



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Situation Update

June 19, 2015 / KHRG #15-6-S2

Doplaya Situation Update: Kyainseikgyi Township, December 2014

This Situation Update describes events occurring in Kyainseikgyi Township, Doplaya District in December 2014 including, stone mining, land confiscation and development projects.

- *A large stone mining project took place in Kyainseikgyi Township, Doplaya District, which polluted air and water, affecting villagers nearby.*
 - *Tatmadaw soldiers cut down trees and bamboo from reserve community forests. Villagers reported asking them to stop, however their request was ignored.*
 - *The highway between Kya Inn Town and Kyaikdon Town, as well as the highway between Kyainseikgyi Town and Three Pagoda Pass have been upgraded.*
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Situation Update | Kyainseikgyi Township, Doplaya District (December 2014)

The following Situation Update was received by KHRG in February 2015. 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.¹ This report was received along with other information from Doplaya District, including one other situation update, 27 photographs and two video clips.²

Introduction:

[The information received] from Doplaya District, Noh T'Kaw [Kyainseikgyi] Township includes:

- (1) Healthcare
 - (2) Education
 - (3) Development
 - (4) Business companies' [activities]
 - (5) Livelihoods
 - (6) Armed groups
 - (7) Road upgrades
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¹ 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.

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.

Healthcare

We saw that in some places, the Burma government established clinics and provided nurses for villagers. [The nurses were] villagers who have a strong desire to volunteer as health workers. They conducted training for them to have the ability to look after their own villagers. There is also a group of malaria health workers. They were going [moving from] village to village [checking for malaria]. We saw that it is very helpful for villagers. There are many villages [in Kyainseikgyi Township], therefore they cannot catch [get to] every village so we still face health problems in some places. If we mention [look] in the past the [healthcare] now is more larger [better].

Education

Apart from education we have seen the Burma government struggles to build schools in some places, [but not others] and we have seen the children [in areas where there are schools] have more chances in their studies. If we look at the period of war in the past the children could not go to school. They always had to flee. Because of that many children lost [the chance] to gain an education. We cannot compare the past to the present time anymore [because change has taken place]. Villagers are therefore so pleased that their children can go to school as well as possible [as easily as they can now in comparison to the past], but education is still lacking in many places and villages. The leaders and area leaders are also struggling [to build schools] in the places where the Burma government has not done anything yet, but not all places [are struggling]. We need more support for education.

Development [projects]

We have seen that the Myanmar government and foreign countries are finding the funds [for local people], therefore in some places they provided a water supply for the villagers to utilise, but not in many places. They just provided it in a few villages. There is no other special support for villagers. [Whether] they will provide it [support] in the future or not I am not certain.

Business companies' [activities]

In Noh T'Kaw [Kyainseikgyi] Township there are some rich people who own businesses and companies. They have planted many rubbers plantations which impacted some community forests. The villagers have no money to do [farm] the wide rubber plantations. The second thing is the rich people were stone mining. The largest stone mining [project] took place in Dooplaya District, Noh T'Kaw [Kyainseikgyi] Township. Some people were mining stone and it caused problems for villagers who live close to the area because they were having [to endure the] smell of smoke and the water was also polluted. They, the villagers, had to use [drink] the polluted water. It also caused problems for the animals as well [as their pastures were close to the stone mining]. Some people mine stone but it does not impact the neighbourhood. The villagers reported that villages which encountered some problems because of stone mining are A--- village which had water issues; B--- village where there was a bad smell [air pollution], and C--- also faced water problems. This is what the villagers expressed as their experiences. They tried to speak to the people [leaders] to get help in some way but what the people [leader] will do for them we have to wait for the future [to find out].

Villager livelihood

At the present time most of the villagers are earning their living by working in cultivation, lemon plantations, Caribbean lemon plantations, betel nut plantations, durian plantations, wild yam plantations, and sesame plantations. There is no special way to earn a livelihood. We have to wait and see if the peace processes take place. [If peace exists in Burma/Myanmar] maybe livelihoods will develop [get better].

Armed groups

There are armed groups which also exist [in Kyainseikgyi Township]. [They are] the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), the Tatmadaw, Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA),³ and the Border Guard Force (BGF).⁴ In that area, the armed groups do not disturb the villagers [except] the Tatmadaw. The Tatmadaw were asking the villagers to do [some work] and paid them some money. Some government military [Tatmadaw] started cutting down the villagers' trees and bamboos from the reserve community forest. The people [villagers] told them [to stop cutting down the trees] but they did not listen. They also went to [pick] the fruits from [the villagers' plantations]. The people do not dare to tell them [to stop] even if they told them they [would] not listen. After the government military [Tatmadaw] and DKBA had problems⁵ until now they have [engaged in] more activities. For example, they have more questions for travellers and they have also recruited more military [personnel]. There is no different activity from other groups, only from the DKBA who are demanding taxes, which is [termed] arbitrary taxation. There is no other special information [from that area] just that information. We have to wait [and receive information] in the future.

Road upgrades

We have seen that two roads were upgraded which are the main roads. The [first] road starts from Kya Inn [Town] to Kyaikdon [Town], and [the second] road from Kyainseikgyi [Town] to Three Pagoda Pass. They are main roads, which are 100 feet wide. [This has] therefore impacted some villagers' paddy fields and land plantations. Some villagers did not say anything but some of them complained that the road passed through the village and [there was] a lot of dust and smoke and they did not pour water on the road.⁶ The houses [and people] therefore which are close by [to] the road were upset. The villagers hope that in the future the [roads] will be upgraded again [and made better]. The people upgraded the road and it is very useful because we can travel easier than in the past. In the past year during the rainy season [villagers] could not travel the road for two months but now if you are patient with travelling by motorbike you can travel during the whole of rainy season, so this is a kind of benefit [of the road upgrade].

Conclusion

This is the information from the ground as I have seen and know. There will be many things that I do not know in the area which I have not grabbed [documented].

³ 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 Forces, also remaining independent of the KNLA. As of April 2012, the DKBA changed its name from "Buddhist" to "Benevolent" to reflect its secularity.

⁴ 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.

⁵ In October 2014, fighting between the DKBA and Tatmadaw broke out in Kawkareik Township, Doooplaya District, causing Karen villagers to flee. See, "[DKBA and Burma army fighting spreads throughout Karen State](#)," Karen News, October 2014.

⁶ Pouring water on the road lessens the intensity of the dust.

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

- “Dooplaya Interview: Saw A---, April 2014,” (June 2015)
- “Dooplaya Short Update: Kyonedoe Township, February 2014,” (June 2015)
- “Dooplaya Situation Update: Kyainseikgyi Township, December 2014 to February 2015,” (June 2015)
- “Dooplaya Situation Update: Kawkareik Township, December 2014,” (June 2015)
- “Dooplaya photo set: Tatmadaw: Tatmadaw conduct heavy weapons target practice in Win Yay Township, January 2015,” (June 2015)

Dooplaya District



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