



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

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**Dooplaya Situation Update: Kya In Seik Kyi Township,
September 2012**

This report includes a situation update submitted to KHRG in September 2012 by a community member describing events occurring in Dooplaya District, during September 2012. Specifically detailed is the situation and location of armed groups (Tatmadaw, DKBA and BGF); the villagers' situation and opinions of the KNLA; and development projects in the area. This report also contains information about Tatmadaw practices such as the killing of villager's livestock without permission or compensation; forcing villagers to be guides; and use of villagers' tractors; villagers were however, given payment for this. The report also describes villagers' difficulties associated with the payment of government-required motorbike licenses, as well as difficulties regarding the education system. The lack of healthcare in local villages is described, as well as the ailments that villagers suffer from. Further, this report includes information about antimony mining projects in the area carried out by companies such as San Mya Yadana Company and Thu Wana Myay Zi Lwar That Tuh Too Paw Yay owned by Hkin Zaw. Antimony mining is reported to have been going on for four years and the presence of mining companies is reported to have led to food price increases in the area. The community member describes how large mining companies have contributed water pipes and money to a village school. The biggest mining project in the region led by Hkin Maung is discussed and it is reported that mining companies working in the area have permission from the KNU and pay taxes to the KNU. This report and others, was published in March 2013 in Appendix 1: Raw Data Testimony of KHRG's thematic report. Losing Ground: Land Conflicts and collective action in eastern Myanmar.

**Situation Update | Kya In Seik Kyi Township, Dooplaya District
(September 2012)**

The following situation update was written by a community member in Dooplaya 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 Dooplaya District, including five interviews, 45 photographs and 6 video clips.²

¹ KHRG trains community members in eastern Burma 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 eastern Burma, 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. As companion to

Situation Update in Dooplaya District (Kya In Seik Kyi)

This situation update highlights the situation in Kya In Seik Kyi Township, Dooplaya District, in September 2012.

Armed Groups situation

In SPDC [Tatmadaw]³ LIB [Light Infantry Battalion] #583, Commander of the second column is Min Naing; we do not know the Official Commander's name and they are in Thee Thah Baw. LIB #583; their Company Commander is Myo Lwin and Camp Commander is Thet Paing Ko. IB [Infantry Battalion] #283 are [based] in Kwee Lon Daing and this information is true. In Ye Tha Lauk [village], the IB #283 Camp Commander is Zaw Lin Htun, and for LIB #583, the Company Commander is Aung Zaw Moe. In Poe Si Muh, the Camp Commander is the Battalion Commander Myo Myint Kyaw from IB #283, but we do not know the columns' name. This information was recorded on August 30th 2012. According to the information that we collected on August 19th 2012, DKBA [Democratic Karen Benevolent Army]⁴ their yellow flag at Lay Law Hsaw on the borderline between Thailand and Burma. In Kyauk Hta, the Camp Commander is Adjutant Tin Myint Mon from LIB #343, MOC [Military Operations Command] #8 and the Operations Commander of MOC #19 in Kyeik Don is Aung Myo. There, the BGF [Border Guard Force]⁵ commander is Eh Mwee. On September 5th 2012, MOC #19 branched into LIB #583 and

this, a redesigned website will be released in 2012. In the meantime, KHRG's most recently-published field information from Dooplaya District can be found in the report, "Shooting in Dooplaya District," KHRG, November 2012.

³ In Karen, the Burmese phrases Na Ah Pa (SPDC) and Na Wa Ta (SLORC) are commonly used to refer to the Burmese government or to Burma's state army, the Tatmadaw. Many older Karen villagers who were accustomed to using the phrase Na Wa Ta (SLORC) before 1997 continue to use that phrase, even though the SLORC has not officially existed since 1997. Similarly, despite the official dissolution of the SPDC in March 2011, many Karen villagers continue to use the phrase Na Ah Pa (SPDC) to refer to the Burmese government or to the Tatmadaw; see: "Mission Accomplished as SPDC 'dissolved'," Myanmar Times, April 4-10th 2011. The term Na Ah Pawas used by the villager who wrote this conducted this interview and interviewee and "SPDC" is therefore retained in the translation of this interview.

⁴ The Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA), formerly the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, was formed in December 1994 and was originally a breakaway group from the KNU/KNLA that signed a ceasefire agreement with the SPDC government and directly cooperated at times with Tatmadaw forces. The formation of the DKBA was led by monk U Thuzana with the help and support of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), the name of the military government in Burma at that time. For more information on the formation of the DKBA, see "Inside the DKBA," KHRG, 1996. The DKBA now refers to a splinter group from those DKBA forces reformed as Tatmadaw Border Guard forces, also remaining independent of the KNLA. The DKBA changed its name from "Buddhist" to "Benevolent" in April 2012 to reflect its secularism.

⁵ 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 formalized ceasefire agreements with the Burmese government and agreed to transform into battalions within the Tatmadaw. BGF battalions are assigned four digit battalion numbers, whereas regular Tatmadaw infantry or 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 see Border Guard transformation footnote above.

LIB #586 and the total number of soldiers is over 290 heading to the borders. Currently, 6th brigade is controlled by LID [Light Infantry Division] #44. IB #283 and LIB #583 are based in Mae K'Ti camp [which is called] *Ler Kwa Soh* in Karen. LIB #586, led by Commander Maung Maung Lwin, with over 30 soldiers, came to ask for tractors from the village head in D--- for sending food and salary of soldiers in Kyeik Don Area, but they [LIB #586] did give [the owners] the cost [payment] for hiring the tractors. They finished [sending] soldiers' salary on September 2nd 2012. They usually send salary once a month, but they send food at different times. This information is given by the village head. Most of the Tatmadaw⁶ soldiers do not wear uniforms while they are going around. They usually come to buy chicken and BEc (alcohol) in D--- village. KNLA [Karen National Liberation Army] Battalion #17, controls Per Kler to Win Lon [villages], but in Kya In, most villagers are [on] the KNU side, and they only say good things about KNU. KNLA Battalion #18, controls T'Moh Theh to Kya In Seik Kyi [villages]. KNLA soldiers are friendly with the villagers and the villagers also rely on the KNLA.

Villagers' situation

On September 13th 2012, in T--- [village] some villagers' [had to use their] carts to carry materials such as logs and bamboo for building a bridge in Kyeik Don [Town]. Moreover, a government medic from W--- named J---, whose husband's name is R---, charged a higher cost for her treatment of most sicknesses, especially for malaria tests. The patients have to pay 2,000 kyat (US \$2.13)⁷ for blood tests, but some villagers from the other villages said that sometimes they have to pay over 7,000 kyat (US \$7.54), including the cost of medicines. However, antibiotics, pre-protections [vaccines] for kids and newborn babies are free. In Kya In, SPDC soldiers from IB #283 of MOC #19 commanded by Moe Myint Kyaw came to find chickens in the village, but when they did not see the owner, they shot a chicken with a catapult and then brought it back to their camp without paying the cost for the chicken. This happened in rainy season and also happens sometimes in the year. Similarly, in under [government] control areas, MOC #19, LIB #586 and IB #283 usually cross V--- and a villager has to follow with them to be a guide, and the villagers are fed-up with being guides, regardless of if they are paid or not. At the same time, D--- [village] also usually has to do the same things. However, for the villagers there, they are very friendly with the Tatmadaw, so they do not have a big problem with Tatmadaw. Sometimes, they are asked for three or five tractors to carry Tatmadaw [soldiers] to the place where they [soldiers] have to go, but the tractors' owners were paid 30,000 (US \$31.91) to 35,000 kyat (US \$37.23).

⁶ The Tatmadaw is the Burmese state military.

⁷ As of June 6th 2013, all conversion estimates for the kyat in this report are based on the official market rate of 940 kyat to the US \$1.

Moreover, villagers in E--- pan gold beside the small stream with hand-made trays and, in two or three days, some villagers can get approximately 18 grams of gold. Anyway, villagers are allowed to do their own business because they do not use any huge machines, which can make the stream unclean and muddy. The villagers' main works are betel nut plantation, paddy farming and hill farming. Wonderfully, the villagers rely on herbal medicine or traditional doctors. There are a lot of eye aches, some dengue, boils or furuncles, and coughing, but there are no government clinics in Mih Nar Ah. Moreover, most women have a special disease that causes itching in the private part of their body [vagina], as there was too much white fluid [vagina discharge] released from inside of lower part of their bodies as white menstruation. In Kwee K'Neh Ghaw, most women are in bad health condition, and they mostly have malaria, coughing, stomach ache and have a lot of back pain when they are pregnant. There are no medics or nurses in the village, so they usually have to go to X--- (T---) to get treatment. However, sometimes medics (likely M---) from Nu Poe [Refugee Camp] come to treat the villagers. The health conditions of the kids from Toh Hkee are bad, such as they have ear infections and sickness and they just rely on the very experienced traditional medics in that village. There are malaria diseases in G---, and they have to go to get treatment in Seik Kyi for emergency cases; the villagers said that sometimes the treatment costs 300,000 kyat (US \$319.15) and sometimes 100,000 kyat (US \$106.38), and it is also depends on the patients' conditions. It will cost more when the patients have a serious health condition. However, near G---, there was a small government clinic and there is only one medic who gives a health service. The villagers from most of the villages near the town usually cultivate rubber plantations, betel nut plantations, lime plantations, citron plantations and paddy farms.

On September 24th 2012, the government made the villagers buy licenses for their motorbikes in Kya In Seik Kyi Township; the cost of licenses has decreased now.

Nevertheless, these days, the villagers do not have incomes yet, as their rubber and betel nut are not ready to sell, so most villagers cannot afford this amount of money. Motorbikes owners with bikes from [made] 1996 to 1998 have to pay over 40,000 kyat (US \$42.55); from 2000 to 2005, owners have to pay over 50,000 kyat (US \$53.19); motorbikes from 2006, owners have to pay over 70,000 kyat (US \$74.47); [motorbikes from] 2007 to 2010, owners have to pay exactly 98,350 kyat (US \$104.63); from 2011, owners have to pay 140,000 kyat (US \$148.94); and motorbikes from 2012, owners have to pay over 140,000 kyat for motorbike licenses. The villagers said that if it is possible, they want the date [for making licenses] to be changed to December.

Unfortunately, most of the villages only have lower education [establishments] such as Primary schools, but some villages such as V--- [village] have nearly to middle school [level], till 7th

standard, in this [school] 203 students study until 5th standard. The school system is not dependent on the number of children in the village, but it depends on whether the government supports it, and the villagers' struggle to get support from different groups and organizations. The village head from V--- wants to promote their village school to middle school for the children who finished 7th standard to be able to continue their next level of education, because they do not want their children to go to study in Seik Kyi. However, most of the village heads and villagers want a higher level of schooling. V--- has a nursery school, which is supported by KWO [Karen Women's Organisation] and H--- School is supported by KSNG [Karen Student Networking Group]. In Kya In, it has two parts. Ka Rah Nih has a primary school and Kya In has a middle school and in the middle school, there are 200 students. However, Ta Kah Klo has the high school where the government pays a higher salary: 120,000 kyat (US \$127.66) for schoolteacher and 200,000 kyat (US \$212.77) for headmaster [per month]. Some people said that they want to be school teachers as the salary is higher, which is not like in the past. Most of the schools in 6th brigade get support from both sides: the Burmese government and KNU.

Development situation

The villagers complained and worry a lot about the development [projects] because development projects, which are done by private companies, can cause the villagers to have conflicts with each other. In Kya In, Hkin Zaw bought a large [area of] land and then his crews planted a lot of rubber there. The problem is that his crew did not leave any space for a small walking road. In fact, Kya In village has a rule that said that the villagers could not sell their land to outsiders, so now they are still solving this problem. Hkin Zaw also did antimony mining in P-- - and his company is called Thu Wana Myay Zi Lwar That Tuh Too Paw Yay co. ltd. The biggest mine is [led by] Khin Maung and [he] works with Chinese crews and experts. There are five mining places in P--- in total, and the other three are small and private but these three only use hand tools to dig the ground and find the antimony. Antimony grade one is the best and it can be sold for over 120,000 kyat (US \$127.66) per ton. All the projects' taxes are paid to KNU. The two biggest companies like Khin Maung's and Khin Zaw's companies gave 200,000 kyat (US \$212.77) to the village school and 250 water pipes to the villagers. The mining not only affects P---, but also affects R--- because R--- is located along the same river that P--- is. The companies promise that they will dig wells for R--- [villagers]. Mining [projects] in P--- have been going on for four years already, but there is still a lot of antimony there. Because of mining, the goods and especially meat, such as pork and chicken prices have increased, especially chicken; 1.6 kilos costs between 7,000 kyat (US \$7.45) and 8,000 kyat (US \$8.51), but the normal price is only 4,000 kyat (US \$4.70). Therefore, the villagers there can no longer afford to have a chicken curry for a meal. Moreover, there is a small company called San Mya Yadanar that does antimony mining in between D---, G--- and S---. The company found antimony grade 5

there, but they are just testing the materials, and that company got permission from the KNU. There are two or three more mining [projects] in Kya In Seik Kyi Township and they are huge.

Conclusion

Activities from both sides of the military groups did not commit violent acts against each other, but sometimes their activities can affect the villagers. Villagers faced social violence; forced labour, low [insufficient] education systems, and insufficient healthcare facilities. However, the village has good business with betel nut plantations, which is starting [to be harvested] now; lime plantation which is nearly finished [harvesting], citron garden that is also nearly finished, paddy farms that are now starting to bloom, and finally the rubber businesses which are popular because they can earn more income. Development projects are everywhere in Kya In Seik Kyi Township, especially the antimony mines, which are the most common [projects] and there is still a lot [of antimony] there.

Further background on the current situation in Dooplaya District can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- “Shooting in Dooplaya District”, (November 2012)
- “Dooplaya Situation Update Kawkareik Township and Kya In Township, April to June 2012,” (September 2012)
- “Abuses since the DKBA and KNLA ceasefires: Forced labour and arbitrary detention in Dooplaya,” (May 2012)
- “Dooplaya Interview: Saw L---, June 2011,” (May 2012)
- “Incident Report: Arrest and torture in Dooplaya District, December 2011,” (March 2012)
- “Incident Report: Arbitrary detention and violent abuse in Dooplaya District, December 2011,” (March 2012)

