



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Situation Update

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Toungoo Situation Update: Thandaunggyi Township & Htantabin Township, January to March 2017

This Situation Update describes events occurring in Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District during the period between January and March 2017, including livelihoods, healthcare, education, and development.

- *Due to unstable weather and a shortage of water in recent years, villagers in Toungoo District have faced significant livelihood challenges.*
 - *In KNU controlled areas in Toungoo District, villagers have difficulty accessing healthcare services due to poor transportation conditions. Meanwhile, in Thandaunggyi Town Hospital in the Burma/Myanmar government controlled area, villagers expressed concerns about being prescribed potentially expired medication.*
 - *Although the education situation in Toungoo District has improved since the preliminary ceasefire was signed in 2012, many students' access to education is limited by a shortage of teachers and a lack of sufficient middle and high schools.*
 - *In 2016, Way Hpone Kyaw Company constructed a road from Leik Tho to Shan Lin Pyin, Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District without consulting villagers and causing significant damage to villagers' lands and plantations. No compensation was given for this damage.*
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Situation Update | Thandaunggyi Township and Htantabin Township, Toungoo District (January to March 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.¹ This report was received along with other information from Toungoo District, including two interviews, 62 photographs and 1 video clip.²

This Taw Oo [Toungoo] District situation update describes the period between January and March 2017, including livelihoods, healthcare, education, and development projects.

Livelihoods

¹ 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.

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.

Villagers in Taw Oo [Toungoo] District mostly secure their livelihoods by farming or by working on plantations. People in highland areas mainly work as hill farmers and work on other plantations such as betel nut, durian, mangosteen, cardamom, coffee, and dog fruit³ plantations. Local people in lowland areas mainly work as plains farmers and work on bean plantations.

Over the last two to three years, the weather has been abnormal and has caused significant damage to villagers' plantations and led to a decrease in the amount of fruits villagers are able to grow from the plantations. As the weather was hot, the water level of the river was low. As a consequence, plantations had a water supply shortage so fewer plants could be grown [and the quality of the plants decreased]. As a result, villagers who secure their livelihoods with agriculture faced many livelihood challenges.

Healthcare

There are two [different kinds of] areas in Taw Oo District. One of these two areas is under the control of the Burma/Myanmar government and the other area is controlled by the Karen National Union [KNU]. Accordingly, the villagers face different healthcare situations depending on which area they are based in.

Hospitals and clinics are located in big villages or towns such as Kler Lar village, Thandaunggyi Town, and Leik Tho Town in the government controlled area. [In these big villages or towns], there are a lot of health workers, medicine, and [sufficient healthcare] materials. However, some villagers said that they received medicine from Thandaunggyi Hospital which was either out of date or expired. When the villagers asked health workers about when the expiration date of the medicine would be, the health workers responded that the medicine could even be used up to six months [after the patients were given the medicine]. After hearing this answer, many villages suspected the origin of these medications and whether it would actually be safe to use the medication when they became sick. Villagers are very concerned about whether their health will be able to improve if they become sick.

In the area controlled by the KNU, healthcare services are led and supported by the KNU. However, there were some places [hospitals and clinics] that were hard to reach [by transportation] and difficult for villagers to travel to a hospital or clinic because the vehicle roads did not reach the places where they live. However, villagers have started constructing a new road for motorbikes; hence, it has become easier for villagers to travel [to the hospital and clinics]. The most prevalent illness that villagers suffer from, especially children in Taw Oo District, is diarrhoea.

Education

There are still many weaknesses with the education system in Taw Oo District. There are mainly primary schools [and not many middle or high schools] in the KNU controlled area. Moreover, many students have had their studies interrupted due to a shortage of teachers. However, the education situation has improved since the [preliminary] ceasefire was signed [in 2012]. In 2015, one high school was established in Taw Koo [area], Per Hti area, Htaw Ta Htoo [Htantabin] Township. The school's name is Htoe Lwee Wah High School and teaches from Standard 5 to Standard 10.

In the Myanmar government controlled area, there are many primary, middle, and high schools. There is a high school in Kler Lar village called Kler Lar High School. Students in Standard 10 must take their exams in Sat Thone Maing (13 miles) [area], a high school in P'Leh Wa Town. Since the [preliminary] ceasefire was signed in 2012, the Karen subject has been allowed to be taught. The Karen subject teachers were selected by village heads and school principals.

Development

In *A Htoo Day Tha* [special region] area, Daw Hpa Hkoh [Htantabin] Township, Taw Oo District, a road and bridge was constructed as a development project between Leik Tho [Town] and Shan Lin Pyin [village]. The project was conducted by the Way Hpone Kyaw Company⁴ and started in 2016 and ended

³ Dog fruit, also known as jengkol, is a bean containing sulphur and a mildly toxic amino acid. It is native to Southeast Asia and is commonly eaten with rice and fish paste.

⁴ KHRG has previously reported on the negative impact of road construction by the Way Hpone Kyaw Company in Thandaunggyi Township, including the construction of a road without prior consultation that damaged villagers' lands and trees and the destruction of a school. Way Hpone Kyaw Company is owned by Bo Kyaw Win and under the control of the Tatmadaw. For more information, please see: "[Toungoo Situation Update: Thandaunggyi Township, November 2016 to January 2017](#)," September 2017, KHRG and "[Toungoo Situation Update: Thandaunggyi Township, March to May 2017](#)," December 2017, KHRG.

in 2017. Local villagers were not consulted during this project; rather, it was implemented after an agreement between the company manager (Managing Director) and the village heads and administrators. Many of the villagers' plantations and lands were damaged but no compensation was offered to them. Many villagers were unhappy about this project because their losses [in terms of money, land and property] have not been acknowledged.

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

- "Toungoo Situation Update: Thandaunggyi Township, March to May 2017," (December 2017)
- "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)

Taw Oo (Toungoo) District



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