



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Situation Update

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**Mergui-Tavoy Situation Update: K'Ser Doh Township,
2013**

This Situation Update describes events occurring in K'Ser Doh Township, Mergui-Tavoy District during early 2013, including the impact of development projects and the effect of business on villagers and the environment.

- *Villagers report that since the ceasefire it is easier to travel around, as there is less restriction on movement.*
- *Villagers report negative impacts of development projects being undertaken by cronies and businesses, including damage to the natural environment, a loss of farmland and lack of trust in local KNU and Burma government authorities who may be cooperating with development actors.*

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 | K'Ser Doh Township, Mergui-Tavoy District
(2013)**

The following Situation Update was received by KHRG in May 2013.¹ It was written by a community member in Mergui-Tavoy 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.²

Ground situation of K'Ser Doh Township, Mergui-Tavoy:

There are two large areas in K'Ser Doh Township. They are Kleh Mu Htee large area and Paw Hkloh large area.

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

Situation

In the present day, civilians are facing a lot of problems regarding development projects which are done by companies and rich people.

Benefits

[Now], it is easy and quick to travel around. Transportation is getting easier [less restricted] and [there is] no need to put a lot of effort into [buying travel documents or paying checkpoint taxes] for traveling.

Problems

It is not easy for widows, orphans and poor people, even though it is easy to travel.

Damages

The current business [developments in the area] have had negative impacts on natural resources, the sustainable lives of people in the community and on their [community] development. Businesses run against [harm] natural resources and abuse human rights.

Businesses, such as rubber plantations, palm tree plantations, mining and charcoal [operations], damage the forest, streams and rivers.

After leaders signed the ceasefire³ in 2012, companies started doing business with the Government and it became a problem for the local people. Companies are doing business with the rich people and these rich people are cronies. They do some agriculture, plant palm trees and rubber trees and say that they have permission from the KNU [Karen National Union] and the Burma government. Actually, it is not true. They are just saying it to get the opportunity, permission and recommendation by the both sides' leaders.

Negative impacts

The civilians said that they do not know which side of the government [KNU or Burma government] they should pledge their allegiance to. The local people do not have a sustainable life and their working places [plantation and fields] are being reduced. They do not have a place to build their houses and also they do not even have fresh water to drink because of the logging and [the companies] drawing wood through the river. Some of the villagers are able to dig wells, but some cannot.

Currently, the local people are losing their rights and they do not have a sustainable life. Their development is stopped because companies and the government are doing business on their lands. It also damages the environment. Trees are decreasing and lands without trees are increasing. Streams have gone dry and fish, frogs and birds are decreasing.

³ On January 12th 2012, a preliminary ceasefire agreement was signed between the KNU and Burma government in Hpa-an, the capital of Kayin State. The exact terms for a long-term peace plan are still under negotiation. For updates on the peace process, see the [KNU Stakeholder webpage on the Myanmar Peace Monitor website](#). For KHRG's analysis of changes in human rights conditions since the ceasefire, see [Truce or Transition? Trends in human rights abuse and local response since the 2012 ceasefire](#), KHRG, May 2014.

Further background reading on the situation in Mergui-Tavoy District can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- Complaint Letter to the Mergui-Tavoy District administrator concerning land damage from mining
- “Mergui-Tavoy Incident Report: Tatmadaw tortures villager and demands forced labour in Ler Muh Lah Township, 2002-2011,” (May 2014)
- *Truce or Transition? Trends in human rights abuse and local response in Southeast Myanmar since the 2012 ceasefire*, (May 2014)
- “Mergui-Tavoy Situation Update: Te Naw Th’Ri Township, August 2012 to March 2013,” (August 2013)
- *Losing Ground: Land conflict and collective action in eastern Myanmar*, (March 2013)

