



**Karen Human Rights Group**

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

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**Situation Update**

August 29, 2014 / KHRG #14-35-S1

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**Doplaya Situation Update: Kawkareik, Kyonedoe and Kyainseikgyi townships, March to May 2014**

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*This Situation Update describes events occurring in Kawkareik, Kyonedoe and Kyainseikgyi townships, Doplaya District between March and May 2014, including issues of land confiscation and updates on villagers' livelihoods and health care.*

- Villagers in Kawkareik and Kyainseikgyi townships reported that the construction of roads by the Burma/Myanmar government destroyed villagers' farms, plantations and houses without any compensation being provided.
  - Staff of hospitals in Kyainseikgyi and Kyonedoe townships reported a lack of running water and a shortage of funding, required in order to provide adequate healthcare for civilians.
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**Situation Update | Kawkareik, Kyonedoe and Kyainseikgyi townships, Doplaya District (March to May 2014)**

*The following Situation Update was received by KHRG in June 2014. It was written by a community member in Doplaya District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor local human rights conditions. It is presented below translated exactly as originally written, save for minor edits for clarity and security.<sup>1</sup> This report was received along with other information from Doplaya District, including two other situation updates, 18 interviews, 179 photographs and 21 video clips.<sup>2</sup>*

**Civilians' situation**

*Kawkareik Township*

I started my trip from Kyeik Doe [town] in Kawkareik Township where I travelled to C--- [village, also in Kawkareik Township]. [C---] village was facing livelihood problems. The Burma government had [recently] constructed roads which went through their [villagers']

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<sup>1</sup> KHRG trains community members in eastern Burma/Myanmar 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.

<sup>2</sup> In order to increase the transparency of KHRG methodology and more directly communicate the experiences and perspectives of villagers in eastern Burma/Myanmar, 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.

mango, rubber and betel nut plantations, as well as through a lot of other [fields with different] kinds of crops. The villagers said “*We plant [our crops] and we want to consume them.*” The Burma government did not give any compensation to these victims. Regarding farms [near the village], the Burma government also ploughed through those farms [in order to build a new road]. They [also] resurfaced the village road, which caused a lot of problems for the villagers’ work and businesses in many ways. One villager from [the nearby] Kwee Lay area said “*Last year there was flooding during the rainy season, which is when we do our farming. This year in the hot season, the Burma government constructed a road [close to our farms]. They filled part of a villager’s ditch in with soil and now the victim has to worry [about increased flooding during this year’s rainy season].*” The person in charge of the road construction told him [villager from the Kwee Lay area] “*We had a meeting [with Burma government officials] and a leader said ‘you hit, you suffer’ [you will suffer and we cannot do anything about it].*” This person who is in charge of construction lives in Meh Ka Tha region. The Burma government constructed the road from D--- village to E--- village. The road cut across people’s property and plantations. As for the upper [eastern] part of the road, it did not cut across a lot of people’s crops. I know because one villager from Kwee Lay told me.

On May 4<sup>th</sup> 2014, I arrived in D--- village, Kawkareik Township. I saw that the villagers were meeting and discussing the villagers’ work [and means of livelihood]. Many victims [who are having problems] with their land came and reported their situations. Some villagers’ [vegetable] plantations were [partially] destroyed due to people burning their hill fields in order to plant [this year’s crops] in the soil. The fire spread to their plantations and consumed their crops [and vegetables]. Altogether 20 plantations were [partially] burnt. If the person who has caused this [is identified and caught], he will have to pay some [money as compensation]. [Also], I heard from a D--- elder who said that he faced many problems. He said he had to move around in the rainy season to avoid the flooding. The farms had flooded in the rainy season, causing the paddy to die. [In addition] the price of rubber was low. This year, because the rubber price is low, many people are going to Bangkok [for work].

#### *Kyainseikgyi Township*

On April 27<sup>th</sup> 2014, a village tract leader whose name is A-- from B--- village, Shwe Chaung Son village tract, Three Pagodas town [Kyainseikgyi Township] said, “*Regarding human rights violations, the Burma government constructs roads and this abuses the villagers.*” The Burma government started road construction in December along Ruh Poo, Kyoh Kyaw, Lay Hpa Htaw and Lay Wa Hploh village tracts. In Ruh Poo, it [the road] cuts across one villager’s farm, four [non-rubber] plantations, two rubber plantations and [it destroyed] 20 houses for which they did not pay any kyat [money as compensation]. In Lay Hpa Htaw village tract, the road cuts across five [non-rubber] plantations and two rubber plantations, and [it destroyed] five houses. [From there], it then goes down to intersect with the Th’Roh Waw road and cuts across two rubber plantations. It [the road] continues back toward Kya Aay road where it cuts across many rubber plantations, mostly ones which have 1,000 [or more rubber or teak trees].

A villager from F--- village told me about the work they do for their livelihoods. There have been problems as they live close to the riverside. There has always been flooding over their farms in the rainy season, which has caused the river bank to erode. [Recently], they have begun worrying as [due to erosion,] the river bank is coming increasingly close to their houses. They asked the leaders in F--- village to give them land that was closer to the road, but they did not provide them with [any such] land. The F--- village leaders also did not allow the villagers to use the land for cultivation. Instead, those leaders planted a large rubber plantation [on the requested land] and they [F--- villagers] did not have permission [to move there or cultivate that land]. The villager [from F---] reported this [to me].

#### *Kyonedoe Township*

On March 13<sup>th</sup> 2014, in G--- village, Kyonedoe Township, I heard that a villager had been facing problems with his work. He said *"[I] do farming and the paddy is not good. In the rainy season there was flooding and the paddy died. Other people's cows ate my paddy and I reported it to the village head, but he did not care."* When I went to speak with him on March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2014, the cows had eaten his small rubber trees. He reported this to the village head, but the village head did not do anything for him. He feels that the village head is biased [against him].

### **Healthcare**

#### *Kyainseikgyi Township*

There are hospitals in Meh Pruh village, Ka Kya Htee Khay village and Lay Wah Hploh village. There are many hospitals [in Kyainseikgyi Township]. However, the good hospitals are supported [financially] by the Burma government. Only in Ka Kya Htee Khay village does the hospital not have any support yet [from any actor]. On April 30<sup>th</sup> 2014, in H--- village, Kyainseikgyi Township, I examined the village situation regarding healthcare. In the village, there is a hospital, which is not supported by the Burma government, nor is it supported by any international organizations. There is no support from either the Burma government or the KNU [Karen National Union]. It is because of the villagers actively working together on their feet [that the hospital was built]. When I arrived there [H--- village], the villagers told me [about the situation]. There were a lot of problems building this hospital. They did not have enough money to buy medicine. They did not have a water [supply] and needed [to buy and install] water pipes. They wanted to build a better hospital, but they are not [financially] strong enough. The villagers do not know who to report these problems to [the Burma government or the KNU]. They said *"How are our leaders [in the KNU] going to solve [these problems?]"*. When I was there, there were many people in the hospital even though they did not have enough medicine. This is because the hospital manager is a good natured person who strives to help anyone who comes to the hospital. Her name is I---.

#### *Kyonedoe Township*

On May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2014, I visited J--- village, Kyonedoe Township. There is a hospital there and the person who is in charge is called K---. He said *"We built a hospital, but we have problems providing salaries for the medics who take care of the patients. [We] also have problems with the water [supply in the hospital], but we do not have electricity problems. However, we do try [to keep the hospital running] for villagers and civilians."*

### **Education**

When I visited F--- village in Kyainseikgyi Township on April 29<sup>th</sup> 2014, a villager told me *"We need a female Karen teacher because we do not have any at the school. The children can only speak Burmese. Sometimes, [Karen speaking] visitors come [to our village] and they cannot speak Burmese. So, if the children could speak Karen it would be better. In F--- village, the majority [of the population] is Burmese. So, the children can speak only Burmese. We need Karen teachers to teach them Karen and to make them understand Karen. [The village leaders] reported this to the Kyainseikgyi Township [leaders], but they did not send [a Karen teacher to the village school]. So, the villagers ask 'How are our leaders [in the KNU] going solve this problem' [for us]"*?

### **Conclusion**

In this Situation Update the civilians have reported on the many different issues they face. In most village tracts, they reported that they do not have rights [relating] to work and livelihoods, or to forests and land. The rich people and their leaders [the Tatmadaw] have a right to work and run their own businesses. They [villagers] said *“Because our superiors [KNU leaders] have not given us a set of regulations or effective rules, we do not know how to respond to rich people and their leaders who come and work in our area.”* The other ethnic [group, the Burmese (Tatmadaw)], come into our area [Doooplaya District] and are able to [buy or confiscate] the land in our area. They abuse our rights and we cannot protect ourselves from them effectively. In our brigade [Doooplaya District], in each township, region and village tract the civilians mostly said their biggest weaknesses are that *“We do not have rights [to our land and livelihoods]. Some people have [rights] and some people do not have rights. It is really difficult for them and we cannot do anything [about it].”* As for my personal opinion, as I go from region to region, it is not one hundred percent of the villagers [I speak with who] raise concerns about their rights, but at least two out of three people I speak with do raise their concerns about their rights.

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

- “Doooplaya Interview: A---, September 2013,” (July 2014)
- “Doooplaya Situation Update: Kyainseikgyi, Kawkareik and Kyonedoe townships, October 2013 to January 2014,” (July 2014)
- “Doooplaya Situation Update: Win Yaw Township, November to December 2013,” (July 2014)
- “Doooplaya 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)

## Dooطلا District



## Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)