



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Incident Report

June 3, 2015 / KHRG #14-85-I2

Thaton Incident Report: UNHCR begins development project in Bilin Township, May 2014

This Incident Report describes a development project implemented by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and its implementing partner Bridge Asia Japan (BAJ). Although C--- villagers in Bilin Township, Thaton District, stated that they were in need of a school, the organisations instead began a project to provide water to B--- and C--- villages. The project is not complete and has not yet benefited local villagers.

Incident Report | Bilin Township, Thaton District (May 2014)

The following Incident Report was written by a community member in Thaton 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.¹ This report was received in November 2014 along with other information from Thaton District, including eight other incident reports, nine interviews, two situation updates, 143 photographs and ten video clips.²

Part 1 – Incident Details

Type of Incident	UNHCR development project
Date of Incident(s)	May 11 th 2014
Incident Location (Village, Township and District)	B--- village and C--- village, Bilin Township, Doo Tha Htoo [Thaton] District

¹ KHRG trains community members in eastern Burma/Myanmar to document individual incidents of abuse 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 incident reports, community members are encouraged to document incidents of abuse that they consider to be important, by verifying information from multiple sources, assessing for potential biases and comparing to local trends.

² 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.

Victim Information	
Name	A---
Age	60
Sex	Male
Nationality	Karen
Family	Yes
Occupation	<i>[Position censored for security]</i>
Religion	Buddhist
Position	<i>[Position censored for security]</i>
Village	B---

Perpetrator Information				
Name(s)	Rank	Unit	Base	Commander's Name
U Min Lwin	Engineer officer	BAJ	Mawlamyine	Unknown

Part 2 - Information Quality

1. Explain in detail how you collected this information.

On April 10th 2014, the NGO [non-governmental organisation] BAJ [Bridge Asia Japan] and UNHCR [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees] came to C--- village with the permission of the government's MPC [Myanmar Peace Center]³ and asked villagers [what] the needs of the villagers [were] for the development of the village. The villagers mentioned that they need a school. After one month they [UNHCR and BAJ] responded to the villagers and said they would supply water.

2. Explain how the source verified this information.

The person who knows about this information is Saw A--- because he is a *[position censored for security]*. So, if these people [UNHCR and BAJ] want to come [to the area] they have to communicate with him and explain the things that they want to do [in the area].

Part 3 – Complete Description of the Incident

³ The Myanmar Peace Center (MPC) was created as part of an agreement between the Burma/Myanmar government and the Norway-led Peace Support Donor Group, and is funded in part by the European Union (EU), United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and the Japanese government. It serves as a focal point for international partners and civil society organisations on issues related to the peace process and to facilitate dialogue between the government and non-state actors. This also includes creating improvements in the quality of life for residents in conflict affected areas in order to increase confidence in the peace building process and democratic transition in Burma/Myanmar.

Describe the Incident(s) in complete detail. For each incident, be sure to include 1) when the incident happened, 2) where it happened, 3) what happened, 4) how it happened, 5) who was involved, and 6) why it happened. Also describe any villager response(s) to the incident, the aftermath and the current living situation of the victims. Please use the space prepared below, and create an attachment if needed.

Regarding the [accuracy of the] information and the date above, this event really did happen in B--- village and C--- village. The NGOs that were permitted [into the area] by the government's MPC were the BAJ and UNHCR, [so they] came in and [began] a water project. The water project is not the root need for these residents. Actually, the villagers stated that they need a school [for education] but they [UNHCR and BAJ] provided support for water [instead]. The water will be distributed to the villagers from three water storage [tanks] in B--- village. Two water storage [tanks] are for C--- village and one water storage [tank] is for B--- [village], close to the place where they draw water [from]. But there has been no benefit [to the villagers] since the project started. They [UNHCR and BAJ] said to the villagers that they will continue working [on the project] this summer when there is road access to the village. There is no water supply [at this time] because the well digging is not finished and the water pump has not arrived yet. The [water] project will [eventually] be finished but as a consequence there will be a problem with the petrol cost of running the engine for the water [system].

The names and positions of people who implemented the project are: Mya Tun Sung Kyaw, field supporter; U Kyaw Thein Htaik, office manager; Naw Mi Mi Oo, project coordinator, Yangon office; U Min Lwin, senior engineer; Win Min Htun, underground water measurer [water table surveyor]; Nay Zar Sung, education and negotiation officer; Naw Lwin Paw, deputy education administrator; and U Khin Maung Htway, transportation contractor. The project start date was May 10th 2014; the materials arrived on May 11th 2014 and they started working [on that day]. The materials [for construction] are: 1,300 bricks, 200 cement sacks, 50 iron rods and a half ton of iron wire rods. There has been no explanation to the villagers of how much money has been spent [on the project] and how it was used.

Part 4 - Permission for Using the Details

Did the victim(s) provide permission to use this information? Explain how that permission was provided.

Since the voice of the villager I interviewed is low and unclear, I did not record his voice. I conducted an interview with him and I noted down the information in a notebook. He also gave me permission to use this information and provide it to the United Nations (UN) so that the whole world will know the information and find out what is actually going on [on the ground].

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

- Thaton Situation Update: Bilin Township, August to October 2014," (April 2015)
- "Thaton Situation Update: Bilin and Hpa-an townships, June to November 2014," (February 2015)

- “Thaton Situation Update: Bilin, Thaton, Kyaikto and Hpa-an townships, September to November 2014,” (February 2015)
- “Thaton Short Update: Bilin Township, October 2014,” (February 2015)
- “Thaton Situation Update: Thaton Township, April 2014,” (January 2015)

Doo Tha Htoo (Karen)

