



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Interview

February 20, 2017 / KHRG #16-86-A3-I1

Hpa-an Interview: Saw A--- and Saw B---, October 2016

This Interview with Saw A--- and Saw B--- describes events occurring in Hlaingbwe Township, Hpa-an District before September 2016, including forced labour, forced porters, arbitrary demands and fighting between armed groups.

- *Between 2014 and 2016, the villagers who live in E--- and F--- villages, Meh Proo village tract, were forced to do forced labour for the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) led by Commander-in-Chief, Kyaw Thet, and Second Commander-in-Chief, Bo Bee.*
 - *Before fighting broke out in September 2016 between the Border Guard Force, assisted by the Tatmadaw, and the DKBA, villagers from E--- and F--- villages were forced to porter rations and woven baskets containing landmines by the DKBA.*
 - *The DKBA arbitrarily demanded 100 baskets of husked rice from E--- and G--- villages to store and use during the fighting.*
 - *Between 400 and 500 villagers in Meh Proo village tract fled to D--- village because of the fighting between the BGF, aided by the Tatmadaw, and the DKBA, in September 2016.*
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Interview | Saw A--- and Saw B---, (males, 41, 34), E---, F--- village, Hlaingbwe Township, Hpa-an District (October 2016)

The following Interview was conducted by a community member trained by KHRG to monitor local human rights conditions. It was conducted in Hpa-an District on October 7th 2016 and is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.¹ This interview was received along with other information from Hpa-an District, including two other interviews, and 34 photographs.²

Ethnicity: Karen

Religion: Buddhist

Marital Status: Married

Occupation: Farmer

Position: Village heads

¹ KHRG trains community members in southeast 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 conducting interviews, community members are trained to use loose question guidelines, but also to encourage interviewees to speak freely about recent events, raise issues that they consider to be important and share their opinions or perspectives on abuse and other local dynamics.

² In order to increase the transparency of KHRG methodology and more directly communicate the experiences and perspectives of villagers in southeast 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.

What is your name?

My name is Saw A---

Where do you live?

I live in E--- village.

How old are you?

I am 34 years old.

What is your religion?

Buddhism.

Are you married?

Yes.

How many children do you have?

I have three children.

Do you have any responsibility in your village?

No.

Are you village head?

No I am not the village head, but after I came to live here the people elected me as temporary village head. I am the temporary village secretary and my other friend is also the village head. I do not know the village tract, township or district. You must ask the other village head.

May I know your name please?

My name is B---

How old are you?

I am 34 years old.

Do you have a family?

Yes.

How many children do you have?

Four children.

Do you know what village tract, township and district you live in?

Saw B---: Meh Proo village tract.

What about Township?



This picture was taken on October 7th 2016 in D--- village, Hlaingbwe Township, Hpa-an District. The picture shows two villagers from other villages who have been selected as the temporary village heads in D-- village, whilst internally displaced persons (IDPs) stay there. They described about villagers from their villages who faced human rights abuses which were committed by the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army led by Bo Bee. [Photo: KHRG]

I do not know.

What about District?

Hpa-an District.

When did you begin to flee?

We started fleeing on the 25th and arrived [in D--- village] on the 26th [of September 2016].

Where did you live?

I lived in F--- village.

How long have you been living here?

I do not know, I left my village on September 25th 2016 and reached D--- village on September 26th 2016.

How many people are there since the IDPs [Internally Displaced People] came to stay here?

I do not know, you should ask the other [D---] village heads who have taken note.

Can you guess how many people there are?

I guess there are around 400 to 500 people.

How many households are there in D---- [IDP] village?

The village head told us that there are around [censored for security] households.

Do you have enough food or necessities to live here?

Yes, we received many things that we need but we are not sure whether it will be enough for us to use or not, because 'enough' can be understood in many different ways.

Are there many groups that come to provide support?

Yes, many groups come to support us and they come almost every day.

How many organisations come to support you?

We do not know, but the D--- village head knows about it because he records everything.

How many villages fled here?

H---, I---, J---, E---, F--- and K--- villages. In total there are six villages.

Why did they flee?

They fled because of fear.

What do you mean by fear?

I mean we were afraid of the fighting; therefore, we fled to escape from the fighting. As you know, if two buffalos fight against each other the grass is trampled.

The fighting broke out between which groups?

The fighting broke out between the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA)³ and the Border Guard Force (BGF)⁴, with assistance from the Tatmadaw.

When did the fighting break out?

I do not remember.

Were there any villagers left behind in your village?

Saw B---: No one was left in my village, but some people from other villages were left behind.

Are they confident enough [about their security] to live in the villages?

Even though they are not confident enough to live, they have to do so because they do not think they have a future to live for.

You mean that the elderly people, who were around 60 and 70 years old, did not flee?

Saw A---: Yes.

How many of them did not flee?

Saw A---: There are two elderly people in E---village.

How many days did it take you to flee from your village to D--- village?

It took me one day to come here, but it was very hard for us to travel with children in the rainy season. We did not bring any rain clothes with us. My kids were crying when we were fleeing.

³ The Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) was re-formed on January 16th 2016 as a splinter group from the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (2010 – present), and is also referred to as Na Ma Kya ('Deaf Ear'). During fighting between the Tatmadaw and DKBA Benevolent throughout 2015, there was internal disagreement within the DKBA Benevolent which resulted in a number of commanders being dismissed in July 2015. These former commanders then issued a statement in January 2016 declaring the formation of a new splinter group. This organisation has phrased the formation of this group as the revival of the original Democratic Karen Buddhist Army which was formed in 1994 until it was broken up in 2010 into the BGF and the still-active DKBA Benevolent. The group is led by General Saw Kyaw Thet, Chief of Staff and General Saw Taing Shwe aka Bo Bi, Vice Chief of Staff. Other lower ranking commanders in the DKBA Buddhist splinter group are San Aung and late Kyaw Moh aka Na Ma Kya (reportedly killed on August 26th 2016). The group is currently based in Myaing Gyi Ngu area in Hlaing Bwe Township, Karen State. This DKBA Buddhist (2016 – present) should not be confused with the DKBA Benevolent (2010 – present) from which it broke away in January 2016, or with the original DKBA (1994 – 2010) which was broken up in 2010 into the BGF and the DKBA Benevolent. Importantly, the DKBA Buddhist has not signed the preliminary or nationwide ceasefire with the Myanmar government whereas the DKBA Benevolent has signed both agreements.

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 Burma/Myanmar 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.

Did you flee in the night time?

Yes, we fled in the night time.

Did you flee there by yourself?

Yes, we fled here by ourselves.

Had there been any shelling in your village?

No, we just heard gun fire around our village.

Can you tell me how the incident happened, step-by-step?

Saw B---: We faced many difficulties even before we fled. Since we have been facing many things before the fighting took place, we felt more unsafe and it made us full of worry. If we say it in another way, when we put many kilos of pork on the weighing scale there will be too much weight for the weighing scale to weigh. When the fighting occurred we did not feel safe and we were thoughtful about the incident. We did not dare to face the BGF and the DKBA. As we were villagers this incident became one of difficulty for us. They did not respect us because they poured all our rice on the ground.

Who poured your rice on the ground?

The DKBA poured out our rice because they have no common sense.

Where did you store your rice? Did you keep it in your village or outside of your village?

We kept our rice in our houses and when they wanted to have the rice they [DKBA] just took it to cook with it.

Did they come to your house and take the rice?

Yes.

How did they use the rice?

They took the rice and poured it out on the ground.

Did they also take it to cook?

Yes, they took some of the rice to cook. They have eaten a lot of our rice. When we were in our village they told us that they would buy the rice from us, but we have not received any payment.

Did they promise to pay you for the rice before they took the rice?

Yes, but they did not pay us.

Do you know the names of the DKBA who poured out your rice?

Saya Myit and Thay K'Htee.

Which DKBA are they from? Do you know their company and battalion numbers?

They are from the DKBA whose base is in Hpa-an District.

Do you know their commander?

Yes, Bo⁵ Bee is their commander. Saya Myit Aung is the column commander.

Why did they pour your rice [on the floor]?

I think because we fled and we did not live in our village during the fighting.

They just destroyed your rice?

Yes, they poured out our rice for the chickens and the pigs.

Did they take your rice after you fled from your village?

Yes, they took it.

When did they take your rice?

We do not know because they took it when we were not in our houses.

So it just happened recently, after the fighting?

Yes, but when we lived there they took the rice and did not pay us any money.

Which month did they take your rice without paying?

They demanded 100 baskets⁶ of rice from each village on September 18th 2016. After everything we are not happy with this situation anymore.

How many villages did they demand rice from?

They demanded the rice from I--- and E--- villages.

Did they demand rice from only those two villages?

Yes.

Did you have to give 100 big tins⁷ of rice or 100 baskets of husked rice?

We had to pay 100 baskets of husked rice.

Who led the group that demanded the rice?

I think Yaw Ku.

Is he a DKBA officer?

Yes, he is the DKBA battalion deputy commander.

Do you know the name of their battalion, for example Kloh Htoo Baw⁸ or Kloh Htoo Lah⁹?

⁵ Burmese prefix meaning 'officer'.

⁶ A basket is a unit of volume used to measure paddy, milled rice and seeds. One basket is equivalent to 20.9 kg or 46.08 lb of paddy, and 32 kg or 70.4 lb of milled rice. A basket is twice the volume of a big tin.

⁷ A big tin is a unit of volume used to measure paddy, milled rice and seeds. One big tin is equivalent to 10.45 kg or 23.04 lb of paddy, and 16 kg or 35.2 lb of milled rice.

The DKBA who operate in here is Kloh Htoo Lah, it is called Bo Bee's group.

What did they use 100 baskets of husk rice for?

I think as the fighting took place they might have used it during the fighting, but we had to transport all of the rice for them.

Did you carry [the rice] for them to their army bases?

We had to carry it for them wherever we were asked to transport it.

Did they force you to transport [the rice]?

I do not know whether they forced us or not, when they asked us we had to do what they asked. They did not transport the rice by themselves.

Did they threaten you?

Yes, they did.

What did they say?

They said that "*if you do not transport the rice, you will see my guns*". It was a threat to us.

Is there any livestock left in your village?

Saw A--- and Saw B---: Yes, the goats, chickens, and buffalo were left behind in the village.

So all of your belongings were left in your village?

Yes, some of them stepped on the landmines.

Do you mean your livestock stepped on the landmines?

Yes, our buffalo and other livestock stepped on the landmines before we fled.

Who planted the landmines?

The DKBA.

⁸ Kloh Htoo Baw are DKBA forces in Hpa-an and Doolaya districts that refused to transform into Tatmadaw Border Guard battalions and which, in November 2010, began fighting Tatmadaw forces. They have been referred to as DKBA #907, Kloh Htoo Baw (Golden Drum), and Brigade #5. Each of these terms refers to different configurations of DKBA units commanded by the brigadier general commonly known as Na Kha Mway, whose real name is Saw Lah Pwe. In September 2011, it was reported that the remaining DKBA forces were to be reconfigured into two tactical commands, Kloh Htoo Wah and Kloh Htoo Lah, and that Na Kha Mway would be the senior commander of these forces. In early November 2011, Brigade #5 signed a ceasefire agreement with the Burma/Myanmar government in which demands for its forces to transform into Border Guard units were removed, and the brigade has moved to re-establish its headquarters at Wah Lay village, Kawkaik Township, Doolaya District. See "[DKBA to accelerate military tactics](#)," *The Irrawaddy Magazine*, September 8th 2011; and "[DKBA Brigade 5 Reaches Ceasefire with Naypyidaw](#)," *The Irrawaddy Magazine*, November 4th 2011.

⁹ Kloh Htoo Lah is under the command of Bo (Officer) Bee and is one of the three current DKBA Battalions, the others being Kloh Htoo Wah and Kloh Htoo Baw, that were formed in September 2011 and refused to transform into Tatmadaw Border Guard battalions. Kloh Htoo Baw (Golden Drum) referred to the DKBA before 2011, but was then reconfigured to have the two additional battalions as well. DKBA forces in Hpa-an and Doolaya districts that refused to transform into Tatmadaw Border Guard battalions began fighting Tatmadaw forces in November 2010 and have been variously referred to as DKBA #907, Kloh Htoo Baw, Golden Drum, and Brigade #5.

Do you know when they planted the landmines?

I do not know.

Where did they plant [the landmines]?

They planted them where the buffalos' path is.

Why did they plant the landmines?

Saw B---: I think they planted them to protect themselves from their enemies.

As the landmines were planted, were you confident to go to your workplace [farm]?

When we lived there we did not allow them to plant the landmines at the workplace [farm].

Did they pay attention to you?

Yes, when we were in our village they paid attention to us and they did not plant landmines in the areas where we would not allow them to plant them.

Did they notify you where they planted the landmines?

They did not notify us, but if we went with them to where they planted [the landmines] we knew the places where the landmines were planted.

Did they force the villagers to porter for them by carrying the landmines?

Yes, we carried the woven baskets with the landmines in. They [DKBA] did not carry it by themselves. We only knew the places where we went with them, but we did not even know every single landmine that they planted. They did not notify us where they planted the landmines. When we reached the place where they wanted to plant the landmines, they left us and went to other areas to plant the landmines. We did not go with them. They planted them by themselves and we also did not dare to get very close to them when they were planting the landmines.

Do you know the date when they asked you to carry the woven baskets, which [contained] the landmines?

I do not know because I did not carry it [the baskets], but the other villagers did carry it for them. Usually when they asked us to carry the woven baskets with the landmines in I never stayed in the village, as I went to do some other work outside of the village.

How many villagers had to serve as porters?

Many people had to serve as porters because we helped each other to transport it [the landmines' baskets]. For example, when the basket reached my village, it would have been carried by villagers from another village.

Would they have done anything if the villagers did not [porter] for them?

Saw A---: If we did not carry for them they would act aggressively to us and they might have done some bad things to us.

Why are you afraid of them?

We are scared that they will kill us. There is no other reason to be afraid of them. If we say we will not do [something] for you they can open the guns and shoot us to kill us.

What did you do during the fighting?

Saw B---: Before the fighting had taken place we worked on our own work [farming], but after a long-time fighting they forced us to do more work for them. We were not able to do our own work anymore because this situation made us into displaced people. We were not able to work. We often had to work for them; therefore we could not earn a proper living to raise ourselves. They even took rice from us, so how do you think about the way they acted? As we are ordinary villagers we worked on the hill farms to earn enough for ourselves, not for them.

Only the DKBA forced you to work?

Yes, at the present time only the DKBA, because no other armed groups operate there [the area called Mae Th'Waw].

Were there many villagers who became displaced people?

Yes, I think the villagers who live around here all fled. All villagers who live in this village tract fled from their villages.

How many villages are in this village tract?

I think there are around 10 to 20 villages in this village tract. The villagers who live in L---, M---- and N--- villages also fled.

Do you think the fighting is still ongoing at the present time?

We do not see it with our eyes but we have heard that the fighting is still ongoing.

How many places do they flee to, to take shelter?

I think to many places.

Do you know the name of the places?

The villagers who lived beside main road fled to Myaing Gyi Ngu [Town], and other villagers fled to C--- and D--- villages.¹⁰

Which main road are you talking about?

O--- main road. They fled to many different areas.

Were there any children separated from their parents because of the fighting?

Yes. Some children were separated from their parents, as their parents stayed behind in the villages and their children fled to other places.

Were there any children who fled to D--- who were separated from their parents?

Yes, there are many of them in here. During the fighting it was not easy to find each other.

¹⁰ For more detail of this displacement see, [“Recent fighting between newly-reformed DKBA and joint forces of BGF and Tatmadaw soldiers led more than six thousand Karen villagers to flee in Hpa-an District, September 2016.”](#) KHRG, December 2016.

Have they reunited with their parents?

Yes, some of them already reunited with their parents and some have still not been reunited with their parents.

Do you know how old they are?

Saw A---: Yesterday, Naw N---'s aunt came looking for Naw N--- and her other sibling. She is 11 years old and her other sibling is ten years old. Her parents stayed behind in her village.

Where does she live?

She lives in E--- village.

Are the parents of them now living in their village?

Yes. They are my sibling's children.

Are they confident [about their security] to live there?

Saw B---: I do not know, I think they have no other way to run and they do not know any other place to flee. One of the other villager's wife fled to Myaing Gyi Ngu [Town] and he went back to live in his village.

How did he go back?

He went back by himself and currently we do not see him around in the village.

Did he disappear?

We do not know whether he has disappeared or not

Do you think something went wrong with him?

He has heart disease.

Do you think he is still alive?

I think he might still be alive but I am not sure as I have not seen him with my eyes.

Why did he go back after he arrived in D--- village?

He did not like living here and [he also] was not confident to stay. He was worried that people would come and launch guns here because many people stay in the same place.

How many villagers went back to their villages?

Only him.

Do you get enough household items from the organisations?

Yes, we received basic necessities.

What did they distribute?

They distributed rice, hoes, tarpaulin [tarp], black plastic buckets, plates, pots, spoons, cooking oil, noodle mama, mats, longyi [sarong], stoves, machetes, medicines, clothes and dry fish.



These pictures were taken on October 10th 2016 in D--- village, Meh Proo village tract, Hlaingbwe Township, Hpa-an District. The pictures show the donation, which was provided by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency and the Partner organisation. They donated mats, clothes, longyi and stoves to the newly displaced people. [Photo: KHRG]

What do you do when the support is not enough for you?

If there is not enough for us to use we talk to the village heads.

What do community members here think about the IDPs?

The community members here welcome us, as they know that we do not dare to live in our village.

What do you think about IDPs?

We have been fleeing [displaced] because of fighting since our great grandparents' generation; therefore, we want to get independence. We built nice houses and raised many livestock, but we had to leave them in the villages when we escaped from the fighting. We have to leave our hill farms and plain farms. It is a poor situation that we are facing.

Did you face any challenges during the fighting?

We were mainly afraid of the DKBA, and as of now we stay a bit far from them and we feel safer.

Which groups did they oppose?

I do not know. I think the Tatmadaw, the BGF, and the DKBA fought each other but I do not know who primarily opened fire.

Do you know any of the battalion commanders' names?

You mean commanders from the BGF?

Yes, commanders from the BGF.

I do not know any of the commanders' names.

What about commanders from the DKBA?

I know their commanders are Bo Bee and Bo Kyaw Thet.

Which armed groups operate in this area?

Bo Bee's group controls this area.

Who maintains the security of the villagers who fled to stay in D--- village?

Bo Q--- maintains the security of the villagers here.

Do you know his rank?

We do not know as we never asked him. I think he is from headquarters.

Is he from the Burma/Myanmar government or the KNU?

He is from the KNU headquarters.

What is their purpose of fighting?

I think they are not happy with each other and that led them to fight. They want to control this area and they might think that if they control this area they might get some benefit.

Who was not happy?

The BGF and the DKBA were not happy with each other, because they disagreed and misunderstood each other.

Have any landmines been planted around your village?

I do not know as we currently do not live in our village. Before we fled many landmines were planted around our villages.

What kind of problems did you face when you used to live under the control of the DKBA?

We had to serve as porters [in the past]. If they did not have enough soldiers we had to serve as soldiers to increase their numbers. One household had to give one or two family members as porters.

Why did you have to serve, was it to increase the numbers of the DKBA soldiers?

It was not really like increasing the numbers of soldiers [when we were serving]. We had to serve as cooks and collect water for them.

Did you have to serve every day?

Yes, we had to serve every day but we rotated with other villagers.

How many people had to serve per day?

It depends on how big your family was. If you have more family members, then two people would have to serve and if you have small family then one person would have to serve.

When did they begin forcing villagers?

They began it [forcing the villagers] when they entered the area [Mae Th'Waw area] to operate.

How many years did they operate?

They operated for around three years, since they entered the area.

Do you still have to serve as porters in the present day?

Yes [no], we had to serve [in the past]. We served as cooks and collected water for them, but they still complained at us and acted aggressively. We faced many kinds of difficulties as villagers. They also told us that we were lazy. They were very mean to us.

Have they ever threatened the villagers?

Yes, but not all the time. They used to tell me that, *"I would kill you and give 500,000 kyat [\$370.17]¹¹ to your wife [as compensation]"*.

Where did you have to serve them?

In their army bases.

Do you know the place name of the army base?

Yes. We call the place Yaw K'Noh place.

Did every villager have to go to serve as a porter in Yaw K'Noh place?

Yes. We had to cook and collect water in Yaw K'Noh, as well as sleep there and serve food to them.

So, since they have entered the area, did you have to serve every single day until the fighting happened?

Yes, we served every single day without end.

What did the villagers do when they stay in their camp?

Before the fighting took place we had to cook, such as collect water and vegetables for them.

What kind of things did they force you to do during the fighting?

During the fighting they asked us to serve as porters.

Did they force you to serve?

No, they did not force us but we could not escape from them. We had to transport rice for them, over ten big baskets of rice. Therefore, we had to gather many villagers to transport the rice they required.

¹¹ All conversion estimates for the kyat in this report are based on the 16th February 2017 official market rate of 1350.88 kyat to US \$1.

Where did you transport [the rice] for them?

Where we had to transport it depended on where the places that they asked us to go to were. Sometime we had to go to the jungle to transport it.

Where did they get the rice?

They got it from the villagers.

Where did they store the rice?

After they forced us to do many things for them and transport a lot of rice, we just fled to escape from them, as we did not want to serve as porters any longer. When we first transported the rice for them we took some rice to Yaw K'Noh Camp, and other army camps. Some rice still remained in the villages. They also asked R--- villagers to transport the rice.

What do they use the rice for?

They used it for themselves. If they were not able to go back to their main base during the fighting, they could use the rice anywhere they stayed.

Have they ever informed villagers before they entered the villages?

No, they never informed us in advance, but if the highest leaders, like Bo Bee, [came to the village] they informed us in advance. The soldiers never notified us in advance.

Have you faced any problems regarding health, education, and livelihood after you moved into the IDP [camp]?

Regarding health and education, we discussed with the village heads and everything is going well. In terms of healthcare, one of the children had to go to hospital in Mae Tauk village because of diarrhoea.

Are the displaced children able to study?

Yes, they are able to study here.

Have the BGF and the DKBA ever forcibly recruited soldiers?

We do not know about the BGF, but the DKBA asked some villagers to serve as home guards.

When did they [forcibly] begin it [the recruitment]?

They started it around two years ago.

How many people in a household had to serve?

It depended on the numbers in the family. If you had a big family then they asked two people to serve and if [you had a] small family then one person had to serve as a home guard.

How many years did they [villagers] have to serve?

They did not limit the years, but after we were recruited as a home guard they never dismissed us.

How many villagers in your village had to serve as a home guard?

Two villagers in my village had to serve.

Did they force them or did the villagers want to serve?

They forced them to serve in my village.

What are the names of the villagers who were forced to serve?

Saw S--- and Saw T--- were forced to serve.

Did they ask them to help in the recent fighting?

Yes, they were asked to help but they escaped before the fighting happened.

Where did they go?

They escaped together with us [villagers] to here. They were not interested in fighting; therefore, they ran with us.

Is there anything more that you need regarding support?

We need thermoses, and also thatched shingles because tarpaulin [tarp] is very hot for the children. If the weather gets too hot the children cry, so we need *Ta La Aw* thatched shingles.

Are any villagers forced to return?

No.

What do you think about the National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA)¹²?

We are very excited to hear about the NCA, as we want the leaders to play peaceful politics, using pens instead of using guns. When guns are used in politics it causes the villagers to worry.

What do you need for your future?

We need full democracy and civilians' rights.

Who built the shelter for you here?

We cut down the bamboos and built the shelters by ourselves.

¹² On October 15th 2015, after a negotiation process marred with controversy over the notable non-inclusion of several ethnic armed groups and on-going conflicts in ethnic regions, a Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) was signed between the Burma/Myanmar government and eight of the fifteen ethnic armed groups originally invited to the negotiation table, including the KNU, see "[Myanmar signs ceasefire with eight armed groups](#)," Reuters, October 15th 2015. Despite the signing of the NCA prompting a positive response from the international community, see "[Myanmar: UN chief welcomes 'milestone' signing of ceasefire agreement](#)," *UN News Centre*, October 15th 2015, KNU Chairman General Saw Mutu Say Poe's decision to sign has been met with strong opposition from other members of the Karen armed resistance and civil society groups alike, who believe the decision to be undemocratic and the NCA itself to be a superficial agreement that risks undermining a genuine peace process, see "[Without Real Political Roadmap, Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement Leads Nowhere...](#)," *Karen News*, September 1st 2015. The signing of the NCA followed the January 12th 2012 preliminary ceasefire agreement between the KNU and Burma/Myanmar government in Hpa-an. For KHRG's analysis of changes in human rights conditions since the preliminary ceasefire, see [Truce or Transition? Trends in human rights abuse and local response since the 2012 ceasefire](#), KHRG, May 2014.

When did you build the shelters?

We built them on September 28th 2016.



These pictures were taken on October 7th 2016 in D--- village, Hlaingbwe Township, Hpa-an District. The pictures show the villagers from six villages, who fled to D--- village for their safety. When the pictures were taken they had been staying there for two weeks and they had built their own houses for temporary shelter. There were 504 people and 90 households when the photos were taken. They left behind their livestock and belongings, as they could not bring anything with them when they were fleeing. Some of their livestock, such as buffalo, stepped on the landmines which were planted by the DKBA group led by Bo Bee. *[Photo: KHRG]*

Do you want to return to your own village?

Yes, we really want to return because we have our plantations and other livestock.

Thank you very much for the information you shared.

Yes, thank you.

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

- “Recent fighting between newly-reformed DKBA and joint forces of BGF and Tatmadaw soldiers led more than six thousand Karen villagers to flee in Hpa-an District, September 2016,” (December 2016)
- “Hpa-an Interview: Saw A---, August 2015,” (October 2016)
- “Hpa-an Field Report: Continued difficulties under ceasefire, January to December 2015,” (September 2016)
- “Hidden Strengths, Hidden Struggles: Women’s testimonies from southeast Myanmar” (August 2016)
- “Hpa-an Interview: Saw H---, February 2016” (August 2016)

Hpa-an District

