



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Interview

July 22, 2014 / KHRG #13-100-T2-I1

Dooplaya Interview: A---, September 2013

This Interview with A--- describes events occurring in Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District in 2013, including forced labour, arbitrary taxation and provides an update on healthcare and education.

- *Villagers from B--- village were ordered to transport material for Tatmadaw soldiers. In one instance, a villager was ordered to transport luggage and ammunition by tractor to the Tatmadaw's Bo Chit Mu army camp on Wa Law Mountain, where Artillery Troop #313 was stationed. The villager did not want to transport the material and was compensated poorly for his labour.*
 - *Each village in C--- village tract was ordered by the Tatmadaw to provide 150 thatch shingles. They were each paid 7,000 kyat for every 100 thatch shingles, which was below the market price.*
 - *Villagers in C--- village tract were ordered to help construct a bridge across the Meh Ta Ler River. They were not compensated for their labour.*
 - *The interviewee describes the arbitrary taxation on villagers returning from the fields with their cows by Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) #356's Column Commander Soe Myint Oo.*
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Interview | Saw A---, (male, 42), B--- village, Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District (September 2013)

The following Interview was conducted by a community member trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. It was conducted in Dooplaya District, September 2013 and is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.¹ This interview was received along with other information from Dooplaya District, including five other interviews, one incident reports and 136 photographs.²

Ethnicity: Karen

Religion: Buddhist

Marital Status: Married

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 conducting interviews, community members are trained to use loose question guidelines, but also to encourage interviewees to speak freely about recent events, raise issues that they consider to be important and share their opinions or perspectives on abuse and other local dynamics.

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

Occupation: Farming
Position: Village tract leader

What is your name?

My name is A---.

How old are you?

48 years old.

Where do you live?

In a previous time [before]?

No, the current location.

I live in B--- [village].

In what village tract?

In C--- village tract.

In which township?

In Karen, it is called Kaw T'Ree Township. In Burmese, it is called Kyainseikgyi [Kawkareik] Township.³

Living in the village, what do you do for your livelihood?

Hill farming.

[What is your] responsibility [position in the village]?

Village tract leader.

Are you married?

Yes.

How many children do you have?

I have one son and two daughters.

And altogether?

Altogether, there are five people [in the family].

What is the name of the eldest one?

Saw D---.

³ While Saw A--- said Kyainseikgyi Township, it was an error and he meant to say Kawkareik Township, which is the Burmese name for the geographic area referred to as Kaw T'Ree Township in Karen.

How old is he?

Eight years old.

And how old is the youngest?

[Her name is] E--- and she is three years old.

Male or female?

Female.

How old is she?

Three years old.

What nationality are you?

I am Karen Buddhist.

What is your responsibility [position] in the village?

I am the village head [chairperson].

How long have you been in this position?

One year.

You have been a village head for about one year. Have you encountered any problems? If you have, could you tell me?

There have been no special problems during the time that I have been in the village head position. [From the perspective of] our people [Karen people in this village], there were not any problems with the Burmese [Tatmadaw soldiers] in 2012. We have [problems] only when they order the help.⁴ They don't ask for other forced labour.

Regarding armed actors, are there any military camps that are situated close to your village?

Yes there is [one], but it is situated so far [from the village]. It is in Meh Ta Ler [village] on Kywut Hpah Thoo Hkoh [Mountain].

What kind of place?

Meh Ta Ler on Kywut Hpah Thoo Hkoh [Mountain]. I cannot describe, [I am unfamiliar with] those places.

To who does that [area] belong to? Does it belong to KNU [Karen National Union], Tatmadaw, DKBA [Democratic Karen Benevolent Army]⁵ or KNU/KNLA-PC [Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army - Peace Council]?⁶

⁴ It is not clear exactly what the interviewee means by 'help', or how he distinguishes this from other forms of forced labour. However, 'help' is often used in reference to random requests or orders for labour, such as providing thatch shingles, for which villagers may or may not be compensated.

⁵ The Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA), formerly the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, was

The place belongs to KNU.

How about the [army] camp?

It is a KNU camp.

Are there any other [camps] close to the KNU camps?

No.

Are there any other army camps close to your village?

Yes, there is. It is *Bo* [Officer] Chit Mu's [army camp]. It is situated on [Wa La Mountain at] the place called C---.

Which armed group?

Currently [Tatmadaw] #32.

IB [Infantry Battalion] or LIB [Light Infantry Battalion]?

IB #32.

What is the name of the camp commander?

The camp commander's name is Commander Phyo Way Hla.

Is Phyo Way Hla still there?

Yes.

Is he in the highest position there?

Yes, he is.

From *Bo* Chit Mu [army] camp and your village B---, how far is it? How many furlongs⁷ [distance]? Can you tell me?

Five furlongs (1 km. / 0.63 miles).

formed in December 1994 and was originally a breakaway group from the KNU/KNLA that signed a ceasefire agreement with the Burma 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. As of April 2012, the DKBA changed its name from "Buddhist" to "Benevolent" to reflect its secularity.

⁶ The KNU/KNLA Peace Council (also called the Karen Peace Council or KPC), is an armed group based in Htoh Gkaw Ko, Hpa-an District, which split from the Karen National Union (KNU) in 2007 and subsequently refused to comply with orders from the then SPDC government to transform its forces into the Tatmadaw Border Guard. See: "[KPC to be outlawed if it rejects BGF](#)," *Burma News International*, August 30th 2010.

⁷ A furlong is a unit of distance equivalent to 0.2 of a km. or 0.125 of a mile.

Five furlongs. Does it take a long time to go by foot?

It takes 30 minutes.

Have the soldiers from the military camp come in to your village?

Soldiers come every day.

What do they do in your village? Do they ask [villagers to do things] or demand things [from the villagers]? If they have, could you tell me step by step?

They come down and sometimes they demand [food and livestock], sometimes they buy [goods] and sometimes they ask *loh ah pay*⁸ if they need it.

In 2013, were they asking loh ah pay or requesting [villagers] to send them [food]? [Did villagers] have to go and send [food or other goods]? Did [soldiers] come and collect the vegetables [in villagers' plantations] or demand chickens?

There was nothing like [them] demanding things arbitrarily, but there were things where they would request [villagers] sell them [stuff].

What kind of things do they request [villagers] sell them?

Chickens, etc. There is nothing like them [soldiers] demanding things arbitrarily [from the villagers].

Were there things like [villagers] having to go and send [something to their camp] with tractors?

Sometimes, they [Tatmadaw] needed [villagers] to send [military material or food to certain places].

What does it mean for [villagers] to have to send [goods] sometimes? What kind of things did [villagers have to send]? Has it been long time [since it has happened]? Do you remember the date? Can you tell me?

I can't remember the date.

Has it been long [since these incidents happened]?

Sometimes, it happens frequently.

Starting [from the beginning] of 2013 to September, during this period, have [villagers] ever had to transport [military material or food to the camp] at any time?

There were things like they [requested villagers] to transport their things.

Did it happen a very long time ago?

About one and half months ago.

⁸ *Loh ah pay* is a Burmese term now commonly used in reference to forced labour, although traditionally referring to voluntary service for temples or the local community, not military or state projects.

Can you tell me when the transporting happened?

September 9th 2013.

What things did they have to transport and with what did they transport?

[They] had to transport their [Tatmadaw] ammunition and luggage with a tractor.

Could you tell me, how many tractors did they request?

One tractor.

Whose tractor? Could you tell me the name of the tractor owner?

Saw F---.

To where did he have to send [ammunition and luggage]?

To the [Tatmadaw military] camp.

Which soldiers' group?

Artillery troop.

Where is their base?

In Mawlamyine.

Where do they live here?

[They] live in *Bo Chit Mu* [army camp] on Wa Law Mountain.

Could you tell me what the artillery number is and how many soldiers are in their troop?

Mostly, there are 50 soldiers in their troop.

What bout the Artillery number?

Artillery #313.

Is Artillery #313 LIB or IB?

Might be IB.

What about the name of their commander?

Min Lwin Soe.

Is he a captain or a major?

He is a captain.

How much weight or load did it [the tractor] have to carry?

Approximately 80 kilograms.

Around 80 kilograms. Why did they request them [villagers] to transport it for them? Can't they carry it [themselves]?

They can, but they request people [villagers] to transport it for them.

Did they pay for that?

Yes, they did.

How did they pay?

They did not pay a lot [enough]. They paid for the petrol and food [for the tractor owner].

Can [the tractor owner] refuse to do that?

No, he can't. He had to go even though he did not want to go.

Do you think they [soldiers] forced you to go or were you willing to transport for them?

If we [villagers] don't go, they [soldiers] are disappointed. It is kind of forced labour.

Were there any times that they requested you [villagers] and you denied their request?

Yes, there were some times.

Have they ever given trouble if you [villagers] did not go?

No, but they scold [villagers].

How do they scold? Have they ever scolded you?

They scold by saying: "[We] *request something of you and you* [villagers] *do not respect* [our request]."

Regarding the request about sending [ammunition and luggage], did they [villagers] ever have to send [additional materials for the soldiers] later on [after the incident that was mentioned above]?

Later on, we sometimes have had to transport materials for soldiers, sometimes when they rotate [duty].

During the [first] nine months of 2013, have they ever demanded bamboo, wood or thatch shingles [from villagers]? Did villagers have to send rice for the military, or did villagers have to build their camp fence?

There were not things like [villagers] having to build fences for the military, but regarding the thatch shingles, they [soldiers] come and buy them if they need them.

Does buying from your village mean they come by themselves or did they order it from the village head?

Sometimes they come by themselves and sometimes they [villagers] receive orders from the army base.

How many thatch shingles did they [the Tatmadaw] order from the village head most recently? How many did they [village head] send [to the Tatmadaw]?

Last time it was 150 thatch shingles from each village in the whole [village tract]. Both G--- and C--- had to provide 150 thatch shingles. H--- [village head] had to provide 150 thatch shingles. [They had to provide them] in the beginning of the rainy season. They paid [each village] for 150 thatch shingles.

B--- [village head] had to provide 150 thatch shingles, H--- [had to provide 150 thatch shingles], and C--- [had to provide 150 thatch shingles]. Do you remember the date and month?

I did not note the date and month. It was a long time ago and it was in the rainy season.

At the time, [were villagers] burning the hill [for hill farming]?

People build their hut and fences after the hill burning for hill farming.

How long [ago] was that?

It should have been in May.

Which soldier group?

Some of them [soldiers] went back already. It is Battalion #284.

IB or LIB?

It was IB.

[What is the name of the] commander?

Commander *Bo Myint Kyaw*. He is a battalion commander.

Regarding their requests, did you [villagers] have to send [the thatch] to them or did they come and get the thatch shingles by themselves?

[Villagers] had to send it to them with the machine [tractor].

Did they pay for the machine [petrol]?

Yes.

How much did they pay for the one machine?

They paid 15,000 kyat (US \$15.37)⁹ for the thatch shingles and they paid 3,000 kyat (US \$3.07) for the petrol per trip.

⁹ All conversion estimates for the Kyat in this report are based on the July 2nd 2014 official market rate of 975.99 kyat to the US \$1.

How much do you [villagers] sell 100 thatch shingles for according to the current [local market] price?

8,000 kyat (US \$8.19) for 100 thatch shingles.

Is it the same as the price that they paid?

No, they paid 7,000 kyat (US \$7.17) for 100 thatch shingles. It is a little less than the [market] price.

Is it ok if you do not sell to them?

If we don't sell to them, they criticise us.

Are there other military camps or columns¹⁰ that are active [in the area]?

There are some columns now. They don't build their shelters [camps]. They approach the monastery and they depend on the monastery.

When was that? Does it mean today?

Yes, today and ten days ago and last month.

If it is today, which armed groups are currently here now?

It is [Battalion] #548.

IB or LIB?

LIB #548, Nabu [T'Nay Hsah Township in Karen], [it is close to] Kawkareik Township.

Column #1 or Column #2?

It might be Column #2.

What is the name of the column commander?

Maung Maung Zaw.

Is he at the monastery now?

Yes, he is.

Do they come in to the village [sometimes]?

Yes, they come sometimes.

Did they cause any trouble for you villagers?

No.

Did they ask for anything from the villagers?

¹⁰ Combination of companies assembled for operations, usually 100-300 soldiers fighting strength.

No.

Are there any benefits [for villagers] with the military column that lives in your village?

No benefits, but sometimes during the new moon or full moon they [soldiers] help with the religious ceremony. Those are the benefits.

How do you feel when you go to the monastery in your village and there are soldiers there? Is there any trouble or are you able to go freely?

The soldiers who are living in the monastery do not give us trouble for going to the monastery. They just stay on their own in their places [area]. There is no trouble for the villagers around here.

If you went to the monastery and there was no military column, in your mind, would you have more freedom because the military column was not there?

If there was no military column, there would be more freedom and convenience, as they would be gone.

How would it be more convenient if there was no military column?

There will be more peace and no disturbances. There are disturbances as they [military column soldiers] are staying in the village.

Could you tell me about the soldiers?

They live in the crowded places [areas with large Karen populations].

What is the annoying part about it for you and how do you feel about it in your mind?

It is annoying because they [soldiers] are congested in the monastery.

Does the soldiers' presence, dwelling in your village, make it more secure [for the village] and do they give advice on village development or anything?

For those things, they [soldiers] do not have anything [recommendations] currently.

Do they direct the villagers to build the village's road or bridge while they were living here?

The military column [soldiers] do not give such directions. [However,] Bo Chit Mu Hill battalion commander and Kwee Hkler Hill battalion commander built a bridge ten days ago with the civilians and villagers, including the column in the monastery as help.

They built the bridge ten days ago? Could you tell me which month and date in detail?

It is one of the days in the beginning of September. For the date, it might be September 3rd [2013].

[Across] which river did they build the bridge?

It's called Meh Ta Ler River.

How did they build it? Did they build it with wood, cement or pebble?

The bridge was built with wood.

Is the bridge big?

The bridge is two motorbikes wide [one lane in each direction].

Did they [soldiers] transport the wood by themselves for building the bridge or did they request [villagers to do it] by writing order letters or did civilians provide [the wood] for them?

The wood is on the mountain and they gave the order to the villagers to cut down the trees and come back and build the bridge. For that they allowed the villagers [to cut down the trees].

After cutting the trees, did they pay the [villagers] wages?

No, they did not pay them wages. They [villagers] had to plan and do it by themselves.

How about the wood? Did they [pay] for the wood?

No, they did not pay for that.

When you say the civilians built and managed the bridge, does that mean they had to use their own money?

Yes, they [villagers] had to use their own money.

How much should it cost for that bridge?

It should be 80,000 kyat (US \$81.97).

Could you tell me how they got that money?

The constructor took responsibility and used his own money.

Did the constructor collect money from the villagers?

No.

Who built it [the bridge]?

They [villagers] built it together with Burmese [Tatmadaw soldiers] and the constructor.

The civilians had to construct it as well?

Yes, the civilians had to construct it and do everything.

Was it ok if the civilians did not go [work]?

Some civilians did go and some civilians did not go.

For those who did go, did they get paid?

No, they did not. It was labour contribution for one day [in rotation from village to village].

How many days did it take to build that bridge?

It took four days.

For those who did not go [initially], did they have to go later?

No.

As you are a village head, did you have to go?

Yes, I had to go for construction as well.

While you were building the bridge, did they feed you [village head and villagers] anything?

For the first time [day], they provided juice. For the next one or two days, they did not provide anything.

When providing the juice, did the camp commanders use their own money or collect it from the civilians?

For that, the camp commander used his money.

If it cost 80,000 kyat (US \$81.97) for that, who is the bridge constructor and where is he from?

He is [a villager] from B--- [village], but he is married to a woman from Daw Theh. [He] came back and [now] lives in B--- [village]. He does logging [as a business]. Now he lives in the monastery.

Did he need to pay tax [to the Tatmadaw or other armed actors] for his logging work and his logging machine [lumber saw] or, because he owns the logging machine, did he have to provide [wood] to build the bridge?

The logging machine is in the monastery. Sometimes he does logging and there are no internal [problems with the monastery] or external problems [with armed actors]. We keep it [lumber saw] for the monastery and for when we want to use it. The villagers can use it for splitting wood and he [constructor] benefits, [for example] by taking one piece of split wood for each time that the villager uses it for splitting the wood.

If the camp commander did not order the building of the bridge [force villagers to build the bridge], is he [the constructor] going to build the bridge?

If the camp commander did not order [villagers] to build the bridge, I have not heard anything [or rumours about building the bridge].

Is it happening because the camp commander ordered [the construction of the bridge] and he agreed [to use] his logging machine and incur the expenses. Is that what he was willing to do?

After the camp commander had ordered it, he [the constructor began] measurements and followed [the order].

After the camp commander had ordered it, would it have been ok if he [constructor] did not follow the order?

He [constructor] said he would do what he had taken responsibility to do.

What if the camp commander did not allow him [to build the bridge]?

If the camp commander did not allow him [to build the bridge? But [I heard] he will construct [the bridge], but I did not know on which day he would construct [the bridge]. But what he said is he would [build the bridge].

Were there other things [kinds of forced labour], like other [villagers] transporting [materials for soldiers], were there other [villagers] who had to transport with a tractor?

Regarding other kinds of forced labour, it happened sometimes in the military camp, especially in the down part [back end], where [villagers] were had to transport [military supplies] frequently.

Could you tell me which day you had to transport [supplies]?

It has not been very long; I can't remember the time.

How many months ago?

It has not been one month yet. It should be around 15 days ago.

In which month?

It was in September.

How many [tractors were used]?

Two tractors.

Did they have to transport it far away?

To Khoh Toh.¹¹

Is the distance far?

Yes, it is.

How long does it take?

Until 12:00 pm.

Leaving at what time in the morning?

Leaving at 8:00 am and arriving there [Khoh Toh] at 12:00 pm.

¹¹ The interviewee did not indicate whether it was Khoh Toh village, or Khoh Toh army camp.

Did they pay wages for that?

Yes, they did.

How much did they pay for one tractor?

9,000 kyat (US \$9.22) for each tractor.

[Inaudible]

[inaudible]...Ammunition and guns.

Ammunition and backpacks. How many times did they have to transport that per month?

I cannot say the regular times for one month. Sometimes, it happened three or four times in a month and sometimes four or five times.

Regarding healthcare, are there any clinics in your village?

Currently, there is a clinic for malaria. It is call 'Anti-Malaria'. There is a room for [testing for] malaria. It is not a full clinic, but it provides aid.

That [clinic] was set up by the Thein Sein government or from which group?

It is from another country. I do not know which group.

Now, as they are coming [into the village], could you tell me the names of the medics?

I have forgotten all of their names.

How long have they been here [in the village]?

Since August.

You can't remember the date?

No.

In 2013?

Yes, it was.

Do they only have medicine to prevent malaria or other medicine as well?

They do not have other medicine. They only have medicine against malaria.

If [the villagers] feel sick and if they go and ask to take the medicine, do they have to pay for that [visit]?

For example, if they [villagers] have malarial disease and ask for the medicine, they do not need to pay for that [visit].

Were there things that the villagers had to provide for the female medical staff who came and lived here [in the village]?

The medical staff that came and lived in the village?

The duty medical staff that had to stay eight or ten days here in 2013.

Those female medical staff came here and we provided food for them [voluntarily].

Where do they get the medicine and did you have to pay for it?

No, they [villagers] do not need to pay for that. We [villagers] just take it from them.

Do they have to pay for individual medical treatment?

No, they do not need to pay. It is free.

Who provides the medicine for them?

They said other people support them.

Can you tell me what they meant by “other people”?

It is in English. I cannot pronounce it.

Could you say it in Karen?

I cannot pronounce it in Karen either.

Is it from the town or from the jungle?

It is from the town. It is from Kyaikto. It is called AMI [Aide Médicale Internationale].

Do you know what it stands for?

No, I do not know.

Did you ask the female medics to come or did they come by themselves?

They came by themselves.

Are there any problems that arise for the villagers related to the male medical staff?

There aren't any problems that arise regarding taking medicine.

Is there a school in your village?

Yes, there is.

How many grades does the school have?

It has up to four standards [grade five] currently.

Where did you find the teachers?

We found the teachers in the village. They are villagers here.

Does the [Burma] government send their teachers here [in the village]?

No, they do not.

How many teachers are there?

There are two teachers. One female teacher and one male teacher.

Could you tell me their names?

The female teacher's name is Naw I--- and the male teacher's name is J---.

Is your school a self-reliant [independent] school or a Government school?

It is a self-reliant school.

Do you [villagers] have to provide rice for each teacher [as part of their salary]?

[Villagers] have to pay [provide rice] yearly when the time comes. We [provide] three baskets (62.7 kg. / 144.24 lb.)¹² of paddy per house.

How many houses are there in your village?

There are 34 houses [in the village] and we [the villagers] provide 4,000 kyat (US \$4.10) per house for one year [as part of their salary].

Because the school is self-reliant, where did you get the books from?

Some books were provided by the KNU and, if they [the school] do not have enough books for some students, their parents provide them. Sometimes, the support comes from other [organisations or groups] as well, like notebooks or pens.

Were the books [that the school] provided for free or did they [villagers] have to buy them?

They were for free. They [villagers] do not need to buy them.

Which books did they [KNU] provide. Did they also provide sports materials as well?

The sports materials were not provided, only the notebooks, textbooks and pens.

Including the football or cane ball as well?

I haven't seen those things.

Are there books provided by the [Burma] government?

No, they haven't provided anything yet.

¹² 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.

Which curriculum does the school use?

It is from Burma and including Karen [language education].

Do the armed groups cause trouble for the school when they come into the village, as the school is self-reliant?

No, they do not cause trouble.

What do you usually do for your livelihood in your village?

We do not have any special jobs. We just do farming, sow sesame seeds, etc. We do not have other kinds of business [work].

How many houses in your village have enough food [from the harvest] between the beginning of the year and the end of the year?

Less [a minority of] people have enough food.

If there were 30 houses, how many houses would have enough food?

Only ten or 15 houses might have enough food. Not more than that.

For those who do not have enough food, how do they do [survive]?

For those who do to have enough food, they just work as day labourers and then buy food [rice] or chilli.

To whom do they hire out their labour to?

Some people do [day labour] at the [Thailand] border. They make 120 [baht] (US \$3.70)¹³ per day. Now, here [B--- village] they pay 3,000 [kyat] (US \$3.07) per day for cleaning the vegetation. They save the money and buy [food], frogs or fish.

3,000 [kyat] (US \$3.07) per day is for women's work or men's work?

It is the same. Men or women, they do not differentiate.

Do they provide a meal?

Yes, they do. They provide a meal one time [per day].

Are there sellers [merchants] here in the village?

No, there are no sellers here.

Are there people who carry other people's things [porter] for money?

No.

They [villagers] do not have enough rice, so where do they buy rice to eat?

¹³ All conversion estimates for the Baht in this report are based on the July 4th 2014 official market rate of 32.38 baht to the US \$1.

We just by from the farmers who [live] close by here.

How much do they [people who do not have enough rice] have to pay for one basket or rice?

12,000 kyat (US \$12.30).

Can you travel freely in your village? Is there harassment [from armed actors]?

[We villagers] can travel freely and there is no harassment.

Are there conscripts?

There is no conscription personally [from individual battalion commanders].

How about for those who work as day labourers or who transport things for money?

There is no paying [taxes to the local leader] for workers who transport things for money.

Do people [soldiers] stop or tax people who have hand tractors?

The people who sell things with the hand tractors have to pay 3,000 kyat (US \$3.07) for traveling back and forth.

Where did they go?

They went to Per Hkler and people [soldiers] stop them at the check point. They have to pay 3,000 kyat (US \$3.07).

Which checkpoint? Burmese [Tatmadaw], DKBA, KPF [Karen Peace Force]¹⁴ or KNU checkpoint?

DKBA and KPF and past them there is the Y'ay Pya Burmese camp. There are three checkpoints.

How much do they [villagers] have to pay at each checkpoint? How much do they have to pay for the KPF checkpoint?

They have to pay 2,000 [kyat] (US \$2.05) [to the KPF] and they have to pay 2,000 [kyat to the DKBA] (US \$2.05) as well.

How about the Burmese Tatmadaw checkpoint?

They have to pay 2,000 [kyat] (US \$2.05) as well.

¹⁴ Karen Peace Force was formed in February 1997 after splitting from the KNU/KNLA and surrendering to and signing a ceasefire with the Burmese military government. The KPF controls some administrative areas in Three Pagodas Pass and operates a number of road and river checkpoints in the area of Three Pagodas Pass. Following repeated rejections of Burmese government proposals to reform KPF into the Tatmadaw Border Guard, substantial elements have since reformed in the Tatmadaw Border Guard in 2010 while others remain independent.

Are there others [checkpoints]? Is it okay if they do not pay [taxes] at the checkpoint?

No, it is not.

Are people able to move freely without harassment in your village?

For trading [business], we cannot travel freely and we have to pay the [checkpoint] tax. For personal travel [non-business], it is free and there is no harassment.

Is there taxation on farming or hill farming?

There is a yearly tax for farming.

Who do they [farmers] have to pay? Can you tell me?

They have to pay to the KNU and DKBA. Two armed groups.

How much do the KNU tax for 100 baskets (2,090 kg. / 4,608 lb.) of paddy?

They tax 3,000 kyat (US \$3.07) for each hill farm. For the [regular] farms, they tax by the basket. They take two baskets (41.8 kg. / 92.26 lb.) of paddy for every 100 baskets (2,090 kg. / 4,608 lb.) of paddy.

For that, do they [soldiers] provide them with receipts or evidence [proof of payment]?

Now they provide them with a receipt.

How about the DKBA? How do they tax?

They do it the same way as the KNU.

Did you see any other problems in your village?

Yes, there were [problems]. The Burmese soldiers taxed people bringing their cows back [to the village].

Has it been long [since this happened]? Can you tell me when and which armed actor did that?

It was #356 in [October].

Does #356 mean IB or LIB?

LIB #356. They are based in Myawaddy.

Can you tell me which column and it's name or the leader's name?

I have forgotten the leader's name.

What column? What is his [commander's] name?

He is called Soe Myint Oo.

LIB #356's column commander's name is Soe Myint Oo?

Yes.

Can you tell me what does Soe Myint Oo do?

He harasses [stops people] and asks for tax.

How much did he ask?

Altogether, he asked for 15,000 kyat (US \$15.37).

Can you tell me the date?

It was in July 2013.

You can't remember the [exact] date?

No, I can't.

So, who had been taxed and where are the cow owners from?

The cows were from down river and the owner is from Per Hkler.

What is the name of the cow owner?

He is called K---.

Where does he live?

He lives in Per Hkler.

After they [Tatmadaw] stopped him, did they return the cows to him?

They asked for a tax and they released the cows after they were paid.

Are there other problems?

No, there are no other problems.

Is there any other information or questions that you wanted to share and that were not included in the questions that I asked?

I have no other things to say, but in the future we will monitor the movement [of the villagers] and we will report [any restrictions on movement] if it is necessary.

So, *Pa Dtee* [Uncle],¹⁵ I want to report the information that you have shared to others. Do you give me permission?

Yes.

Do you have any other things to say?

¹⁵ *Pa Dtee* or *Dtee* is a familiar S'gaw Karen term of respect attributed to an older man that translates to "uncle," but it does not necessarily signify any actual familial relationship.

No, I have nothing to say.

Thank you a lot.

Thank you.

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

- “Dooplaya Situation Update: Win Yaw Township, November to December 2013,” (July 2014)
- “Dooplaya Situation Update: Kyainseikgyi, Kawkareik and Kyonedoe Townships, October 2013 to January 2014,” (July 2014)
- “Dooplaya Situation Update: Kyonedoe Township, January to August 2013,” (July 2014)
- “Chapter: The impact of anti-personnel and other mines in Southeast Myanmar since the January 2012 ceasefire,” (July 2014)
- “Villagers report negative impacts of stone mining on their livelihoods in Kyaik Ma Yaw Township, 2011 to 2014,” (June 2014)

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22