



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Situation Update

June 10, 2015/ KHRG #15-6-S1

Dooplaya Situation Update: Kawkareik Township, December 2014

This Situation Update describes the situation in Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District during December 2014, including incidents of land confiscation and updates on education, healthcare and village development.

- *Villagers report that the education situation is improving, however villages still need funds to pay teachers and some children cannot continue their studies after primary school as their parents cannot send them to schools in other villages.*
 - *Villagers report that health workers in villages do not have medicine to treat patients, while malaria continues to be a problem.*
 - *Villagers report that a company constructed a road from Meh K'Neh village to Hsoh K'Lee village, which destroyed parts of villagers' plantations without providing any compensation.*
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Situation Update | Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District (December 2014)

The following Situation Update was received by KHRG in February 2015. It was written by a community member in Dooplaya 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 along with other information from Dooplaya District, including one other situation update, 27 photographs and two video clips.²

Introduction:

[The information] from Dooplaya District, Kaw T'Ree [Kawkareik Township] [includes]:

- (1) Education
- (2) Healthcare
- (3) [Civilians'] livelihoods
- (4) Company road construction
- (5) Armed groups in the area
- (6) Village development

Education

¹ KHRG trains community members in eastern Burma/Myanmar to document individual human rights

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.

From 2013 to 2014, we have seen that some schools have been reformed³ in some villages. Some countries [have] provided support to the Burma government so we have seen education getting better in a few places. The fighting has decreased in some places. The villagers therefore cooperate with schools which have already been established, as well as with the person responsible [village leader] in the area. In some areas they do not have enough [materials/human resources] for schools. We still need many things aside from education, such as money to pay school teachers. Some children who [passed primary school] should [continue] their studies but they cannot go to school [to continue their studies] because their parents cannot send them to other places [the towns or villages where the high schools are located].

Healthcare

Healthcare still has many problems because we have seen that in some places the villagers still face malaria. They [nurses] do not have medicine [to treat patients] and have no money to buy medicine to help villagers. Now we have seen that Burma [government] health workers are helping the villagers in the places where they can reach [in Kawkaik Township]. They came to help villagers for a short time and [then] left after two to three months. They also did not elect any leader such as people who have knowledge about medicine [to lead the other nurses]. Therefore, with healthcare we still have many problems. We still need more people who will help us with our healthcare. Now we have seen that [the villages] which are near the Thai border (Tha Waw Thaw [Hta Law Thaw], Hser Poh Hkee, Htee K'Pler, Kree Hkee, Kaw La Mee, K'Neh Kler, Paw Buh La Hta, Khaw Poh Hkee, K'Law Gaw, Maw Hkee, Maw Poh Kloh, and Kwee Hser Paw) have malaria health workers from the Thai border who help them, so the villagers gain some support from them. Apart from [the help they get from] organisations they struggle with support; therefore we still have a medicine problem.

[Civilian's] livelihood

In our area the people only do [work in] cultivation, corn [plantations], peanut [plantations], wild yam [plantations] and some of them do logging. There is no huge businesses [for villagers] to earn money. The people [villagers] do not do gold mining and stone mining and therefore the villagers earn their living from the jobs above.

Road Construction

Now we have seen that development has taken place in Burma. Companies came and constructed the road. They started constructing the road from Meh K'Neh [village] to Hsoh K'Lee [village]. They ploughed the roads and it impacted the villager's lands such as corn plantations, paddy fields, and some other land plantations. The [plantation or lands] which were impacted were not compensated for. Some of them have no other land, only lands which are next to the main road. Some parts of this land were destroyed. These things [have] caused problems for some villagers.

Armed groups

There are many armed groups as we have seen, such as the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army⁴ (DKBA), Border Guard Force (BGF),⁵ the mother organisation: the

³ By 'reformed' the researcher means the physical repair of the school buildings, as well as improvements in the standard of education.

⁴ The Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA), formerly the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, was formed in December 1994 and was originally a breakaway group from the KNU/KNLA that signed a ceasefire agreement with the Burma/Myanmar 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/Myanmar 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

Karen National Union (KNU), and the government military [Tatmadaw]. The armed groups have no other special activities yet because it is now the ceasefire⁶ period and they do not want to disturb the villagers [with the exception of the] DKBA. They collected too much tax so the villagers complained a little bit about arbitrary taxation. At the current time [they] are active, as shown above. In the future how they will do [behave] I am not certain yet.

Villages' development

Regarding village development we have not seen anything special apart from support for villagers in terms of schools and hospitals. The [Burma] government has not provided anything yet. Schools, hospitals, water and electricity are not supported by the government yet. They provided some solar panels and entered the villagers into a raffle. If they win the raffle they can get solar panels [for free]. The mother organisation [the KNU] and villagers are cooperating together in some ways to build a school and hospital as well as they can. The government has not provided any support yet.

Conclusion

I'm sending you the situation update from Kaw T'Ree [Kawkareik] Township, Taw Naw Mu Htaw area and it is the information that I went to collect and learn about.

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

- "Dooplaya Photo Set: Tatmadaw conduct heavy weapons target practice in Win Yay Township, January 2015," (June 2015)
- "Two separate clashes between armed actors in Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District, February 2015," (May 2015)
- "Dooplaya Interview: Naw A---, March 2015," (April 2015)
- "The Asia Highway: Planned Eindu to Kawkareik Town road construction threatens villagers' livelihoods," (March 2015)
- "Dooplaya Interview: Maung A---, August 2014," (February 2015)

Forces, also remaining independent of the KNLA. As of April 2012, the DKBA changed its name from "Buddhist" to "Benevolent" to reflect its secularity.

⁵ Border Guard Force (BGF) battalions of the Tatmadaw were established in 2010, and they are composed mostly of soldiers from former non-state armed groups, such as older constellations of the DKBA, which have formalised ceasefire agreements with the Burmese government and agreed to transform into battalions within the Tatmadaw. BGF battalions are assigned four digit battalion numbers, whereas regular Tatmadaw infantry battalions are assigned two digit battalion numbers and light infantry battalions are identified by two or three-digit battalion numbers. For more information, see "[DKBA officially becomes Border Guard Force](#)" *Democratic Voice of Burma*, August 2010, and, "[Exploitation and recruitment under the DKBA in Pa'an District](#)," KHRG, June 2009.

⁶ On January 12th 2012, a preliminary ceasefire agreement was signed between the KNU and Burma/Myanmar government in Hpa-an. Negotiations for a longer-term peace plan are still under way. 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.

Dooplaya District



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