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Article I. Attacks on health and education

Interview | Naw W---, (female, 20), schoolteacher, Kyauk Kyi Township, Bago Region (Interviewed in March 2010)

Do you have any problem in your teaching?

We have only a problem that we can't run our school if the Tatmadaw military troops come up to our village.

Have you ever closed your school when Tatmadaw soldiers come up to your village?

Yes, we have closed for very long time.

...

How many students do you have?

The entire student body is 61 students.

Have you finished school this year?

No.

Have you finished exams?

No.

Now, where are your students and their families?

Some are here and some are still at home. They are separated to many places.

When did the school start closing down?

On January 17th 2010, it closed down for one week and again on February 7th 2010 and until now. So, the school can't re-open again.

How long have you been in the jungle?

We have been in the jungle for a long time since February 7th 2010 and until now.

Have any villagers gone back home?

Yes, some have gone back home.

...

Are there any Tatmadaw camps based near your village?

Yes, there are.

Did they come into your village?

No. But they came and burnt Theh Der village.

Were there any other villages that had to flee like you or did only your village flee?

Nearly every village had to flee like us.

How about the other schools?

Mostly they have all had to close down. Some finished their exams but some didn't. For Kheh Der School, only three subjects they finished the exams and then closed down until now.

...

What is your plan for your future?

For the coming year, we hope we will continue our school if the Tatmadaw soldiers withdraw.



In January 2010, Tatmadaw battalions under the command of MOC #10 began attacking villages in northern Kyauk Kyi Township, Nyaunglebin District. Within two months, more than 2,000 villagers were displaced as they fled into hiding in the forest. The attacks, during which ten schools were abandoned and a clinic burnt, coincided with final exams for students. Some communities were able to gather in hiding places, where students resumed their exam preparations and eventually, took their tests. The photo at left taken on February 7th 2010, shows students from Htee Baw Hta village studying in a hiding site. Htee Baw Hta village was razed by Tatmadaw soldiers on February 9th 2010.¹

Interview | Saw P--- (male, 37), Lay Kaw Htih village tract, Hpapun Township, Kayin State (Interviewed in January 2011)

¹ The UN Secretary General's Special Representative (SRSG) on Children and Armed Conflict's report in April 2011 confirmed these Tatmadaw attacks on civilian settlements in eastern Bago Division that resulted in the closure of 13 schools and the destruction of one high school and one clinic, as described by KHRG and reported to the MRM; see: *Children and armed conflict: Report of the Secretary-General, A/65/820-S/2011/250*, para 112 April 2011. For KHRG's news bulletin describing this incident, see "Attacks and displacement in Nyaunglebin District," KHRG, April 2010.

“My wife's name is Naw M--- and she was shot and killed on a Wednesday morning, on October 13th 2010, while there was a lot of light coming from the fire in my house and the midwife was busy, helping my wife to deliver her baby. I built my house at the edge of the village, on the border of the forest and the village. My wife was shot after she knew it was a baby boy, and she named her baby Saw G---. When she was shot, there wasn't much blood coming out because a lot of her blood had come out when she delivered her baby. Then everyone was trying to hide. At that time, it was an important period for farming [the harvest] and most of the villagers in the village were spending the night at their farms [sleeping in field huts].



This photo, taken in January 2011, shows three-month-old Saw G---. On October 13th 2010, the hut in which his mother gave birth to him, attended by a midwife, was fired on less than 45 minutes after he was born; his mother was shot and killed at that time. [Photo: KHRG]

When the attack happened, there weren't many villagers in the village. After the attack, I went back and buried my wife's dead body at 1 pm, with not many people helping me. Then I went up to my hill field hut and stayed with my newborn baby and his two elder brothers. I just fed my newborn baby the excess rice water mixed with sugar for two months. Then I had no money and only some sugar left, which people from the village gave to me for my baby, and I decided to go somewhere. During that time, some people requested to adopt my son and some suggested that I give him to people to adopt. But I made up my mind that I'd take care of him myself and if he died he'd die in my hands and, if he stayed alive, he'd be very much still alive under my care. After my wife died, before I came here [a refuge site outside of Papun District], I stayed in the forest for two months. I had no plan to come here. People told me, *'If you move to that village, you might have a better life.'* I just came step by step and, later, I decided to come here. It took me six days. I left my hill field on December 15th 2010 and arrived on 20th December 2010. When I stayed in my village, I just farmed hill fields and I could earn very much and work with other people in their flat fields. N--- and P--- villages were close to my village. Also a reason I left my village was because I worried for myself, that if people said to join the army, then I'd join and I wouldn't be able to control myself.² I didn't want to stay there [in A--- village] anymore and when I stayed there I always remembered my wife whenever I looked at my baby. When I arrived here, I didn't want to go back, too. Whenever my baby cried, I directly saw my wife's

² Although Saw P--- did not specify which armed group he might have joined, the context of his statement suggests that he was referring to the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA). KNLA, DKBA (Democratic Karen Buddhist Army), and Tatmadaw forces remain active in Dweh Loh Township; however DKBA Special Battalion #777 operating in central and southern Papun District, locally referred to as Gk'Saw Wah ['White Elephant'], has been reconfigured as a state-controlled Border Guard Force battalion, as of August 2010.

face. Also I see the face of Burmese [Tatmadaw] soldiers. I hate them, but I can't do anything to them. I comfort myself that my wife's fortune was good up until now. But if I have time and an opportunity, I'll go back and call my eldest child to here. When I came, I couldn't bring him because I couldn't carry all of them [the children]. I left him with Aunty and Uncle there. My second son is here and he's happy here because there are a lot of his friends that he can play with. My baby also receives good care and he can get milk powder here. People come and help me a lot, nursing my baby and cooking rice for me sometimes.”³

Landmine contamination in school compound: Kawkareik Township



The photos above, taken in March 2012, show the Tatmadaw camp beside U Kray Hta village in Dooplaya District and three bulldozers parked in front of the camp. These three bulldozers were used to clear landmines planted in U Kray Hta village and on the vehicle road. According to the community member working with KHRG who took these photos, the clearing of the landmines was not systematic or complete, and at least some landmines still remain in and around the village, including in the U Kray Hta school compound. The vehicle road from which some mines were cleared by the bulldozers is visible in the foreground in both photos.⁴ [Photo: KHRG]

³ Previously published on the KHRG; see: “Mother of newborn shot and killed in Papun District,” KHRG, January 2011.

⁴ Previously published on the KHRG website; see: “Abuses since the DKBA and KNLA ceasefires: Forced labour and arbitrary detention in Dooplaya,” KHRG, May 2012.

Article II. Forced recruitment of children

Child Soldier Interview | Kyaw Be---, (male, 18), Shay Paw Kar, Yangon (Interviewed in August 2011)

How did you enter to the troop? Were you ordered or did you want to enter yourself?

I didn't want to enter myself. We were playing during the water festival at Inya Gan [Lake] and we heard a bomb exploded and then we went to the main road. All of my friends were going back by car. One of my friends named S--- and me remained and we were drunk. Then one man came and called us to go back home. We followed him and came back by line car and after that we arrived in T'Nyay Gone recruitment centre but I didn't know anything. After I awoke, I was in the upper house. I couldn't come back and also couldn't phone my family.



The photo above left was taken in August 2011, and shows 18-year-old Kyaw Be---, a former child soldier from Tatmadaw LIB #357, who was based in the Palu area of Kawkareik Township during January 2011 for 15 days before he deserted. He said he was abducted during the 2010 *Thingyan* water festival, along with another friend who was under 18 years old at the time. [Photo: KHRG]

How many friends include with you in the recruitment center?

We were two people, one was my friend S---.

How old was your friend?

He was 17 years old.

At that time how old were you?

I was over 17 years old. My friend was 17 years old. Our houses were close to each other.

Was it the 2010 water festival?

Yes, the 2010 water festival.

Did you see anyone who was under 18 years old was being recruited?

A lot, some were under age below us. Some were only 16 years old. Some were under 16 years old.

After you arrived in recruitment centre where were you sent? Did you have to attend training there?

They recruited over 200 or sometimes over 300. After that they separated into Battalion and sent them to attend training. They sent 200 or 250 people in one Battalion.

...

Where were you asked to attend training?

Sometimes, in Yamethin but sometimes in Thaton. For me, I attended in Yamethin.

How long did you have to stay there?

I had to stay there for four months and half. They had a lot of rules so I followed the rules.

What did you learn from the training?

They taught us how to shoot, how to hide and how to run forward or backward.

Did they teach you how to set up landmines?

Yes, they taught us how to set up landmines.

Was it difficult or easy for you?

We were tired. They set up a night sentry because they worried that we would run away.

How did they treat the soldiers who attended the training?

Even when we went to toilet, they didn't allow us to bring anything.

Did you know the LIB #357 Commander's name?

2nd Major Maung Maung Aung.

Was he a Major or Battalion Commander?

He was Battalion Deputy Commander.

How many people included from your age, 17?

There were 20 people included at the age of 16 or 17.

What weapon did you have to carry?

They gave me one MA1 and one bomb and one landmine.

Did you have to go to the front line?

We came here to the front line.

Did your leader give order to fight on the front line?

They ordered us to go at the front and then they followed us. The Majors and people who had power walked in the middle between us.

Child Soldier Interview | Saw Mi---, (male, 14), Kyauk Kyi Township, Bago Region (Interviewed in March 2011)

What is your name?

My name is Saw Mi---

How old are you?

I'm 14 years old.

Did the Tatmadaw Border Guard register you to become their soldier?

Yes, they did.

Did any other of your friends of your age go to be soldiers?

No, no one has gone yet.

What is the Border Guard commander's name?

His name is *Bo* [Officer] T'Kee.

Do you know the battalion name?

No, I don't know.

Will they take you to be a soldier?

Yes, they will.



These photos were taken in March 2011 in T--- village, Kyauk Kyi Township and show Saw P---, 42 (left), with his 14 year-old son, Saw Mi--- (right). Tatmadaw Border Guard soldiers under the command of *Bo* T'Kee registered Saw Mi--- to serve as a soldier, but had not yet called him up for active duty when these photos were taken. The community member who collected this information said that he believed Saw Mi--- was not called to follow the soldiers yet because he is quite small for his age. Saw P--- reported that six other T--- villagers were recruited to Tatmadaw Border Guard at the same time as Saw Mi---, but that some villagers avoided military service by paying a fee. [Photos: KHRG]

Child Soldier Interview | Ko A---, (male, 17), Bago Region, (Interviewed in January 2011)

How old are you and what is your name?

I am 17 years old and my name is A---.

When did you join the SPDC army?

I started joining the army when I was 15 years old.

Where did you live [before you joined the Army]?

I live in Thone Kwa village in Daik U Township, Bago Division.

Why did you join the army?

I was recruited forcibly, as porters are, when I went to visit my aunt [who lives in Bago Town]. Then, I was sent to the recruitment centre and attended the training for 20 days. After that, I was sent to the front line directly.



The photo above was taken on January 11th 2011. It shows Ko A---, 17, a former child soldier with Tatmadaw LIB #202. Ko A--- told KHRG that he was forcibly recruited by the Tatmadaw when he was 15 years old and received only 20 days of military training before he was sent to the front line in the Kawkareik area. [Photo: KHRG]

Who recruited villager porters?

It was the Tatmadaw army, led by Lt. Soe Than.

What did the authorities in the recruitment centre tell you when you reached there?

They asked me where I lived. I replied to them that I live in Thone Kwa village in Daik U Township, Bago Division. Then they also asked me about my parents. After they asked everything about me, they sent me directly to the training school. In the training, I had to attend for 20 days and I was sent to the front line directly.

Did you join the army because you wanted to go or were you forced to join the army?

I was arrested to join the army. I was not willing to join the army.

Can you tell us about your experiences in the recruitment centre? What did you have to do there and during the training?

While attending the training, they asked us to dismantle guns and then set up the guns. After the training period, we had to clean grass and paint walls and rooms.

Were there any soldiers the same age of you when you were in the recruitment centre?

There were over 20 to 30 soldiers the same age as me. The rest were big.

...

Did you see them yourself?

Yes

How about in other groups?

For other groups, I do not know.

Where did you have to go after you attended the training?

After the training, I had to go to the front line immediately, to Myawaddy directly. I stayed in Myawaddy for quite a long time. After attending the training, I was based in Myawaddy. Then, I came to stay in Three Pagodas Pass. We stayed there for three or four months before the fighting happened. Then, our camp was attacked and the ones who got injured the most were us, the children. But, the DKBA soldiers did not get injured a lot. Soldiers in our side got seriously injured.

What did you have to do during the fighting?

During the fighting, we also had to fight along with other soldiers.

Did you have to hold the gun?

Yes. I had to hold the gun.

...

Can you tell us about your experiences in that area after the attack in Myawaddy?

There were no experiences there, but we were based there for a month. In order to go there in the future, we had to find the way and there were four or five or ten children who died because they stepped on landmines. They died by wired landmines that exploded during the trip. We did not go forward and stay in that village. We arrested people forcibly and entered villages and demanded money from the villagers. We came forward after we did this. We came here to Waw Lay directly.

How did your officers plan for the injured soldiers?

For the injured soldiers, they took a rest in a good place and they cured them.

...

Are there any soldiers who deserted from the army?

Yes, there were four or five or ten soldiers deserted from the army.

Did they desert before or after you?

They deserted before me.

What were your responsibilities when you were in the front line?

I had to fight when I saw [KNLA soldiers] and I did not have to do anything when I did not see them. I had to stay beside an officer as a guard and serve for him.

What is your officer's name?

He is U Than, the battalion commander under Division #66.

What did you have to do when you stayed beside the officer?

I had to massage him. I had to do whatever he asked me to do. If he asked me to go and buy things, I had to go and buy the things.

Did you have to carry your gun when you had to do things, for example when you went to buy things?

No. I did not have to carry the gun.

Did you have to shell mortars or plant landmines?

I did not have to plant landmines, but I had to shell mortars.

...

Can you tell us a little bit about the two girls who were raped [near Waw Lay village]?

Three soldiers who followed their officer came back and told me that two girls were raped. After they raped her, the girl who was raped by the officer was killed. Her head was cut off. Another girl who was raped by them was killed like this. They did not cut off the girl's head. They stabbed her with a knife. I did not know the three soldiers who followed the officer, but their officer was the sergeant, Soe Than.⁵

How did you know about this information?

His three followers came back and told [the other soldiers]. They, the three of them, raped one girl and their officer raped another girl. I do not know the names of the three soldiers.

What is your battalion?

My battalion is Battalion #202, *Tat Ma* Division Division #66. The highest officer for the whole Division is U Than. Battalion #202 is led by Soe Than. My Company was led by Than Soe.

When did it happen?

It happened about a month ago.

Where were you when these three soldiers came and told you?

I stayed under *Tat Ma* (Light Infantry Division) #66. It is based in Way Lay.

Why did they tell you about this case?

They told me because they wanted me to be involved in this crime. But I was not interested in doing it. They thought I would be involved in this case. We got along with each other. They were proud of themselves.

How old were the girls who were raped?

⁵ This incident was reported separately by KHRG; see: Displacement Monitoring Update 39: "Body of unidentified naked woman found near Waw Lay," January 1st 2011.

I do not know exactly about their ages. According to them [the soldiers], they were about 18 year old. One of them is 18 years old and another is 19 years old.

How long have you been in the army?

2 years

Why did you desert?

I deserted because I did not know what they have done in the past was right or wrong. I did whatever they asked me to do. However, finally, they became worse and more cruel, slowly and slowly like this. I think back about my group. It became like this. Most are selfish. They think only to get profits for themselves. They do not think to benefit other people. After I thought like this, I thought back deeply about myself, about what happened to me. I had to eat what others fed me and had to do what others asked me to do. I did not have the same value as a dog. It came to my heart naturally. Originally, I am not the one who is patient about things that are not right. Therefore, I was not satisfied that I had to follow and do things like this. But, even though I am not satisfied, I cannot do anything. So, I deserted.

What are your plans for the future?

My future plans are that I have not had any contact with my parents for two years. I never wrote or sent a letter to them. I do not know where they live and whether they have died or not. I will try to find out a way to contact with them. If my parents are still alive, I want to stay with them together. If they have died, I will seek work and stay alone.

...

Are you willing to share your experiences with other groups, like the foreigners from the UN?

Yes. I have served for the army. They oppress us according to their positions step by step. Even though they receive things, they do not share and they take for themselves. Therefore, I want to warn those who are under-age not to join the army like me.

Do you want to add anything about the army?

They oppress [soldiers] according to their positions step by step. During the fighting, they left those who died and cured those who got injured immediately. But if those soldiers would die within 10-15 minutes, they will not wait. They will shoot them dead immediately. They killed them like this. It happens every time there is fighting.

...

Is there anything else that you want to say?

I do not know about other things and I cannot say anymore.

Child Soldier Interview | Maung S--- (male, 20), Myaungmya Township, Irrawaddy (Interviewed in January 2010)

Why did you join the army?

I was forced to join the army in Myaungmya Town. I could not resist. They told me if I didn't join the army, they would put me in prison, so I had to join the army even though I didn't want to. Then, I was sent to T'Nyay Gone recruitment centre in Yangon. After that, I was moved to Yamethin Practice Zone #3.

I had to attend the military training for over four months. There were 250 soldiers in my round in company #3. When we first started the training, we had to learn marching, and how to dismantle and set up the guns etc. There were about 100 soldiers amongst the [total] 250 soldiers, who were under 18-years-old participating in the training. The youngest soldiers were 16 to 17-years-old. There were more soldiers who had been forcibly recruited than those who had made the decision to join. During the training, ten recruits [including me] fled, and only I was caught and brought back. I was punished by the Sergeant and beaten. After I was brought back, I was put in custody and beaten. I couldn't count how many times the Sergeant beat me. My arms swelled up and my head was broken. After the training, I was sent to LIB #434 and my soldier number was T/7----.

Seven soldiers were sent to join this battalion. One of the seven soldiers died due to illness. Our company commander was Captain Than Naing Tun. The Battalion Deputy Commander was Thaug Tin Htay. In the army, we were oppressed by them. They didn't treat us well. As I didn't want to join the army at first, I wasn't happy being a soldier and I fled from the army. I fled along with a friend, Maung A---. We brought an M40 and an MA3, and 22 MA3 bullets and over 30 M40 bullets. We threw other weapons into the river when we swam to the other side. My other friends also want to flee from the army if they have the opportunity to do.

Article III. Killing or maiming of children

Seven year-old girl injured by landmine: Kawkareik Township, Kayin State



These photos, taken on February 25th 2011, show Naw S---, a 7-year-old-girl from Shwe Aye Myaing Village, Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District, was injured by a landmine while returning to her village with her father. Naw S--- was injured in both of her legs when the bicycle her father was driving triggered a landmine that had been placed on a path near the village. The injury to her left leg is more serious, according to a doctor that treated the girl, and Naw S--- was hospitalized for at least 20 days. Naw S--- accompanied her father back to their village, because her father was worried that he would be accused of being a DKBA soldier if he was seen travelling alone by Tatmadaw soldiers active near Shwe Aye Myaing. Naw S---'s family had been staying in a discreet refuge site to protect themselves from physical security and human rights risks to civilians caught in the middle of the continued Tatmadaw – DKBA conflict in Dooplaya District.⁶ [Photos: KHRG]

⁶ Previously published on the KHRG website; see: Displacement Monitoring Update No. 62: “7-year old girl injured by landmine in Shwe Aye Myaing village,” KHRG, March 2011.

Seven year-old boy killed, 17 year-old injured, during mortar fire: Kawkareik Township, Kayin State



These photos, taken on June 7th 2011, show seven-year-old Saw Te---, who was severely injured in his head when Tatmadaw LIB #283 shelled Mae T'Ler village. In the photo on the right, Saw Te---'s wound is visible, including white matter that was described to KHRG's researcher as part of the boy's brain. Saw Te--- died shortly after arriving at a hospital in Mae Sot District from another facility in Umphang District that was unable to treat his injury. ⁷ [Photos: KHRG]



These photos, also taken on June 7th, show Pah No---, 17, three hours after he was injured while attempting to flee shelling of Mae T'Ler village by Tatmadaw LIB #283. Pah No--- was struck by mortar fragments in the left side of his face and his left shoulder; he was sent to a medical facility in Thailand to receive treatment for his injuries. [Photos: KHRG]

⁷ Previously published on the KHRG website; see: "Tatmadaw shelling kills one child, injures another in Mae T'Ler village," KHRG, June 2011.