'.

<sup>4</sup> Burmese prefix meaning 'officer'

<sup>5</sup> All conversion estimates for the kyat in this report are based on the July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2017 official market rate of 1,358.66 kyat to US \$1.

Other schools suffer from a lack of teachers. There are around ten teachers who have been assigned to teach at a sub-middle school in Maung Nweh Gyi village, Thandaunggyi Township but some teachers resigned after two months from the school and until now there have not been any replacements for the teachers who resigned. Thus, the students were stuck studying under the remaining teachers and therefore learning in class became ineffective as there were not enough teachers. The Burma/Myanmar Township Education Officer also has not arranged for any new teachers to replace the resigned teachers. Likewise, there are not enough teachers in Thandaung Myo Thit High School but many students are studying there. Only 25 out of 100 10<sup>th</sup> Standard<sup>6</sup> students were able to sit the final exam in 2016-2017. According to one student's parents, the principal of Thandaung Myo Thit High School said that students who had not taken the final exam [in 2016-2017 academic year] were told to gain more knowledge before they sat the final exam next year. Some students [that sat the test] said that the lessons that the teachers taught did not correspond with the questions that were asked in the exam.

Myanmar government schools have been built and older schools have been repaired [by the Burma/Myanmar government], but the equipment and materials needed for the schools have yet to be delivered in sufficient quantities. Students' parents had to buy notebooks, pencils and other supplies with their own money. However some parents encountered financial problems when buying school materials for their children.

The schools that are located in KNU (Karen National Union) controlled areas are not supported by the Myanmar government and they are mostly self-funded. The teachers are hired by a collective group of students' parents so that that their children can have access to education. However, there is still not enough support [from the villagers or students' parents]. Therefore KED (Karen Education Department), which is under KNU administration, contributed learning materials and sports equipment for the students. The KED also contributed materials such as notebooks, pens, pencils and various sports equipment to students from Myanmar government controlled areas as well [as KNU areas].

As Htoe Lwee Wah High School charges affordable school fees and is a high school, many students go to Htoe Lwee Wah High School. The school is located between Thandaunggyi Township and Htantabin Township and the number of students has been increasing year by year.

There are also numerous students from remote areas who had to stop their education due to insufficient financial support and due to their family's financial problems.

## **Healthcare**

The illnesses and sicknesses that local people and children in Thandaunggyi Township have suffered from include dengue, common fever and sickness.<sup>7</sup>

Villagers from Thandaunggyi Town and other nearby villages usually go to hospital to receive treatment when they feel sick and suffer from other diseases. According to one local villager, after being admitted to Thandaunggyi Hospital some people have received medication, however some patients were treated with out of date medication. Some patients knew about this and they disclosed the issue to health workers. They asked why patients were injected with medication that was out of date; however, some health workers had an aggressive response to the patients' questions. Some health workers responded positively and explained politely about the situation of the hospital and told the patients that the hospital was only able to provide these medicines to the patients. Despite the fact the patients were not charged for tablet medication, patients still

---

<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> Detailed information was available on these illnesses.

had to pay for the [expired] injections. Pregnant mothers who give birth in hospital are usually sterilised.<sup>8</sup> However, there is no information on how those mothers were persuaded to be sterilised. Since the [civil] hospital does not offer free treatment to civilians, villagers just sought treatment from KBC (Karen Baptist Convention) and other healthcare organisations.

The KBC group is spread amongst many villages, but does not exist in every village. Despite the KBC providing health services in some villages, they can only provide tablet medication. When some serious cases arose [in the villages], they referred the patients to hospital or clinics. Mostly, villagers preferred to cure themselves in their villages [by either buying medicine or practising traditional forms of medicine] as going to hospitals and clinics are costly and they had financial issues.

Some villagers encountered difficulties in travelling to hospitals and clinics, as they do not have access to a car, motorbike or a motorable road to transport patients from their villages to hospitals. KBC and other civil organizations came to provide free health services in Taung Pat Leh village, Shan Leh Pyin Gyi village tract, Thandaunggyi Township. However, according to KBC and civil society organizations, the patients with serious injuries, who need to be admitted to hospital and have injections, must pay for themselves. Villagers in rural areas are very far from the hospital [which only exists in the town] and they face large problems traveling to hospital. Since they live so far from the hospital, their travel costs are high. Some patients have been cured through traditional medicine, especially by taking herbal medicines. Due to having problems with finance and the access of medications, villagers just cured themselves using their traditional methods. As a result, the recovery time from their sicknesses which should be just one or two days takes at least one week. As the sickness takes longer to recover from, it affects the family's livelihood [because they spend more time unable to work].

If villagers that live in KNU controlled areas suffer from sicknesses, the KNU healthcare department provides treatment for them. The KNU healthcare section also addresses the villages and cures the patients [in the villages]. However, the KNU healthcare department can only give treatment to the villagers with the medicines that they had [as they have a shortage of medication]. So, villagers had to buy medicines from the town and KNU continued to cure them with those medicines.

Even though the KNU health section opened clinics in villages, there are still some villages that do not have clinics. Pregnant women, especially those from remote areas give birth with the help from local midwives<sup>9</sup>. Pregnant women that live near KNU clinics can easily receive maternity care from the clinics but pregnant women that live in remote area can only give birth with help from local midwives and face difficulties when they are giving birth. There was also not enough medicine being provided. Children have not received proper medical care or clothing.

### **Livelihoods**

Local villagers in Thandaunggyi Township are mainly engaged in agricultural work. Mostly, they work on plantation lands such as on rubber plantations, betel nut plantations, cardamom plantations and coffee plantations. Some people also work on short-term plantations [such as water grass, radish and loose leaf lettuce plantations] to secure their livelihood. Some villagers who do not have any plantation land are working as daily labourers and casual workers.

The amount of crops produced this year has been reduced because of unstable weather, [such as lower levels of rainfall in the monsoon]. Moreover, the price of the crops is the same so it is difficult for their families [as the price has not increased relative to the reduced harvest].

---

<sup>8</sup> It is unclear whether consent was given for these procedures, or indeed whether these procedures were in fact sterilisation. Provision of contraception for mothers following child birth is sometimes incorrectly referred to locally as sterilisation. KHRG is currently in the process of gathering further information.

<sup>9</sup> These midwives are not medically trained and often just receive basic training and instruction from their elders.

People that work in the rubber business [on rubber plantations] also faced difficulties with their business, because the price of the rubber has decreased compared to the market price in 2013-2014. For example the market price was 1,500 kyat [US \$1.10]<sup>10</sup> for one pound of rubber in the past but the current price is now only 1,000 kyat [US \$0.73] for one pound. Worse, a lower amount of rubber has been produced [in this year]. People that do not own any plantations earned only 3,500 kyat [US \$2.57] from their work as daily labourers so it is difficult to cover the families' livelihoods.

There are also some people who work in other places where they believe they will earn good money such as logging, riding elephants [working as mahouts<sup>11</sup>], and other work. There are some young women who seek work in big cities working as housemaids.

Students also usually find work, especially in the summer time, in order to pay for their school fees. They often work on rubber plantations, collecting rubber sap and milk, earning 2,000 kyat [US \$1.5] per day.

There are many villages that are far from vehicular roads. This means it costs a lot of money to transport crops, and [villagers feel that] the income they receive for their work is not enough compared to the amount of work the families put in to harvest their crops. This amount is not enough to provide for their families. In summer, the plants that villagers rely on for their livelihoods, such as cardamom, faded [died] and collapsed because it is too hot. Likewise, because there is too much heat, coffee and dog fruit plants could not even produce fruit, which was a big concern for the owners' family. They are worried whether the plants will be able to produce fruit in the next year.

Villagers, from ten village tracts had their land confiscated by the Burma/Myanmar government in 2013. The land was taken from the A Htoo Day Tha [area] to Mate Tha Lin Taung [area] and demarcated as a reserved teak field<sup>12</sup>. The villagers in these areas faced problems as they rely on those plantation lands for their livelihoods. Regarding this particular problem, there is no warranty [guarantee of safety] for their long-term plants on these plantations since the lands are no longer recognised [as legally belonging to the villagers]. Local villagers wanted to get back their land that supports their livelihoods, so villagers and a group (known locally as the Independence Labour Union) that helps the villagers get back their confiscated lands cooperated and requested the Burma/Myanmar Forestry Department to renounce ownership of the land that they had confiscated. However, the problem has not been solved until now. Thus, the villagers could not make a living safely; especially villagers are involved in hill farming, and they did not dare to go to their farm site and work as they were afraid of being arrested.

Some villagers who do not own any plantations and just work [as day labourers] on [other peoples] hill farms have also been facing difficulties. Local villagers in Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District, have been facing the loss of land due to an increase in land confiscation committed by the [Burma/Myanmar] government, the Tatmadaw and companies. In April 2017, Kaung Myanmar Aung Company<sup>13</sup> (KMAC) installed a signboard [indicating that the land has

---

<sup>10</sup>All conversion estimates for the kyat in this report are based on the 03/07/17 official market rate of 1,358.66 kyat to US \$1.

<sup>11</sup> Mahout is a term for an elephant trainer or rider.

<sup>12</sup> By demarcating the area as a reserved teak field it means villagers can no longer plant crops and work the land as a plantation.

<sup>13</sup> Kaung Myanmar Aung Company (KMAC) or Kaung Myanmar Aung Group of Companies is a Myanmar-owned business group with investments in teak plantations in Toungoo District, and mining, agriculture, shipping, construction and real estate development within Myanmar. Their chairman is Mr Khin Maung Aye. KMAC have been implicated in land confiscation cases in southeast Myanmar which have included threats to villagers who were customary owners of the lands, see "[Toungoo Situation Update: Thandaunggyi and Htantabin townships, November 2014 to February 2015](#)," July 2015. Affected villagers held protests against the company in 2015 and early 2016 in

been confiscated] beside Thandaunggyi Town vehicular road. The villagers' indigenous land was confiscated, but the villagers had not been informed about it prior to the land's confiscation. The confiscated lands were not compensated and villagers have no idea who collaborated with Kaung Myanmar Aung Company regarding this land confiscation.

Local villagers in Shout Pin Chaung village tract, Htantabin Township mainly depend on their land to secure their livelihood. Ministry for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation confiscated some of the villagers land and the rest of their land was confiscated at a later date by the companies [including KMAC] and Tatmadaw so that the villagers are in a really difficult situation regarding their livelihood. Amongst these difficulties, the villagers were even sued by the company [KMAC] that confiscated their lands [for trespassing upon company land]. As the villagers no longer had access to their land anymore and were engaged in low paid casual work, they had financial problems while paying the court fees. Kaung Myanmar Aung Company's staff cut down the banana trees of the villagers in Na Ga Mauk village tract, Htantabin Township so that the plantation owners had to deal with the loss of their plants which were used to support their livelihoods.

There is also land confiscation which occurred in Htantabin Township, Toungoo District, by companies [including KMAC]. Not only did Kaung Myanmar Aung Company arbitrarily confiscate the villagers' lands, they also sued the villagers whose lands they confiscated [for trespassing upon company land]. Villagers have been spending their savings, which they saved for their families, on court appointments but their problem still has not been solved.

### **Development Projects**

Regarding development projects in Thandaunggyi Township, the road that was constructed in 2016 in Leik Pyar Gyi village tract was used only for a year [before becoming damaged beyond use]. Chan Mya Way Si [company] took responsibility for this road construction. The project damaged local villagers' plantation lands but there has not been any compensation offered for their loss. Regarding the local development for this road construction, the responsible personnel of Chan Mya Way Si Company asserted to the villagers that they would find a route [for the road] for them and they promised the villagers 5,000 kyat [US \$3.66] for each day's labour. Some villagers believed it and worked but they were finally paid much less than they were told they would be. Out of many local villagers in Leik Pyar Gyi village, Thandaunggyi Township, one villager was exclusively selected by the company to work for them and they would be paid 5,000 kyat [US \$3.66] per day in their agreement. Although this villager worked for the company for up to two months, the company gave him only 50,000 kyat [US \$36.62] [for his 2 months' work] but to date the full amount has not been given to him.

In 2016, the Burma/Myanmar government budgeted 36,000,000 kyat [US \$26,596] for the development of Leik Pyar Gyi village, and for rebuilding their school. The village only has a primary school which was previously self-funded. However it was damaged and is now unsafe for the students to use. Therefore, this school was rebuilt in 2016, but was not finished by April 2017 [at the time of writing]. So, this situation creates a big concern for the academic year of 2017-2018.

NRC (Norwegian Refugee Council) provided 2,000,000 [US \$1,471.07] kyat for the concrete paving of a motorbike road 200 feet long, in Maung Nweh Gyi village, Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District. To construct the concrete road, Thandaunggyi Township Administration Office offered an expenditure budget to the village administrator for implementation of the project. The

---

order to demand the return of their lands, see "[Toungoo Situation Update: Thandaunggyi and Htantabin townships, November 2015 to January 2016](#)," July 2016. For information on a similar case with KMAC in Pyin Oo Lwin Township, Mandalay Division, see "[Presidential adviser sues 13 farmers for trespassing](#)," Myanmar Times, September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2013.

villagers were not consulted or notified and they also could not refuse [the project] since this was managed by the township administrator.

In April 2017, the village administrator held a meeting about the reconstruction of the self-funded road that had been built by NRC in Maung Nweh Gyi village and was ordered by the Township administrator to pave the road with concrete. In the meeting, the village administrator said that the road was 3 feet wide and 1 mile long. He said that it was a great opportunity for the villagers and they would not get this kind of chance again, and then he asked the villagers to accept the project.

The Myanmar government and NRC collaborated to construct a concrete road for motorbikes and transformed a former pathway in Nan Chain Hwin village, Maung Nweh Gyi village tract, Thandaunggyi Township. This project had to be implemented so the village administrator organised and pressured the villages in his village tract to accept the project [for the towns development]. The road which had been constructed in Shan Lin Pyin village tract, Leik Tho Town by the company, which was owned by the leader of local militia, did not take into account the wants and needs of the local villagers. The project led to the destruction of local villagers' lands [due to the road passing through their land].

### **Military Activity**

Military Operations Command (MOC) #19 came to Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District. In March, Light Infantry Battalion<sup>14</sup> (LIB) #599, under the control of MOC #13, came to Maung Nweh Gyi village according to their assigned duty. LIB #599 and the former village clerk cooperated to do business for their own profit by setting up a brick production workplace on a villagers' football field. The workers who baked bricks were the soldiers of LIB #599. LIB #599's camp and the brick production workplace are far from each other and the soldiers were carrying guns whilst walking through a village, during the baking of the bricks, so the villagers were worried for their safety. Moreover, Tatmadaw troops from Maung Nweh Gyi upgraded their camp using bamboo and wood taken from villager's gardens.

In March 2017, LIB #599 Battalion Commander, Company Commander, Sergeant and Maung Nweh Gyi village administrator toured the village. They ordered a package of [24 cans of] beer from a trader who traded between Toungoo Town to Maung Nweh Gyi village and they went to drink the beer in a house where only one young woman and her younger brother stayed. The Maung Nweh Gyi village administrator arranged to provide and drink beer with LIB #599 Battalion Commander, as he had requested. For appetizers to eat while drinking beer, the Commander ordered the village administrator to tell the young woman to cook for them. The village administrator asked the woman to cook as he was commanded to, but the woman was very afraid whilst she was cooking. The Commander stayed in the young woman's house until midnight. The woman did not dare to ask the Commander to go back herself so she just waited [without sleeping until he left] as she was afraid. Although the two off his staff [Company Commander and Sergeant] also wanted to take him home, they did not challenge the Commander since they are from the same battalion [and dared not to go against the leader]. The young house owner asked the village administrator to tell the Commander to go back to his place and the administrator did but the Commander refused to do so. The house owner said that the commander left the house after midnight and went back to his camp.

Other military activity occurred including the sending of military rations within Thandaunggyi Township. MOC #20 and MOC #13 rotated troops on March 12<sup>th</sup> 2017. Simultaneously, they

---

<sup>14</sup> 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. Yet up to date information regarding the size of battalions is hard to come by, particularly following the signing of the NCA. LIBs are primarily used for offensive operations, but they are sometimes used for garrison duties.

transported rations and ammunition and rotated troops until March 18<sup>th</sup> 2017. After troop rotation in frontline areas, trained soldiers from Bu Yin Naung military started conducting training exercises in those areas and practicing firing their guns. They also practiced shooting on March 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> 2017. However, they did not notify the nearby villagers when they would conduct military training so villagers were worried as the area is near the villagers' path. Local villagers were in a panic as the military training conducted in Doe Thaung and Mwe Kone villages, Htantabin Township is in an area where the villagers' lands were confiscated in 2016. The training included the shooting of heavy weapons and shooting machine guns by the military tank unit. This shooting training was conducted on March 24<sup>th</sup> 2017.

On March 29<sup>th</sup> 2017, some villagers' rubber plants were fired at during military training while the Tank Section was practising firing machine guns amongst villagers' land [including plantations] in Nant Tha Kone, Kyun Kone, Ywar Thit villages, Shout Pin Chaung village tract, Htantabin Township. This shooting practise was on land that had been arbitrarily confiscated by the Tatmadaw. Villagers stated that the Tatmadaw did not inform the villagers about this training so there were some villagers [working] in the rubber plantations. The villagers got frightened by the unexpected shooting practice and immediately ran back [to their] homes.

On March 31<sup>st</sup> 2017, Tatmadaw transported rations using 20 military trucks from Toungoo Town to Thandaunggyi Town. Rations were also frequently transported to Bu Yin Naung military camp monthly.

In April 2017, the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) Brigade #2, Battalion #5, Company #3 and Karen National Union (KNU) conducted a survey in the forest in order to protect and maintain the forest. Meanwhile, an unknown Tatmadaw battalion noted the direction that the KNU/KNLA went. Even though KNU/KNLA walked around the villages in their controlled areas, Tatmadaw Southern Commands Headquarter Operation Commander (G3) Myo Min informed the KNU/KNLA that the KNU/KNLA could not make any activity [patrol] in this area and the KNU chairperson of Thandaunggyi Township was also pressured to stop the current [KNLA activity] activity and leave the place, saying that the command had come from above. At the time KNU/KNLA left Pyar Lay village and headed to Leik Pyar Gyi village, Tatmadaw soldiers in Thandaunggyi Town followed and watched the KNU/KNLA's direction. KNU/KNLA were aware of this therefore, they [KNU/KNLA] avoided the direction [where the Tatmadaw was based] in order avoid the conflict. The villagers were very worried [that the conflict would happen] because of this circumstance.

In the past, there were 51 households in Hlwe Gyi (also called Mahn) village, Pynmana Township or Zeyathiri Township, Naypyidaw Union Territory [north of Toungoo District]. However, when Naypyidaw Union Territory was established, Infantry Battalion (IB) #122 took responsibility for security in 1999 and based their camp in Hlwe Gyi village, and then Hlwe Gyi village was forced to relocate to the lower part of the village. For proper land arrangement and administration, the Burma/Myanmar government's land measurement department came to measure lands for both building houses and establishing livelihoods so the villagers could be rehabilitated the new village. As the years have passed, the villagers also have been making a living there by planting vegetables and trees.

However, IB #122 Commander Maj. Soe Yan Naing assembled a meeting with villagers on March 15<sup>th</sup> 2017 and informed the villagers that the villagers had to leave their place [Hlwe Gyi] very soon [due to proposed Tatmadaw expansion]. Due to the date of their forced displacement, the villagers faced a critical situation regarding moving their materials or possessions from one place to another in a short period of time. They were not able to find a solution to the problem of this forced relocation so in the end they had to relocate [to Popa Kone village].

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

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

### Taw Oo (Toungoo) District



Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)