



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

News Bulletin

July 4, 2013 / KHRG #2013-B40

Hpa-an Photo Set: BGF production and sale of *yaba* in T’Nay Hsah and Ta Kreh townships

This photo set includes three still photographs selected from images taken by a KHRG community member; one was taken in April 2013 and two were taken in June 2012. The photographs were taken in T’Nay Hsah Township, Hpa-an District and depict a tablet form of methamphetamine for sale, which is known locally as yaba, meaning ‘crazy medicine’ in Thai. The yaba pictured below was manufactured and sold by the Border Guard Force (BGF) Battalion #1016’s commander, Mya Khaing, who is based in T’Nay Hsah Township. According to the community member who took these photos, the sale of the drug is pervasive throughout T’Nay Hsah and Ta Kreh townships and has seriously harmed many teenage villagers’ lives and put some families in debt as a result.

Photo Set | T’Nay Hsah Township, Hpa-an District (July 2012 to April 2013)

The following photos were taken by a villager in Hpa-an District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. They are presented below, censored where necessary for security purposes.¹ The three photos below were received along with other information from Hpa-an District, including 532 additional photos and four video clips.²

¹ KHRG trains villagers in eastern Burma to document individual human rights abuses using a standardised reporting format; conduct interviews with other villagers; and write general updates on the situation in areas with which they are familiar. When writing situation updates, villagers are encouraged to summarise recent events, raise issues that they consider to be important, and present their opinions or perspective on abuse and other local dynamics in their area.

² When these documents have been processed and translated by KHRG and when sufficient information has been compiled and analysed, a full Field Report on the situation in Hpa-an District will be available on the KHRG website. Until then, KHRG’s most recent analysis of the situation in Hpa-an District can be found in the recent Field Report, “Hpa-an Situation Update: T’Nay Hsah Township, June 2012 to February 2013,” KHRG, June 2013.



This photo was taken on April 24th 2013 in H--- village, Noh Kay village tract, T’Nay Hsah Township by a community member trained by KHRG. It depicts the drug *yaba*³ in pill form after it has already been packaged for individual sale. According to the community member who spoke with villagers affected by the sale of this drug, members of the Border Guard Force (BGF)⁴ manufacture and sell the drug to many villages throughout T’Nay Hsah and Ta Kreh townships. The drug is also reported to be sold by some villagers in H--- village to supplement their income. The BGF person implicated in leading the production of *yaba* is Mya Khaing, the Commander of Battalion #1016, based in Kyeh Paw Ka La Kon army camp in Kyeh Paw village, while the *yaba* is manufactured on the T’Nay Hsah and Noh Hta Baw cliffs. In July 2012, a different villager from G--- village described that the drug is distributed and sold widely by family members of BGF soldiers and, as a result, other villagers have become afraid to sell the drug.⁵ [Photo: KHRG]

³ *Yaba*, which means 'crazy medicine' in Thai, is a tablet form of methamphetamine. Introduced to East Asia during World War II to enhance soldiers' performance, methamphetamine has become increasingly popular in Thailand, Laos, Cambodia Vietnam, and in Burma where it is typically manufactured; see "Yaba, the 'crazy medicine' of East Asia," UNODC, May 2008.

⁴ Border Guard Force (BGF) battalions of the Tatmadaw were established in 2010, and they are composed mostly of soldiers from former non-state armed groups, such as older constellations of the DKBA, which have formalised ceasefire agreements with the Burmese government and agreed to transform into battalions within the Tatmadaw. BGF battalions are assigned four digit battalion numbers, whereas regular Tatmadaw infantry or light infantry battalions are identified by two or three-digit battalion numbers. For more information, see "DKBA officially becomes Border Guard Force" Democratic Voice of Burma, August 2010, and, "Exploitation and recruitment under the DKBA in Pa'an District," KHRG, June 2009.

⁵ This information was included in one unpublished interview submitted to KHRG by a community member in Hpa-an District. The interview was conducted by KHRG's Field Director when he visited G--- village, Htee Hpoh Kyaw village tract, Nabu Township, Hpa-an District in July 2012.



These two photos were taken on June 27th 2012 in K--- village, Mya Pa Taing Nee village tract, T’Nay Hsah Township by a community member trained by KHRG. The photos depict the drug called *yaba*, which is manufactured by the BGF Battalion #1016’s commander, Mya Khaing; it is packaged similarly to candy; and then is sold everywhere in the area in T’Nay Hsah and Ta Kreh townships. A resident villager told the community member that many young boys and students are using the drug and have become addicted. Some parents of the addicts are also reported to have accumulated debt because their children are borrowing money from them in order to purchase the drug. The villagers expressed that they want the drug to stop being sold in their areas. [Photos: KHRG]

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

- “Hpa-an Situation Update: T’Nay Hsah Township, June 2012 to February 2013,” (June 2013)
- “Hpa-an Situation Update: Ta Kreh and T’Nay Hsah Townships, December 2012,” (April 2013)
- “Hpa-an Situation Update: T’Nay Hsah Township, November to December 2012,” (March 2013)
- “Demands for soldier salaries in Hpa-an District, October 2012,” (February 2013)
- “Landmine death and injuries, old mines continue to make travel unsafe in Hpa-an District,” (December 2012)

