



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Situation Update

June 25, 2014 / KHRG #12-87-S1

**Nyaunglebin Situation Update: Kyaukkyi Township,
January to June 2012**

This Situation Update describes events occurring in Kyaukkyi Township, Nyaunglebin District between January and June 2012, including forced labour and other demands; military activity; and lack of access to healthcare.

- *Villagers were forced to construct the Tatmadaw's Aw Law Say, Kyoh Pay Hsee, and Thay Cha Hsee army camps. Villagers reported the repair of army camps and stocking of rations by Tatmadaw forces, but no other suspicious activity since the ceasefire.*
- *Villagers were required to provide food for a local militia established by the Tatmadaw, as well as money to supplement the militia soldiers' salary each month.*
- *Villagers have faced a lack of access to healthcare and medicine because of limited supplies and difficulty of transportation.*
- *An update on the Shwegyin Dam situation and the Myanmar Peace Support Initiative (MPSI) in Kyaukkyi Township is provided.*

This Situation Update was initially published in May 2014 in the Appendix of KHRG's in-depth report, [Truce or Transition? Trends in human rights abuse and local response in Southeast Myanmar since the 2012 ceasefire](#).

**Situation Update | Kyaukkyi Township, Nyaunglebin District
(January to June 2012)**

The following Situation Update was received by KHRG in June 2012. It was written by a community member in Nyaunglebin 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 Nyaunglebin District, including five interviews and 133 photographs.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

This year, from January 1st 2012 until June 16th 2012, because the KNU [Karen National Union] and the SPDC [Tatmadaw]³ were holding the ceasefire [negotiations], the [number of] human rights abuses decreased. However, they are still happening. The forced labour [of villagers] for building army camps is still happening, but a little less than before. It is not happening very often like before. The villagers do not need to be afraid as often and movement restrictions have become less severe.

However, the transportation of food to the SPDC-established militia is still occurring. Even though the SPDC established them [the militia], the villagers always had to give them [the soldiers in the militia] food. The SPDC army does not give them food. This has happened in Ta Hkaw Pga village tract,⁴ Koh Nee village tract and A--- village, which are located in Moo [Mone] Township. The villagers have to send food [to the militia] every month. For [villagers in] Ta Hkaw Pga village tract, they have to send eight baskets⁵ of rice, eight viss (12.8 kg. / 28.16 lb.)⁶ of fish paste, eight bottles of oil, and 41,000 kyat (US \$41.54)⁷ to supplement [the soldiers'] income every month.

Koh Nee village tract villagers have to pay 35,000 kyat (US \$35.46) and [provide] eight baskets of rice to the sentries serving for the militia. A--- villagers have to pay 14,000 kyat (US \$14.18) for sentry, eight bowls of rice and 10,000 kyat (US \$10.13) for monthly usage. There are 450 households in Ta Hkaw Pga village tract, 301 households in Koh Nee village tract and #--- [censored for security] households in A--- village. The villagers from these three places have to send the goods described above on a monthly basis to the militia.

The army camps that the villagers have to construct are Aw Law Say army camp, Kyoh Pay Hsee army camp and Thay Cha Hsee army camp. [Tatmadaw Light Infantry Battalion (LIB)] #599 soldiers are based at Aw Law Say army camp. The Infantry Battalion [IB]⁸ #92 [soldiers] are staying at both Kyoh Pay Hsee army camp and Thay Cha Hsee army camp. However, on May 24th [2012], the IB #20 [soldiers] came to the Kyoh Pay Hsee and Thay Cha Hsee army camps to replace IB #92 [soldiers]. Currently, IB #20 is staying at those army camps.

considerations. For additional reports categorized by Type, Issue, Location and Year, please see the Related Readings component following each report on KHRG's Website.

³ In Karen, the Burmese phrases *Na Ah Pa* (SPDC) and *Na Wa Ta* (SLORC) are commonly used to refer to the Burma 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.

⁴ A village tract is an administrative unit of between five and 20 villages in a local area, often centred on a large village.

⁵ A basket is a unit of volume used to measure paddy, milled rice and seeds. One basket is equivalent to 20.9 kg. or 46.08 lb. of paddy, and 32 kg. or 70.4 lb. of milled rice.

⁶ A viss is a unit of weight equivalent to 1.6 kg. or 3.52 lb.

⁷ As of January 13th 2014, all conversion estimates for the Kyat in this report are based on the official market rate of 987 kyat to the US \$1.

⁸ Infantry Battalion (Tatmadaw); 500 soldiers but most in the Tatmadaw are under-strength with less than 200 soldiers.

Shwe Kyay [Shwegyin] Dam Update

Regarding the Shwe Kyay Dam situation, almost 30 cubits (540 in. / 1,370 cm.)⁹ of water have already been released. Because the water was released and people can see the ground through the water again, people who sifted for gold in the past have started to sift for gold again. Some of the villagers took the timber that could be found in the water and sold it for money. We do not know the exact reason why the Burma government released the water. In the past, they also released water but not as much as this year. We are not sure whether they want to take out timber and other materials that have drowned in the water. At the *Ye'Nwe Chaung* [Ye'Nwe River] they built a dam and later released all of the water to take out the timber that had drowned in the water. After that, they closed the gates of the dam again. For *Khay Loh Kloh* [River], they released the water for the purpose of sifting for gold.

For the Ler Doh [Kyaukkyi] Township situation update, there is a project [Myanmar Peace Support Initiative (MPSI)],¹⁰ in which the Burma government is going to assist IDPs [internally displaced persons] in Muh Theh [village], Kheh Der village tract. They have not properly started this project yet. Three white people [foreigners] went to Muh Theh on May 19th 2012 to look for a place [for the IDP project] and, after that, they came back to stay in Ler Doh. On May 28th 2012, the Norwegian Prime Minister¹¹ went to Ler Doh. It is confirmed that they are really doing this project.

Military activity

For army activity, the Tatmadaw [soldiers] are not really active and just stay in their army camps [near the villages]. However, they still walk around on the vehicle road. There is no other suspicious activity and during the dry season they started to collect their rations, bullets and some heavy weapons [re-stocking their supplies]. Currently, they are rotating the battalion numbers to stay in their army [camp]. Since the situation became slightly more stable, we have not yet seen any of their special activities [military exercises]. The soldiers are repairing their army camp, but currently there are no new army camps under construction. Moreover, they closed two army camps, which are in Hteh Htoo village and in P'Ya Lay Kon [village].

Villagers' livelihood

⁹ A cubit is a standard measurement for the length of bamboo poles, commonly referred to in Karen as the length from one's fingertips to one's elbow, about 18 in. or 45.7 cm.

¹⁰ The Myanmar Peace Support Initiative (MPSI) was formed in March 2012 at the request of the Burma government. It is a Norwegian-led humanitarian aid programme with the goal of providing temporary support in ethnic conflict areas during the peace building process. See, "[Relevance of Norway-Supported Peace Project in Myanmar Under Review](#)," *The Irrawaddy Magazine*, January 15th 2014; and the Peace Donor Support Group website www.peacedonorsupportgroup.com/projects.html, accessed February 11th 2014. For more information on the MPSI and other pilot programs in Nyaunglebin, see these KHRG reports: "Nyaunglebin Situation Update: Ler Doh Township, November 2012 to January 2013," KHRG, April 2013; "[Nyaunglebin Situation Update: Moo, Ler Doh and Hsaw Htee townships, January to June 2012](#)," KHRG, October 2012; and "[Nyaunglebin Situation Update: Kyauk Kyi Township, July 2012](#)," KHRG, September 2012.

¹¹ While the villager refers to the Norwegian Prime Minister, he is most likely referring to the State Secretary of Norway, who visited Myanmar from May 28th-30th. See, "[Norwegian State Secretary visits Myanmar](#)."

In the past, because of heavy rain and an unstable climate, the villagers could not grow rice and could not burn the hill fields; it was difficult for the villagers [to earn their] livelihood. As a result, most of the villagers have faced food problems.

Villagers' healthcare

Regarding healthcare, we do not have enough medicine. The people who live close to a clinic and who live in an area where the Back Pack Health Worker Team [BPHWT] is located, can still obtain some medicines. There are also some places where the BPHWT does not go. There is not enough medicine for the villagers because of the limited amount and the difficulty of transporting medicines.

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

- *Truce or Transition? Trends in human rights abuse and local response in Southeast Myanmar since the 2012 ceasefire*, (May 2014)
- "Nyaunglebin Situation Update: Kyauk Kyi Township, February to April 2013," (December 2013)
- *Civilian and military order documents: November 2009 to July 2013*, (October 2013)
- "Forced Labour in Nyaunglebin District, February 2013," (October 2013)
- "Landmine injuries in Mone Township, Nyaunglebin District since January 2013," (July 2013)

