



Appendix to Displacement Monitoring Update #34

December 22, 2010 / KHRG #2010-U34 - Appendix

Appendix to Update #34: Interview Transcript

In the last week, there has been further conflict between KNLA and Tatmadaw soldiers in Hlaing Bwe Township, Pa'an District. Villages in Hlaing Bwe Township that have been affected include Noh Day Poe, Htee Baw Gkyo, Wa Bway Dtoo, Khaw Htee Bper, Daw Gkyo Boh, Oo Moo Kee and Oo Moo Hta. The Karen-language news agency Kwekalu reported that shelling began on December 5th and, according to a member of the support staff team helping the refugees who spoke with a KHRG researcher, intermittent shelling was still ongoing as of 9:00 am on December 15th. According to local sources, the Tatmadaw has asked the villagers to go back to their villages, but more than 65 villagers [13 households] have nonetheless crossed into Thailand at Mu Yoo Hta, [at the mouth of the Muh Yoo River] and 35 more families have gone to stay in K---, [an hour down the Moei river by boat]. Local and international organisations in Thailand have been providing support to the villagers staying at Mu Yoo Hta. On December 15th 2010, a KHRG researcher interviewed Saw F---, a member of the support staff team providing services. Below is a full transcript of KHRG's interview with him.

Interview | Saw F---, (male) relief worker, Mae Sariang District, Mae Hong Song Province (December 15th 2010)

I heard that you participated in providing services to the villagers who are crossing into Thailand – is that true?

Yes, I spent last night in the place where those villagers are living.

Can you explain to me about the situation of those villagers?

Yes, the Tatmadaw forced the villagers to go stay at the army camp, carrying water, cooking and carrying injured soldiers. These villagers didn't want to do that because they still have to do their farming so they gathered secretly and crossed into Thailand on the night of December 10th. They arrived on the Thailand side [of the Moei river] on 11th December at around 8:00am. Now most of them are still hiding in the forest at Muh Yoo Hta.

How many of those villagers are in the area now?

There are 65 villagers [13 households] in this area and another group of 34 households who continued down [the Moei river] to the Burma side of the river to a place called K---.

Who is providing the villagers [at Muh Yoo Hta] with services?

TBBC, COERR, UN, MI and CBO groups are providing medical support and other assistance. There are 13 households in this area. We are just providing them with services day-by-day because there has not been any decision made yet as to how to do it.

Is there any plan to move these villagers into a refugee camp?

The NGO groups want to move them to a refugee camp [either Mae La Oo or Mae Ra Moe] but the local Thai Army [RTA] troops will not allow it to happen. We heard that the they [RTA] would like to send them to Kler Koh village further down the [Moei] river on the Thai side. Some of those villagers would like to go and stay in the [Mae La Oo] camp because their children are studying in the camp and they would like to stay close to their children.

What happened to their home village?

After they left, they did not dare to go back. When they first fled, they stayed in their field huts but the Tatmadaw shelled mortar into their farming areas and that is when they left.

The villagers who are staying in Muh Yoo Hta – how many different villages are they from?

They are all from Noh Day village because all of Noh Day village is fleeing.

What about other villagers from the other villages in the Manerplaw area?

There are some villagers from other villages who went to stay at K---. Those villagers have not arrived at this area yet. For their security we don't want this issue published yet. Those people came from villages around the Manerplaw area [Hlaing Bwe Township, Pa'an District] but they headed to K---.

Do those villagers get any services?

The local officer there is looking after them. It is very difficult for them because no aid group can reach that area.

Have you asked those villagers why they are fleeing? As you say, it sounds to me like they are not afraid of fighting but they are afraid of having to work in the army camp?

Yes, the fighting is not happening in the village but the Tatmadaw camp is close to their village. The soldiers came and forced them to go and work in the army camp and carry injured soldiers because there are many Tatmadaw soldiers who were injured. But the villagers have to take risks when they go to carry water.

Do you still hear gunfire when you go and provide services to the villagers at Muh Yoo Hta? [Muh Yoo Hta is close to the area where the fighting is happening.]

Yes, I still hear the mortars exploding everyday, but it doesn't last long – only five or six minutes. I don't know why it is happening. I think they are shelling the area because they [the Tatmadaw troops] have no reinforcements yet.

Who is the fighting happening between?

The fighting is happening between the KNLA and the Tatmadaw. The groups of villagers who are fleeing include some DKBA family members.

Are there still Tatmadaw troops in Noh Day village area?

Yes, there are still Tatmadaw troops. They have no reinforcements. They have injured soldiers and they can't get out of that area. They have no way to get out.

Do you know the [Tatmadaw] camp name?

The camp name is Hseh Preh Gkyo [Hill].

What about travelling on the river now?

No, travelling on the river is forbidden. No one can travel in the river. There are also over 300 villagers hiding at a place called upper Ht--- in the Manerplaw area [Hlaing Bwe Township, Pa'an District]. Those villagers have a more difficult situation. But I don't know the names of the villages that they are from. The KNLA is taking care of security for them. Some of them have crossed to the Thailand side and some have stayed on the Burma side. They are on both sides of the river.

Can you reach that area?

I couldn't get permission to go to that area. If I can get permission I will go. I would like to go and see.

Who provides them with support?

They are receiving support from local villagers in Thailand from M--- village. The M--- villagers come and provide them with some support because where they are hiding is close M--- village.

Is the boat that regularly runs from Mae La Oo camp to Muh Yoo Hta running?

Only the emergency aid groups can travel there.

Where do the villagers from Muh Yoo Hta stay?

They are staying at B---, away from the RTA border control camp. That place is very far from a water source.

Do you want to raise any other issues?

Yes, one of the Mae Pa villagers stepped on a landmine and got injured. It happened at about 5 pm on Sunday evening on December 12th but we didn't receive him until Monday morning. He stepped on the landmine at his village when he was on the way here. Because it is an emergency, I tried to get him to the hospital at Mae Sariang. I don't know his name. We have a record of it in the camp office. But I don't know what type of landmine he stepped on because I had no time to ask. He injured his right leg and thigh.

Who got him from the place he was injured to here?

He was sent from K--- by boat. The DKBA sent him from the place he got injured to K--- and the local KNLA arranged a boat for him from K--- to here.

What do you think will happen in the future? As you talk to the villagers, do you think there will be more or less conflict?

There will be more conflict in the future.

Are there any other issues that you would like to share with me?

The Thai authorities [RTA] came yesterday and said that they will only let these refugees stay here for one week. They have already made that decision.

Do the villagers dare to go back?

I asked them yesterday and they said: we will go back only when the Tatmadaw have all left. If they are still there, we will never go back. It is clear that they dare not go back.

How many Tatmadaw troops are staying at Hseh Preh Gkyo [Hill] camp?

There are 913 soldiers in one group and 28 in another group and these two groups have combined together.

Is there anything else that you want to share?

One thing is that one woman delivered her baby when she was on the way here. And one woman had a miscarriage. We asked permission for them to get medical treatment at the [Mae La Oo] camp hospital and, after they get better, we will send them back to the place they live here. The two women are from Noh Day village and the man who was injured by a landmine is from Mae Pa village. Both villages are in the Marnerplaw area [of Hlaing Bwe Township, Pa'an District].

How do you provide food to these people?

We just send them food day-by-day. We are not allowed to send a lot of food to these people.