



Field Report

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Militarization, Development and Displacement: Conditions for villagers in southern Tenasserim Division

Villagers in Te Naw Th’Ri Township, Tenasserim Division face human rights abuses and threats to their livelihoods, attendant to increasing militarization of the area following widespread forced relocation campaigns in the late 1990s. Efforts to support and strengthen Tatmadaw presence throughout Te Naw Th’Ri have resulted in practices that facilitate control over the civilian population and extract material and labour resources while at the same time preventing non-state armed groups from operating or extracting resources of their own. Villagers who seek to evade military control and associated human rights abuses, meanwhile, report Tatmadaw attacks on civilians and civilian livelihoods in upland hiding areas. This report draws primarily on information received between September 2009 and November 2010 from Te Naw Th’Ri Township, Tenasserim Division.

Tenasserim Division is Burma's southernmost region, bordered by the Andaman Sea to the west and Thailand to the east. No more than 60 miles (97 km) across, the 400 mile (644 km) long Division constitutes a narrow peninsula, shared with Thailand and pointing southwards towards Malaysia. Human rights conditions in northern Tenasserim have recently received media attention due to preparations for the development of a large deep-sea port project in Tavoy.¹ This area has also received extensive international attention for human rights abuses related to gas extraction projects.² In addition to these issues, KHRG has also documented abuses in Tenasserim including the use of forced labour in Ler Mu Lah Township in the central-eastern area of Tenasserim Division³ and forced relocation campaigns in the central-western area around Palauk, Palaw, Mergui and Tenasserim towns.⁴

Forced relocation of civilian settlements was a widely-used Tatmadaw practice in Tenasserim Division during the mid-1990s, particularly concurrent with offensives against Karen National

¹ The Burmese government's award of a concession to the Italian-Thai Development Public Company Ltd. (ITD) on November 2nd 2010 for infrastructural development at the site of the proposed deep-sea port in Tavoy and the creation of a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) on January 28th 2011 has led to concerns specifically over land confiscation and the exploitative treatment of Burmese labourers involved in the project. See: "Tavoy deep-sea port workers strike," *The Irrawaddy*, February 2011; "Land Survey Department research near Tavoy spark fears of impending land confiscation," *HURFOM*, January 2011.

² See "Conditions in the gas pipeline area," KHRG, August 1995; "Ye-Tavoy area update," KHRG, January 1996; "Effects of the gas pipeline project," KHRG, May 1996; "Relocations in the gas pipeline area," KHRG, April 1997. Abuses in Kaw Te Hgah Township, related to the internationally-owned Yadana and Yetagun gas projects and the government-owned Kanbaw to Myaing Kalay pipeline, have also received extensive international coverage. Most recently, see *Broken Ethics: The Norwegian Government's Investments in Oil and Gas Companies Operating in Burma (Myanmar)*, ERI, December 2010.

³ *A strategy of subjugation: The situation in Ler Mu Lah Township, Tenasserim Division*, KHRG, December 2001

⁴ "Tenasserim Division: Forced Relocation and Forced Labour," KHRG, February 1997; "Freefire zones in southern Tenasserim," KHRG, August 1997.

Liberation Army (KNLA) positions in Tenasserim Division and Dooplaya District beginning in February 1997.⁵ The operations weakened the KNLA 4th Brigade substantially, which no longer holds extensive territory but remains active as a 'guerrilla' force.⁶ The operations also brought a large population of civilians into areas where they could be easily monitored and controlled.⁷ According to the most recent estimates by the Thai-Burma Border Consortium (TBBC), relocation sites in the area are currently home to 62,100.⁸ This figure represents almost half of the total estimated population of 125,000 civilians in relocation sites in eastern Burma⁹ and is indicative of the singularly extensive nature of the forced relocation campaigns in Tenasserim Division.

"At that time [in 1997], the Burmese military killed about 200 people in the villages which were located along the beach [in the Kyunsu area of Te Naw Th'ri Township]. Villagers in the lower sea [coastal areas] had to leave their villages and go to live in other places."

-Villager, Tenasserim Township (2009)

This report is primarily focused on the extended territory to the south and east of Tenasserim Town, in the lower centre of the division, which is referred in Karen as Te Naw Th'ri Township. This includes all or parts of the government-delineated Kyunsu, Tanintharyi, Kawthoung and Bokpyin townships, as well as the Lenya and Tanintharyi national parks. Te Naw Th'ri Township can also be sub-divided into four areas referred to as Gkay, Te Keh, Pewa and Ma No Roh. Villagers living in government-controlled¹⁰ and mixed-administration¹¹ areas of Gkay, Te Keh, Pewa and Ma No Roh interviewed for this report described abuses including: harassment and arbitrary arrest of civilians as alleged supporters of the Karen National Union (KNU) or KNLA; the imposition of movement restrictions; the forced registration of civilians for

⁵ KHRG documented an extensive campaign of forced relocation and forced labour carried out by increased numbers of Tatmadaw troops in an area from Palauk in the north to Tenasserim town in the south from September 1996. See "Tenasserim Division: Forced Relocation and Forced Labour," KHRG, February 1997; "Refugees from the SLORC occupation", KHRG, May 1997; "Free-fire zones in Southern Tenasserim", KHRG, August 1997; "Field reports: Mergui-Tavoy District," KHRG, January 1995. For information on the military offensive concurrent with these relocation campaigns, see Ashley South, *Ethnic politics in Burma: States of conflict*, 2009, p. 61; *Forgotten victims of a hidden war: Internally displaced Karen in Burma*, Burma Ethnic Research Group and Friedrich Naumann Foundation (BERG), April 1998, p. 31.

⁶ The KNLA formally adopted the use of guerrilla tactics in 1998 at a military conference in Mae Hta Raw Tha, Dooplaya District. See, South, 2009, p.56.

⁷ Relocation sites in Te Naw Th'ri Township generally correspond to the region's limited existing transport infrastructure, for example, along the north-south Tavoy-Mergui vehicle road or proximate to villages in the flat agricultural lands flanking the southern end of the Tenasserim River. In the Ma No Roh area, the six main relocation sites established more than ten years ago, namely Mu Kwa, Lah Poo Nga, Klawk Thoo Gaw, Ma No Roh, Htee Nyat Aue and Cheh Chaw, all lie along the vehicle road, navigable only during the dry-season, that runs between Tenasserim Town and Bu Bwyit.

⁸ *Protracted Displacement and Chronic Poverty in Eastern Burma*, TBBC, November 2010, p.60.

⁹ This figure is for the government-delineated Shan, Karenni/ Kayah, Karen/ Kayin and Mon States, as well as Pegu/ Bago and Tenasserim Divisions. See *Protracted Displacement and Chronic Poverty in Eastern Burma*, TBBC, November 2010, p.60

¹⁰ The consolidation of government control in Te Naw Th'ri has been enabled by the introduction, in July 2009, of Tenasserim Divisional Police officers in all village tracts and the establishment, in 1997, of a new regional Coastal Command headquartered at Mergui, which included a Military Operations Command (MOC), currently MOC #13, based at Bokpyin. A Military Operations Command (MOC) typically consists of ten battalions and most MOCs have three Tactical Operations Commands (TOCs), made up of three battalions each. As of 2010, there were 60 Tatmadaw battalions stationed in Tenasserim Division, 13 of which were active in Bokpyin Township. See *Protracted Displacement and Chronic Poverty in Eastern Burma*, Thailand Burma Border Consortium (TBBC), November 2010, p.56.

¹¹ 'Mixed-control' or 'mixed-administration' are terms used to describe areas in which control by Tatmadaw or Tatmadaw-allied armed forces is nominal, opposition armed forces continue to exert some control, and conflict occurs. See: *Submission for the UN Universal Periodic Review: Human rights concerns in KHRG research areas*, KHRG, July 2010.

identification purposes; the forced attendance of Tatmadaw military training and the creation of Tatmadaw-organised militias; uncompensated forced labour, including road-maintenance, the fabrication and delivery of building materials, guide duty and forced portering; frequent and arbitrary demands for 'taxes' or other cash payments; and land confiscation to facilitate implementation of business ventures or development projects.

"We have to avoid relocation sites. After people relocate you, you are not so different from when people breed chickens. They can take you out, and kill you and eat you when they want. They can oppress you. You have to give them when they demand things that they need."

Pah T--- (male, 59), Ma--- village, Te Naw Th'Ri Township (2010)

Despite forced relocation campaigns and abuses like those listed above, and detailed below, which often serve to facilitate control of the civilian population, civilians in at least some areas of Te Naw Th'Ri Township continue to hide in difficult-to-access upland areas where they can evade abuse. In November 2010, TBBC estimated a population of 1,240 at hiding sites in the government-delineated Tanintharyi Township, as well as 520 people at hiding sites in Bokpyin. In order to document living conditions for displaced civilians hiding in Tenasserim, KHRG conducted research in seven distinct hiding sites in three areas of Te Naw Th'Ri Township: Te Keh, Pawa and Ma No Roh, at which a total population of 636 people were staying as of June 2010. Also included in this research were three additional villages, L--- and S--- villages in Pawa and K--- village in Te Keh. These three villages, though known to the Tatmadaw, are sufficiently beyond immediate Tatmadaw control that they face abuses similar to those described by villagers in hiding. The second section of this report details information from civilians in these ten locations, who reported abuses including the burning of houses and food stores and deliberate firing on civilians by Tatmadaw patrols. Civilians in these areas also registered serious concerns relating to food security and disruption of education as a result of these abuses and prolonged or repeated displacement.



The photo on the left, taken on March 30th 2010, shows villagers in the Ma No Roh area of Te Naw Th'Ri Township removing edible beans from dried seedpods of a *parkia speciosa*, a tree indigenous to many parts of southeast Asia, while other family members are cutting wood in the nearby forest. The families paid for travel permission documents in order to leave the Tatmadaw relocation site in which they live. The photo on the right, taken on March 19th 2010, shows a wild yellow orchid growing in the jungle in Te Naw Th'Ri Township. Some villagers in the area support their livelihoods by gathering and selling wild orchids; the flowers, which grow on jungle trees, are removed and replanted to decorate homes in eastern Burma. Villagers living under Tatmadaw control in Te Naw Th'Ri Township have said that Tatmadaw abuses that extract labour, and limited food and financial resources from civilians place a heavy strain on local livelihoods activities. [Photos: KHRG]

"One thing I feel is happiness and another thing I feel is hardship. I can feel a little freedom here, but we have problems with food, and more fear.... If possible, we don't want to move. We're further and further away from our birth place. We can't do it anymore... We want to go back to our village but we don't dare to go back, because the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] can enter the village easily... We have the things that we need. We have our land and plantations, but we don't dare to go back and stay."

- Pah T--- (male, 59), Ma--- village, Te Naw Th'Ri Township (2010)

Conditions for villagers in areas of consolidated Tatmadaw control

This section details abuses against civilians living in previously established relocation sites or in mixed-administration areas, which the Tatmadaw can consistently access but where the KNLA 4th Brigade continues to conduct infrequent operations or where the Tatmadaw believes KNLA operations might occur. Abuses detailed below appear to aid Tatmadaw efforts to consolidate control over civilian populations in relocation sites and mixed-administration areas, limiting the KNLA's access to a potential support base. Importantly, the abuses detailed below also facilitate extraction of resources from the population and countryside, by the Tatmadaw, government authorities, and businesses operating in cooperation with them. Abuses of this latter type are also included in the section below.



These photos, both taken on March 30th 2010, show villagers who live in Tatmadaw relocation sites in the Ma Noh Roh area of Te Naw Th'Ri Township, who have traveled outside of their relocation sites to engage in livelihoods activities. Other residents of relocation sites in Ma Noh Roh who travel outside relocation sites to pursue livelihoods activities told KHRG that they are required to buy permission documents from Tatmadaw officials if they need to travel in the area for any purpose. In the photo on the left, a couple cooks lunch while taking a break from cutting wood in the nearby forest. In the photo on the right, villagers cut fish caught in the local river.. [Photos: KHRG]

Harassment and arbitrary arrest

Suspicion of civilians leading to harassment or arbitrary arrest by Tatmadaw forces has been previously documented to attend the escalation of hostilities between the Tatmadaw and non-state armed groups in mixed-administration areas in eastern Burma,¹² as well as to accompany tensions between the Tatmadaw and various racial and religious minorities.¹³

¹² For example, the seizure of Myawaddy Town in Dooplaya district on November 7th 2010 by a breakaway faction of the DKBA prompted fears amongst civilians in the Waw Lay and Myawaddy areas that they would be suspected of supporting DKBA soldiers and subsequently arrested. See "Protection concerns expressed by civilians amidst conflict in Dooplaya and Pa'an districts," KHRG, November 2010.

¹³ For further examples of racial and religious persecution in Burma, see *Easy Targets: The persecution of Muslims in Burma*, KHRG, May 2002; *Progress Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar*, A/HRC/13/48, 10 March 2010 pp. 16 – 18; *Crimes against Humanity in Western Burma*:

"They do abuse, like punching and beating, but they haven't killed villagers. One time, they SPDC Army [Tatmadaw soldiers] gathered all villagers in the village together at the school. They picked out anyone who they needed [from the group]. After that they beat, punched, kicked, and beat them with guns. The Burmese [Tatmadaw] soldiers stood [one] up and kicked him in the left side. I don't know why they did this. The Burmese soldiers tied up four of them [villagers] together tightly. They punched one and all four of them fell down. They gathered us at 3:00 pm and let us go at 8:00 pm. No one could stay at home. Many people were crying... I don't remember the date and time when the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw soldiers] came to my village. They come whenever they heard that revolutionaries [KNLA soldiers] had come down [to the village]. They also came up and told us 'If it's just [KNLA] officer Hsa Wah, he can come [to the village], we don't care about that.' But if Muslim soldiers were included, then they care¹⁴."

-Saw G--- (male, 45), Ma--- village, Te Naw Th'Ri Township (2010)

On October 5th 2010, the village heads of H--- and Th--- villages in the Gkay area were arrested by Tatmadaw soldiers from LIB #591, following suspicion that they were in contact with the KNLA. Elsewhere in Te Naw Th'Ri Township, three Muslim residents of Na--- village were arrested on October 21st 2010 by soldiers from Tatmadaw LIB #561,¹⁵ under the command of Than Tee, as they were going to the mosque to pray. According to a KHRG researcher, local militia leaders cited security concerns regarding the upcoming elections when asked why the three had been arrested; however local sources told KHRG that the three men had been arrested in reprisal for a previous refusal to cooperate with LIB #561.

"They can take action if these three people are guilty but it is not suitable to go and arrest them in a mosque."

-Na--- villager, Tenasserim Division (2010)

Movement restrictions

The imposition of movement restrictions on certain villages by Tatmadaw officials has often been carried out ostensibly to cut off support for armed opposition groups, and for security while Tatmadaw units are active in a given area. In the case of incidents documented in Te Naw Th'Ri Township, this also appears to be the case: according to a KHRG researcher, on April 18th 2010, the head of C--- village in the Ma No Roh area was accused of contacting the KNLA and

The Situation of the Rohingyas, Irish Centre for Human Rights, 2010; and: *The Repression of Ethnic Minority Activists in Myanmar*, Amnesty International, February 2010.

¹⁴ Saw G--- did not elaborate on which group he was referring to when he described 'Muslim soldiers.' At least two armed Muslim groups have operated in Tenasserim Division, including the Kawthoolei Muslim Liberation Force, which later reformed as the All Burma Muslim Union (ABMU) in 1987. Both incarnations of the group operated in close cooperation with the KNLA, though this activity reduced after the late 1990s. See, Andrew Selth, "Burma's Muslims and the War on Terror," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 27:107-126, 2004. While KHRG could not confirm whether ABMU is still conducting armed operations in Tenasserim, the group's name appeared on signed statements as recently as March 2010. See, "Global Campaign on Burma's 2010 Military Elections: Endorsing Organizations as of 19 March, 2010," Forum for Democracy in Burma, March 2010. In March 2011, a source in KNLA 4th Brigade also reported that one 'Muslim unit' continued to operate under its 11th Battalion, commanded by H---. Sources from an ethnic Mon organisation operating in northern Tenasserim, meanwhile, reported that a third armed Muslim group, made up of approximately 50 soldiers and known locally as the "Mawlawi Tint Lwin" group, after the name of its leader, Mawlawi Tint Lwin, was active during 2003-2004 but has since become quiet.

¹⁵ Although the source for this information did not specify the exact location of N--- village, previous KHRG and TBBC reports have listed LIB #561 as based at Tone Daw in Te Naw Th'Ri Township. It is therefore likely that N-- is also in Te Naw Th'Ri Township, however, the frequency of troop rotations means that this cannot be conclusively determined. See "Living conditions for displaced villagers and ongoing abuses in Tenasserim Division," KHRG, October 2009; *Protracted displacement and chronic poverty in eastern Burma/Myanmar*, TBBC, 2010.

subsequently forced to swear an oath of loyalty to the Tatmadaw.¹⁶ A local source reported that, shortly thereafter, on April 26th 2010, LIB #561 was preventing C--- villagers from leaving the village and had planted landmines around the village, though detailed information about the location of landmines was not obtained by KHRG.

A KHRG field researcher also reported that Tatmadaw troops clamped down on villagers' movements and augmented troop strength in Te Naw Th'Ri Township during Burma's November 2010 elections. On November 7th 2010, villagers in Te Naw Th'Ri Township reported that all travel between villages in the area was banned, and that Tatmadaw forces maintained positions at all 30 polling stations in government-controlled areas, stationing additional troops in every village in which there was a polling station. KHRG's researcher also reported that security concerns regarding polling stations resulted in the forced closure of all schools, including nursery and high schools. Similar closures in other parts of the country were also evident in Te Naw Th'Ri, as the closure of the Karen Baptist University in Yangon forced some students hailing from Te Naw Th'Ri Township to return to their homes. Disruptions to religious worship were also reported by several community members across Te Naw Th'Ri Township, who told KHRG that they were banned from attending church ahead of the elections.



This photo, taken on March 30th 2010, shows residents of a Tatmadaw relocation site in the Ma Noh Roh area of Te Naw Th'Ri Township. The men were seeking work, but said that they each had needed to buy a Tatmadaw travel permission document costing 2,000 kyat (US \$2.27) to be able to travel outside the relocation site. [Photo: KHRG]

Registration

The expansion of Tatmadaw control in Te Naw Th'Ri Township has been facilitated by the mandatory registration of civilians for identification cards. On October 17th 2009, according to a KHRG researcher, Tatmadaw officials began requiring civilians over the age of 12 to register for identification cards in Tenasserim Township. The reason given was that registration would facilitate voting procedures in the 2010 elections; local villagers, however, have reported that they believe identification cards are a mechanism to consolidate control over civilians living in Tatmadaw-controlled areas.

"This [registration] is a way to sanction [punish] the village head, villagers and parents. If some issue is happening, it will be easy for them to take action against the village head and parents."

-Village leader, Tenasserim Township (2009)

¹⁶ KHRG's researcher reported that the village head was forced to 'drink bullet water;' likely referring to a practice termed *aw gklow klee teet* in Karen, which literally translates as 'drink gun bullet water.' *Aw gklow klee teet* entails an oath-taker being forced to drink water in which lead bullets have been placed.

Forced military training and conscription

Villagers in Te Naw Th'Ri Township have also reported incidents of forced participation in Tatmadaw military training and conscription of villagers into local militias.¹⁷ Forced conscription and military training are forms of forced labour, and deprive families and communities of individuals who would otherwise participate in livelihoods activities. Demands for military service are also frequently backed by implicit or explicit threats of violence for non-compliance.

On November 29th 2009, a total of 60 villagers from 11 villages in the Te Keh area were forced to attend unpaid military training with Tatmadaw officers and heads of police in Te Keh village for 30 days. A KHRG researcher reported that the purpose of this training was for villagers to “defend their own places”.¹⁸ Villagers were selected to attend military training from the following 11 villages: W---, K---, L---, A---, T---, M---, U---, V---, W---, P--- and O---. Elsewhere in the Ma No Roh area, following clashes between the KNLA and the Tatmadaw in the C-- area on January 23rd 2010, Tatmadaw soldiers from LIB #559 entered C--- village and threatened the residents that, if they could not obtain and hand over one gun from KNLA forces, the soldiers would kill five C--- villagers. When the villagers responded that they didn't have any guns, the Tatmadaw forced C--- villagers to agree to resist the KNLA and to form a local militia group of 15 people for that purpose.

“Burmese [Tatmadaw] soldiers find a way to make conflict between Karen people. The villagers are afraid and now they [the Tatmadaw] do this again and again, and always coerce villagers. If the militia is formed, there'll be more tax that the villagers have to pay, more food that they have to give [to the Tatmadaw], and the SPDC [Tatmadaw] soldiers will always be able to enter and leave the village.”

-Saw P---, N--- village, Ma No Roh area (2010)

Forced labour supporting infrastructure for military operations

Villagers in Te Naw Th'Ri Township have reported to KHRG frequent demands from locally-deployed Tatmadaw troops for various forms of forced labour that inhibit villagers' ability to pursue their own livelihoods effectively. The frequency of Tatmadaw troop rotations, in some cases occurring as often as every three months, exacerbates the burden placed on rural communities, as new troops regularly arrive and issue new demands for labour.

Forced labour abuses often support infrastructure necessary to Tatmadaw operations. For example, in the Gkay area during April 8th 2010, a KHRG researcher reported that Tatmadaw soldiers from LIB #597, led by Battalion Commander Za Lay, ordered villagers to clear brush from both sides of the road between M--- and N--- villages. KHRG has documented frequent instances of villagers being forced to clear brush near roads across eastern Burma in areas where the Tatmadaw fears ambush by non-state armed groups.¹⁹

¹⁷ The Tatmadaw practice of forcibly recruiting civilians from communities under nominal and consolidated Tatmadaw control in eastern Burma for service in Tatmadaw battalions and local militia groups could potentially serve as a model for the implementation of a new military conscription measures for Burmese citizens over the age of 18. See: “Burma introduces military draft,” *Democratic Voice of Burma*, January 2011.

¹⁸ The use of this phrase suggests that villagers from W---, K---, L---, A---, T---, M---, U---, V---, W---, P--- and O--- in Te Keh were being forced to create local militias to resist non-state armed groups, including the KNLA. However, while this report documents a separate incident, in C--- village in the Ma No Roh area, in which villagers were threatened with violence if they did not create a local militia group, KHRG has yet to confirm whether this was the case with villagers from W---, K---, L---, A---, T---, M---, U---, V---, W---, P--- and O--- villages who attended military training in Te Keh village.

¹⁹ “Submission for the UN Universal Periodic Review: Human rights concerns in KHRG research areas,” KHRG, July 2010.

According to a KHRG researcher, on October 29th 2009, Company #1 of LIB #554, led by Captain Win Kyaw, demanded five thatch shingles from each household in Pewa village tract. Local sources told KHRG that LIB #554, headquartered at Aung Kain military base on the Thailand-Burma border, has every year for the last ten years ordered villagers to produce and deliver thatch whenever roofs on the buildings at their camps require repair. The villagers that spoke with KHRG explained that such demands are almost always prefaced by the assertion that compliance is necessary to promote development. KHRG's researcher explained, however, that the frequency of such demands, and the limited improvements in services or infrastructural benefit for local communities, has led some villagers in Pewa to doubt Tatmadaw claims that labour demands support development.

“On October 30th 2009, all these villages in Pewa had to go and send thatch to the battalion office: Q---, B---, H---, I---, D--- and X---. Nowadays, the Tatmadaw soldiers in Te Naw Th’Ri Township demand things without stopping. Anytime when they ask for help from the villagers, they say all the things they’re doing are for development.”

- Saw W---, Pewa village tract, Te Naw Th’Ri Township (2009)

Forced labour during military operations

In Te Naw Th’Ri Township, Tatmadaw forces have used villagers to support Tatmadaw forces during military operations, both in combat and during non-combat activities. In addition to being illegitimate involuntary labour, these abuses place civilians in danger of harm from ongoing conflict between the Tatmadaw and non-state armed groups.²⁰

According to a KHRG researcher, a Yuzana Company dam project in an area of unconsolidated Tatmadaw control, at Blaw Seh on the Te Keh River, was reportedly recommenced on August 14th 2010, after being discontinued in 2004.²¹ Shortly thereafter, the headman of E--- village was forced to guide and accompany a



This photo, taken on March 29th 2010, shows a husband and wife who live in a Tatmadaw relocation site in the Ma Noh Roh area of Te Naw Th’Ri Township. They told KHRG that the previous week members of a local militia had come to their workplace and taken some of their personal belongings. [Photo: KHRG]

²⁰ In addition to accidental harm resulting from proximity to soldiers in conflict areas, KHRG has documented the deliberate use of civilians to protect Tatmadaw soldiers, including forcing civilians to clear landmines, walk in front of patrols and wear Tatmadaw uniforms when walking with patrols. See Displacement Monitoring Update No. 63 “Villager forced to wear Tatmadaw uniform while portering Tatmadaw supplies”, KHRG, March 2011; No.53 “Villagers used as human shields by Tatmadaw troops”, KHRG, February 2011; and No. 52 “Three former convict porters confirm serious human rights abuses in the current conflict in Dooplaya District”, KHRG, January 2011.

²¹ For more information on foreign investment in, and abuses attendant to, Burma’s nationwide dam-building initiatives, see “Dam projects inked as cronies prosper,” *Democratic voice of Burma*, December 2010; “Myanmar, China, Thailand agree to study for \$10 billion hydropower project,” *Bloomberg*, November 2010; “Amid Burma (Myanmar) election, China-built dam highlights plight of ethnic minorities,” *Christian Science Monitor*, November 2010.

group of 50 Tatmadaw soldiers from LIBs #558 and #581, based at Aung Kain in the Te Keh area and under the control of 2nd Lieutenant Than Htun. The soldiers were serving as a security force for three engineers from the Yuzana Company;²² the purpose of the trip was to visit and inspect a potential site for the proposed dam. During the journey, a Tatmadaw soldier was severely injured when he stepped on a previously-laid landmine, highlighting the grave danger to which the headman of E--- had been exposed during his forced service as a guide accompanying the Tatmadaw units.

KHRG's field researcher in the area also reported that, following the completion of their preliminary analysis of the site, the Yuzana engineers took one viss (1.6 kg. / 3.6 lb.) of earth away for further analysis. Before the group departed the site, the soldiers from LIBs #558 and #581 took inventory of the E--- village population and specifically recorded which villagers possessed motorboats and motorbikes. The villagers said they were told this information was being gathered in order to prepare for the November 2010 elections. However, inventory of village populations has been previously used by Tatmadaw personnel to fix labour demands according to the village's population of able workers,²³ while surveys of land and villagers' possessions has preceded such items' confiscation or use in support of Tatmadaw militarization and development initiatives.²⁴ Elsewhere in eastern Burma, human rights abuses, including the loss of land due to flooding, land confiscation and forced labour have been documented to attend dam development projects and the subsequent increased militarization of the dam development sites.²⁵

"If this dam project succeeds, it will destroy many civilians' plantations, and people will be faced with many kinds of problems."

- KHRG field researcher, Te Naw Th'ri Township (2010)

"It has been over ten years since Ma No Roh [village tract] was forced to relocate by the Burmese military [Tatmadaw]. We have to carry [porter] and pay tax to the Burmese military government without stopping. Now, we have to go and carry things and rations for the Burmese military but they don't say where we have to go."

- Villager, Ma No Roh village tract, Te Naw Th'ri Township (2009)

Villagers in Te Naw Th'ri Township also reported being forced to porter Tatmadaw supplies and equipment in areas not accessible by vehicle.²⁶

According to reports from KHRG field researchers, beginning on October 5th 2009 soldiers from Tatmadaw LIB #559, under the command of Aung Myo Lin, demanded two people from each village in Ma No Roh village tract to serve as porters. Villagers are often also required to provide their own carts and draft animals to porter supplies and equipment for the Tatmadaw. On October 15th 2009, for example, troops from Company #2 of LIB #554, led by Colonel Kyaw Shin

²² The Rangoon-based Yuzana Company Ltd. is a multi-sectoral corporation, with wide interests in Rangoon housing projects, hotels, department stores, supermarkets and agriculture and fishery businesses. The Yuzana Company has most notoriously been responsible for the confiscation of 400,000 acres of land in the Hugawng Valley of Kachin State since 2006, for the purpose of establishing mono-crop plantations. For more information on land confiscations in Kachin State by the Yuzana Company and related development project abuses perpetrated by the Yuzana Company, see *Tyrants, Tycoons and Tigers: Yuzana Company Ravages Burma's Hugawng Valley*, Kachin Development Networking Group (KDNG), August 2010; "Yuzana Company builds houses for 100,000 workers," *Kachin News Group*, April 2009.

²³ *Village Agency*, KHRG, November 2008, p. 97.

²⁴ "Exploitative abuse and villager responses in Thaton District," KHRG, September 2009

²⁵ *Development by Decree*, KHRG, April 2007, p. 37

²⁶ Lack of road access may be the result of infrastructural deficiencies, such as the absence of roads or the inability to use certain roads in the rainy season, or may be due to strategic considerations, such as the risk of ambushes or landmine attacks on Tatmadaw vehicles by non-state armed groups.

Ya, demanded and confiscated four carts from residents of N--- village in the Gkay area of Te Naw Th’Ri Township; local sources told KHRG the carts were used to transport Tatmadaw rations to R--- village. It is important to note that October corresponds with the beginning of the paddy harvest season, highlighting the potentially severe consequences for civilians forced to labour for the Tatmadaw rather than tend to their fields at a crucial point in the agricultural cycle.

“The Burmese army [Tatmadaw] always asks for porters like this. Sometimes they don’t go anywhere or go very far, they just go on patrol around the village. Even though they can carry their own things or loads, they still ask for porters to carry them. Now is the time for people to harvest their farms. The farms will be destroyed if people have to go and carry for a long time. Now, civilians always have to live with these complaints.”

- Relief worker, discussing Ma No Roh village tract (2009)

Arbitrary taxation in lieu of forced labour

Villagers in Te Naw Th’Ri Township continue to report the levying of frequent demands for cash payments by Tatmadaw troops. KHRG has generally described payments of this kind as ‘arbitrary,’ because they vary in frequency and amount according to the discretion of local officials and are distinct from the systematic and formally authorised levying of taxes by agents of a civilian government. These cash payments are often demanded either in lieu of the provision of porters or on the grounds that they are required to support provision of services or infrastructural benefits for the region.²⁷

“They are always doing this [demanding porters]. At least twice in a year, we have to go and carry things to the military bases on the [Thailand-Burma] border. Even if people have already paid a salary [tax] for the hire of other porters, when the Burmese [Tatmadaw] troops enter the village, we still have to arrange to provide porters for the troops. They often ask for a salary [tax] for porters, so it makes us wonder if they use that salary [tax] to hire other porters or not.”

- Village head, L--- village, Te Naw Th’Ri Township (2009)

Villagers in Tenasserim Division have previously reported to KHRG that they are required to both make payments for Tatmadaw forces to hire porters, and work as unpaid porters themselves at least twice a year.²⁸ Fees levied for the provision of porters compound the impact of forced portering on local communities and livelihoods, as they strain villagers’ limited financial resources, often without actually alleviating Tatmadaw demands for civilian porters.²⁹

“On the border of Tenasserim [Division], there are five new military [Tatmadaw] camps that have been set up. In those five places, there are now more than 200 people who go and carry rations to each place. In all the villages around Tenasserim Town, the Tatmadaw demands 10,000 kyat (US \$11.36)³⁰ from each household. Even if the villagers don’t have money, they have to give 10,000 kyat from every household. On January 5th 2010, the village heads from the Gkay and Te Keh areas already went and gave the 10,000 kyat that they collected from every house.”

Village head, T--- village, Te Naw Th’Ri Township (2010)

²⁷ “Living conditions for displaced villagers and ongoing abuses in Tenasserim Division,” KHRG, October 2009

²⁸ “Living conditions for displaced villagers and ongoing abuses in Tenasserim Division,” KHRG, October 2009.

²⁹ Villagers have told KHRG that, although Tatmadaw forces demand payments ‘in lieu of’ the provision of porters, demands for porters are often issued even after payment demands are met.

³⁰ All conversion estimates for the kyat in this field report are based on the fluctuating informal exchange rate rather than the official fixed rate of US\$1 = 6.5 kyat. As of March 10th 2011 this unofficial rate of exchange was US\$1 = 880 kyat, and this figure is used for all calculations above.

Cash payments in lieu of porters represent a significant burden to local villagers, many of whom are dependent on subsistence or near-subsistence livelihoods activities and possess limited surplus financial resources. According to reports submitted by KHRG researchers, in January 2010 villagers in N--- village in the Gkay area reported that they had been forced to pay 40,000 kyat (US \$45.45), 'in lieu of' providing two porters to a local Tatmadaw unit. In the Pewa area, villages that had been instructed to send residents to porter military equipment and supplies to Aung Kain camp for Tatmadaw LIB #557 were subsequently informed, in a message sent to village heads at the beginning of January 2010 by LIB #557 Commander Soe Win Kyaw, that they no longer needed to provide porters. The village heads were ordered, however, to collect 10,000 kyat (US \$11.36) from each household in their communities, in lieu of providing porters. By January 3rd 2010, nine villages in Pewa had collected and delivered 450,000 kyat (US \$511.36) to the LIB #557 Commander. According to a KHRG field researcher, these nine villages were Ba---, Ha---, He---, Ma---, Ka---, Wa---, Ca---, Pa--- and Hi---.

Elsewhere in Te Naw Th'Ri Township during January 2010, village heads in Te Keh, Bawh Lawh and Nyaw Pay Gkway village tracts had been instructed by LIB #561, based at Tone Daw in the Te Keh area, to send two people from each village to porter Tatmadaw supplies and equipment to Ler Ker military base, near the Thailand-Burma border. According to a KHRG researcher, the village leaders subsequently received an order issued by Battalion Commander Aung Lwin stating that LIB #561 would hire other porters, but that the villagers were obliged to pay for their hire. There are 20 villages in each village tract in this area, meaning that each village tract had been ordered to supply 40 porters: a substantial diversion of labour from village livelihood activities. Village heads were instructed to pay 40,000 kyat (US \$45.45) for every porter that they did not send, so each village was required to pay 80,000 kyat (US \$90.90) in lieu of providing two porters. Collectively, each village tract reported that they had paid 1,600,000 kyat (US \$1,818).



This photo, taken on March 30th 2010, shows a resident of a Tatmadaw relocation site in the Ma Noh Roh area of Te Naw Th'Ri Township. The man told KHRG that villagers in the relocation site had been asked to porter supplies and equipment for Tatmadaw soldiers. [Photo: KHRG]

Arbitrary taxation for local development projects

Villagers living under Tatmadaw control in eastern Burma have reported being required to make cash payments for services, infrastructure projects or other local development initiatives that were either already being provided before payment was demanded, or that remained unimplemented long after payment was made. Although such projects are often framed by Tatmadaw officers or government officials as supporting development of local communities, villagers have complained that money is taken by officials involved or spent on projects designed and implemented without local input.³¹

At a meeting between Company Commander Than Tee of LIB #561, based at Tone Daw, and village heads and village tract leaders in the Te Keh area on October 27th 2010, for example, the villagers were informed that the Tatmadaw was planning to plant paddy in the area, but required use of the villagers' cows and buffalos to plough the new paddy fields. The officials

³¹ "Exploitative abuse and villager responses in Thaton District," KHRG, November 2009

said, however, that because it was too difficult to bring the cattle to the fields, each villager was required pay a tax in lieu of providing cattle. Villagers who owned a cart had to pay 1,000 kyat (US \$1.14) each, while villagers who owned cattle had to pay 1,500 kyat (US \$1.70) each. According to a source present at the meeting, the paddy had already been planted a month before these taxes were demanded.

Elsewhere, in the Pewa area, local villagers told KHRG that repeated demands for financial support were levied by Ministry of Education officials during the protracted construction of new schools in the area, on the grounds that the payments were necessary to expedite the construction process. KHRG sources reported that, during October 2009, local officials demanded 300,000 kyat (US \$341) from each of the following six villages in the Pewa area: Ba---, Ha---, He---, La---, Ta---, Ye---.

According to a KHRG researcher, candidates campaigning in Te Naw Th'Ri Township in the run-up to the November 2010 elections also levied arbitrary taxes to support their campaigns or to secure political support for the development of local educational infrastructure. For example, Saw Ha Bay, a former State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) Education Department Vice-Coordinator and Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) candidate in the 2010 election, demanded 40,000 kyat (approximately US \$45.45) from every village in Tatmadaw-controlled areas of Te Naw Th'Ri Township in order to cover the cost of paper to make ballots, and promised to support villagers with funds to cover school-building costs in return. During his campaign in Te Naw Th'Ri Township, Saw Ha Bay was accompanied by Tatmadaw officers and representatives from the Yuzana Company, which has close links with the Tatmadaw.³² Local sources have told KHRG that a school in Ho--- village cost residents 500,000 kyat (approximately US \$568) to build themselves and that no government funds or material support have since been forthcoming.

"People tried to [build the school] as Saw Ha Bay guided us, but nothing is different. It's just like pouring water on the sand. Our hopes are just dreams. We already paid 40,000 kyat (US \$45.45) to him for our dreams to become true, but his words and his actions didn't match."

-Village elder, Ho--- village, Te Naw Th'Ri Township (2010)

Land confiscation

During 2010, KHRG received reports of land confiscation, facilitated by Tatmadaw-backed coercion, to support business and development projects in Tenasserim Division. According to a report submitted by a KHRG researcher, on October 2nd 2010, U Thaw Kyi and U Chit Oo, representatives from the AIS Company,³³ came to the Gkay area of Te Naw Th'Ri Township and announced plans to develop date palm plantations in R---, N--- and Y--- villages. Gkay is the area of Te Naw Th'Ri Township in which Tatmadaw-control is most firmly established. According to Saw C---, a local land-owner, U Thaw Kyi and U Chit Oo surveyed 13 acres of his land and subsequently forced him to sell the land to AIS. Saw C--- said he was unwilling to sell, but did so after he was told by U Thaw Kyi and U Chit Oo that the Tatmadaw soldiers would

³² The head of the Yuzana Company, U Htay Myint, also ran for and won a seat in Parliament in the November 2010 elections, representing Tenasserim Division on the Union Solidarity Development Party (USDP) ticket. U Htay Myint is a prominent real estate tycoon with reported close connections to both Vice-Snr. General Maung Aye and Lt. General Khin Nyint; he is also the President of the Construction Owners' Association, the Myanmar Projects' Association and Industrial Holdings Ltd. For more on U Htay Myint's campaign in Tenasserim, see: Union Solidarity Development Association/ Party Fact Sheet, *Mizzima Election 2010*; "Burmese Tycoons Part I," *The Irrawaddy*, June 2000.

³³ The report submitted by KHRG's researcher was primarily based on information supplied by a local villager named Saw C---, who was not able to provide KHRG with any further details regarding AIS Company.

make 'a problem' for him if he did not agree to the deal. In exchange for his land, Saw C--- received just 50,000 kyat (US \$56.81) per acre for his land.³⁴

Land confiscation, without compensation, has also been reported elsewhere in Tenasserim Division. According to reports received from a KHRG researcher, on October 14th 2010, 20 villagers from the Na---, Te--- and Do--- areas of K'Ser Doh Township reported to local Tatmadaw officials that a coal mining company had destroyed their lands, without paying them any compensation for the damage. The villagers reported the matter to authorities from Tatmadaw Tactical Operation Command (TOC) #2 at the Mee Tah army camp, but had not received any response after their complaint was forwarded to the Headquarters of the Tatmadaw Coastal Region Command, under which TOC #2 operates.

Conditions for villagers outside areas of consolidated Tatmadaw control

"Not every villager has enough food to eat. I don't know about those who don't have enough food, because I am a new arrival here... Now I've decided that I will [do] as the people here do: I will farm a hill field, I will do a plantation, I will plant as people plant."

- Saw L--- (male, 29), Te--- village, Te Naw Th'Ri Township (2010)

The following sections detail conditions for 127 households, totaling 636 internally displaced people (IDP), staying at seven hiding sites in the Te Keh, Pewa and Ma No Roh areas.³⁵ Population information on these areas is provided in the table below. The following section also includes information from L--- and S--- villages in Pewa and K--- village in Te Keh. These additional three locations, though known to the Tatmadaw, are sufficiently outside of Tatmadaw control that they face abuses similar to those of villagers in the hiding sites detailed in the below table:

No.	Location	Village hiding site	Dispersed population numbers (as of June 29th 2010)	Total population numbers (as of June 29th 2010)
1	Te Keh	Ht--- village	25 individuals [6 households]	286 individuals
		Gh--- village	165 individuals [28 households]	
		Gk--- village	96 individuals [21 households]	
2	Ma No Roh	Dt--- village	183 individuals [39 households]	183 individuals
3	Pewa	P--- village	23 individuals [5 households]	167 individuals
		W--- village	56 individuals [11 households]	
		D--- village	88 individuals [17 households]	

Villagers in areas delineated above reported that they continue to face serious human rights abuses and threats to their physical security and livelihoods. Incidents reported in the past year include Tatmadaw soldiers firing on civilians, attempting to forcibly relocate civilians to areas of consolidated military control, and destroying homes and food stores at hiding sites. The imposition of movement restrictions on civilians in Tatmadaw-controlled areas, described in the preceding section, also further exacerbates food security concerns for IDPs in hiding, by undermining communication links between villages and cutting off food and supplies to hiding

³⁴ Other incidents of Tatmadaw-backed land confiscation in support of Tatmadaw-connected business ventures was reported elsewhere in Tenasserim Division in 2010; see: *Protracted Displacement and Chronic Poverty in Eastern Burma*, TBBC, November 2010, p.56.

³⁵ As of February 2011, the number of villagers in hiding in this area increased after attacks displace additional people in the Ma No Roh area, which was then reported to have increased to 236 people. See: "Burma Army burns 23 homes and chases families in southern Karen State," FBR, February 2011. The report also described an incident in which Tatmadaw soldiers had burned 23 homes and a school in three separate hiding sites on January 27th and 28th 2011.

sites in areas of unconsolidated Tatmadaw control.³⁶ In addition to long-term threats to food-security, villagers interviewed for this report also expressed concerns their children's education, which is both interrupted by displacement or the threat of attack and undermined by constraints on household capacity to subsidise schools and teachers.



These photos, both taken on March 26th 2010, show a villager in hiding in the Ma Noh Roh area of Te Naw Th'ri Township. The photo on the left shows the villager's hill field, which he has recently burned to prepare to plant rice. The photo on the right shows a scar on the man's left arm, where he told KHRG he was shot by soldiers from a Tatmadaw patrol. In Tenasserim Division, as elsewhere in eastern Burma, Tatmadaw forces continue to target civilians who evade Tatmadaw control with military attacks, as well as through practices that undermine food security. [Photos: KHRG]

Deliberate attacks on the civilian food supply

"Usually the [Tatmadaw] soldiers come from Battalions 224, 24, 280, 557, and 558, and I don't know who the leaders of these battalions are. One column will have 24 people [soldiers], and one battalion 48 [soldiers]. When they attack us, a column will have 15 soldiers."

-Saw G--- (male, 45), Ma--- village, Te Naw Th'ri Township (2010)

According to a KHRG researcher, on May 1st 2010 a patrol of Tatmadaw soldiers from LIB #594, led by Battalion Commander U Zaw Tin, entered K--- hiding site in the Te Keh Kee area, forcing villagers to flee their homes. After the villagers fled, the soldiers burned down three houses, destroying all the property and food stores inside. The houses belonged to Saw R---, Saw Y--- and Saw P---. Saw R---'s house had held 68 baskets of paddy (1,421 kg. / 3,065 lb.), Saw Y---'s house had held 80 baskets of paddy (1,672 kg. / 3,606 lb.), and Saw P---'s house had held 89 baskets of paddy (1,860 kg. / 4,012 lb.). A pig belonging to Saw P--- was also killed during the attack on K---.³⁷

Disruption to livelihoods activities

Villagers in hiding in both the Ma No Roh and Pewa areas of Te Naw Th'ri Township have reported that prolonged displacement due to Tatmadaw military operations has prevented them from spending sufficient time at their hill fields, and resulted in damage to their hill fields by animals in their absence. Limited ability to tend to hill fields has in turn led to decreased paddy crop yields and heightened food security concerns for villagers.

³⁶ For more on the impact of movement restrictions elsewhere in eastern Burma, see: "Forced Labour, Movement and Trade Restrictions in Toungoo District", KHRG, March 2010.

³⁷ Pigs are a staple food source in eastern Burma; one pig alone can produce up to 40 viss (64 kg. / 144 lb.) of meat.

According to a report submitted by a KHRG researcher, on August 29th 2010 following clashes the previous day between the Karen National Defense Organisation (KNDO)³⁸ and the Tatmadaw in the Pewa area, Tamadaw commanders from LIB #582 told village heads from L--- and S--- villages that both communities were required to relocate to sites proximate to a vehicle road in the area. The villages were instructed to relocate without fail before August 31st 2010, or risk being treated as military targets. Columns from LIB #582 conducting patrols in the Pewa area subsequently shot at villagers that had refused to heed the forced relocation order, including two incidents on October 31st 2010 at L--- village at 10 am and S--- village at 12 pm. No villagers were reported to have been injured in the attack.

The threat of immediate harm posed by LIB #582 prevented L--- and S--- villagers from returning to finish harvesting their paddy crops during the 2010 harvest season and, in the villagers' absence, much of their remaining unharvested crops were destroyed by wild animals. The window of opportunity for harvesting paddy crops in eastern Burma typically opens in October and closes by January each year, depending on local growing conditions and strain of paddy. Villagers in Pewa who were unable to complete their harvests in 2010 will have to survive on the yield of their partial harvests and whatever other food and economic resources they can access until the 2011 harvest.

Restrictions on access to external food supplies

"We trade with villagers in the SPDC [Tatmadaw] controlled area secretly. They sometimes exchange things and we sometimes exchange things secretly with each other. There are some who love us and [some who] hate us.

- Pah T--- (male, 59), Ma--- village, Te Naw Th'Ri Township (2010)

The imposition of movement restrictions on villagers in relocation sites can undermine food security for villagers in hiding, since communities in hiding frequently rely on food resources acquired from Tatmadaw-controlled areas to address food shortages caused by Tatmadaw military operations against civilians beyond military control, and resulting livelihoods constraints.³⁹

According to a KHRG researcher in the Gkay area, on April 29th 2010, Tatmadaw troops based near S--- and R--- villages were reported to be preventing residents from leaving the villages; communication between residents of these villages was subsequently cut off. On May 2nd, the regular presence of Tatmadaw troops in relocation sites at Ta--, C--- and Ma--- was reported to be preventing villagers from leaving their villages, which in turn was preventing food supplies from reaching communities in hiding in the Ma No Roh area.

Nowadays, it isn't easy for IDPs [villagers in hiding] to get food because the enemy⁴⁰ [Tatmadaw forces] regularly occupies the relocation sites at Ta---, C--- and Ma--- and

³⁸ The Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO) is a militia force trained and equipped by the KNLA and incorporated into its command structure; its members wear uniforms and typically commit to two-year terms of service. KHRG and other groups have reported that KNDO units have in the past engaged in forcible recruitment, including of children, and accepted child volunteers, despite claims by the group to be putting an end to the practices. See: My Gun Was as Tall as Me, *Human Rights Watch*, October 16th 2002, p.131. See also: "Photoset 2005-A," KHRG, May 27th 2005, introduction and photo 12-15 in "Soldiers."

³⁹ For more on how Tatmadaw military practices target the food security of civilians seeking to remain in hiding and beyond Tatmadaw control, as well as the protection strategies employed by communities in hiding to address food insecurity, see: *Self-protection under strain*, KHRG, August 2010, pp.52-64.

⁴⁰ Civilians who have experienced abuse by the Tatmadaw often speak as parties to the conflict rather than bystanders, though this does not necessarily reflect actual direct participation. Civilians previously interviewed by KHRG explained their use of the term as follows: "They accuse us of being their enemy so we also accuse them of being our enemy." See, Kevin Heppner, "'We Have Hands the Same as Them': Struggles for Local Sovereignty and Livelihoods by Internally Displaced Karen Villagers in Burma," KHRG Working Paper, May 2006.

they don't allow villagers to go out outside the villages. As possible, we'll find a way to help them.

-Ma--- villager, Te Naw Th'Ri Township (2010)



The photo on the left, taken on March 19th 2010, shows a villager in a hiding site in the Ma Noh Roh area of Te Naw Th'Ri township pounding paddy outside of a hut. The photo on the right, taken on October 9th 2009, shows an elderly woman from another hiding site in the T'e Keh area receiving food support provided by a local relief organisation to address food shortages in the area. Villagers in hiding in Te Naw Th'Ri Township have told KHRG that food insecurity fostered by Tatmadaw operations near their communities is one of their most serious problems. [Photos: KHRG]

Consequences for education

"In the past, the children couldn't attend [school]. Now parents have found teachers so they can go to school, and they can study very well [without any problems]. But we don't know what will happen in the future."

- Pah T--- (male, 59), Ma--- village, Te Naw Th'Ri Township (2010)

Villagers in hiding in Te Naw Th'Ri Township have expressed serious concerns about disruption to their children's education during displacement.⁴¹ Villagers in K--- village, in the Te Keh Kee area, for example, told a KHRG researcher that the school in K--- village had had two teachers for 30 students during the 2009 – 2010 school year, and had been partly subsidised by the children's parents. However, repeated displacement and physical security threats in K--- village in the past year have meant that, for the 2010 – 2011 school year, the school in K--- village now has only one teacher; according to KHRG's researcher, the residents of K--- are actively seeking another teacher so that the school can provide the same standard of education as before. In the Pewa area, meanwhile, as of June 29th 2010 no school was reported to have been established in any of the three hiding sites recorded by a KHRG field researcher, where 43 households, totalling 167 villagers and an unspecified number of school-age children were living. In the Ma Noh Roh area, as of January 2011 offensive military operations by three Tatmadaw battalions against communities in hiding were causing further displacement; according to the Free Burma Rangers, attacks on hiding sites at Htee Poe Meh Gkeh and Lah Peh T'Gkee included the burning of a school and 17 homes in those communities.⁴²

⁴¹ A recent video documentary released by the Karen language *Kwekalu* news organisation provides background on education in Tatmadaw-controlled areas of eastern Burma. The video includes information regarding the challenges families face providing adequate education for their children, with special attention to economic constraints – many of which are linked to Tatmadaw practices affecting civilians under military control.

⁴² According to FBR, the Tatmadaw units involved in the attacks were IB #224, IB #17, and LIB #560. See: "Burma Army burns 23 homes and chases families in southern Karen State," FBR, February 2011



These photos, taken on March 20th 2010, show children staying in two different hiding sites in the Ma Noh Roh area of Te Naw Th'Ri Township. Villagers in Te Naw Th'Ri Township have told KHRG field researchers that providing stable and adequate education for their children during displacement is a high priority for communities in hiding. [Photos: KHRG]

Conclusion

"The SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] knew about our plans [to flee], but as long as there are forests and secrets in the world, there's no problem [for us]. The SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] knows everything about us, but there's a world and we can flee. We know this."

- Pah T--- (male, 59), Ma--- village, Te Naw Th'Ri Township (2010)

The abuses documented in this report follow more than 15 years of forced displacement of civilians, which has led to approximately 62,100 villagers living in government-controlled relocation sites throughout Tenasserim Division.⁴³ Forced relocation has depopulated upland regions and consolidated populations in lowland areas more accessible to Tatmadaw forces; areas which, geographically and strategically, facilitate Tatmadaw control. Communities in relocation sites and villages under military control interviewed for this report subsequently reported a range of abuses made possible by Tatmadaw access to and control over their communities, including demands for forced labour and arbitrary taxation, forced conscription, movement restrictions and land confiscation. Such abuses are consistent with abuses documented by KHRG in relocation sites and government-controlled areas elsewhere in eastern Burma. These abuses appear designed to serve the dual purpose of preventing non-state armed groups from extracting support from the civilian population, while consolidating military control sufficiently to facilitate the use of civilian populations as a support base for extensive Tatmadaw infrastructure and troop deployments.⁴⁴

The cumulative effect of these abuses is to seriously undercut the ability of villagers in government-controlled areas of Te Naw Th'Ri Township from pursuing their livelihoods freely and effectively. Forced labour, forced conscription and movement restrictions inhibit or prevent villagers' own livelihoods activities and may have long-term consequences for food-security, as when demands for forced labour come at key junctures of the agricultural cycle. Additional arbitrary and unpredictable demands for taxation drain villagers' resources and threaten to drive livelihoods below subsistence level. Land confiscation, meanwhile, cuts villagers off from the

⁴³ This figure is based on data released by TBBC in November 2010; see: *Protracted Displacement and Chronic Poverty in Eastern Burma*, TBBC, November 2010, p.60

⁴⁴ For more on Tatmadaw practices aimed at controlling the civilian populations, see: *Self-protection under strain: Targeting of civilians and local responses in northern Karen State*, KHRG, August 2010; *Food crisis: The cumulative impact of abuse in rural Burma*, KHRG, November 2009; *Cycles of Displacement*, KHRG, January 2009; "Human Rights in rural Burma," KHRG, April 1998.

lands on which their livelihoods depend, often with long-term economic consequences. Individuals deprived of their land typically have limited or no opportunity to recover food and economic resources already invested, or to prepare financially for the cost of starting new livelihoods projects on new lands.

Militarization also acutely impacts the security and livelihoods of communities in hiding and actively avoiding Tatmadaw control in Te Naw Th’Ri Township. Access to upland hiding sites by Tatmadaw patrols has resulted in deliberate attacks on civilians, civilian agricultural projects and food stores. Movement restrictions enforced on villages under Tatmadaw control, meanwhile, limit covert trade in food items to hiding villages, undermining a vital safeguard against food insecurity for communities where research was conducted for this report. Although not viable for many civilians in relocation sites and militarized areas under Tatmadaw control in Tenasserim, strategic displacement remains an important strategy villagers use to protect livelihoods and human rights in those parts of Tenasserim where evading Tatmadaw control is still possible – despite the unique physical security, livelihoods and humanitarian concerns attendant to life in hiding.

Further background on the military situation in Tenasserim Division can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- *Living conditions for displaced villagers and ongoing abuses in Tenasserim Division* (October 2010)
- *A strategy of subjugation: The situation in Ler Mu Lah Township, Tenasserim Division* (December 2001)
- *Freefire zones in southern Tenasserim* (August 1997)
- *Tenasserim Division: Forced Relocation and Forced Labour* (February 1997)
- *Relocations in the gas pipeline area* (April 1997)
- *Effects of the gas pipeline project* (May 1996)
- *Ye-Tavoy area update* (January 1996)



TENASSERIM DIVISION
 Map by KHRG (Karen Human Rights Group)

