



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Incident report

December 18th, 2019 / KHRG Log # 19-50-I1

Hpapun Incident Report: *Forced relocation by the Meh Tha Lut village administrator in Bu Tho Township, May 2019*

On May 1st 2019, the Meh Tah Lut village administrator ordered 87 villagers from K---, situated near L--- village, Meh K'law village tract, Bu Tho Township, to relocate due to road construction activities by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation. Consequently, villagers were forced to dismantle their houses and displace to other villagers' nearby paddy fields. As of December 17th 2019, some villagers had returned to K--- while others remained at the relocation site. The houses of the villagers who returned were not rebuilt as promised by the officials in charge of the project.¹

Part 1 – Incident Details

Type of Incident	Forced relocation
Date of Incident(s)	May 1 st 2019
Incident Location (Village, Township and District)	K--- (close to L--- village), Meh K'law village tract, Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District

Victim Information	
Name	Ma S---
Age	43
Sex	Female
Ethnicity	Burmese
Family	Married
Occupation	Day labourer
Religion	Buddhist
Position	-
Village	L--- village

¹ The present document is based on information received in May 2019. It was provided by a community member in Hpapun District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions on the ground. The names of the victims, their photos and the exact locations are censored for security reasons.

Perpetrator Information			
Name(s)	Position	Location	Superior's Name
U Aung Myint Kyine	Meh Tha Lut village administrator	Meh Tha Lut village, Meh K'Law village tract, Hpapun Township	U Chan Nyein Aye, Bu Tho Township administrator

Part 2 - Information Quality

1. Explain in detail how you collected this information.

Ma S--- called the KHRG researcher, who went to meet with her and interviewed her.

2. Explain how the source verified this information.

The interviewee experienced this incident first hand.

Part 3 – Complete Description of the Incident

Describe the Incident(s) in complete detail.

Around April 21st 2019, three people from the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation (the Ministry) and the Meh Tha Lut village administrator, U² Aung Myint Kyine, came to K--- to survey the area for a road construction project to improve connectivity between K--- and L--- village. At the same time, villagers were also informed of this project and promised that they would each be allocated a plot of land measuring 40 x 60 feet [approximately 12.20 x 18.30 metres] in K---. The village administrator also extorted money from villagers by asking them to pay between 10,000 to 20,000 kyats [USD 6.64 and 13.28, respectively]³ to cover the cost of the road construction activities.

On May 1st 2019, U Aung Myint Kyine forced 87 villagers from 13 households in K--- to relocate. Many villagers have lived in the area since 2009. Although they do not possess any land titles, they obtained consent from the Karen National Union (KNU)⁴ to live there. On the same day, the three people from the Ministry and the village administrator started the construction activities with bulldozers. Although the villagers did not want to leave, they dismantled their houses and built huts on other villagers' nearby paddy fields as they had no ability to oppose the project.

The dismantled houses valued at a range of 50,000 to 300,000 kyats [USD 33.19 to 199.13]; and 25% of the houses were destroyed during the dismantling process. Ma S--- stated: *“We were afraid that our houses were going to be destroyed by the bulldozer if we failed to move out from our place. Actually, it was not necessary to dismantle the houses. Because of this, we faced difficulties as we are a big family. They [the village administrator] intentionally forced us to relocate from this place [...].”*

While road construction activities were carried out, U Chan Nyein Aye, the Hpapun Township administrator, came to the area to monitor the situation. He, U Aung Myint Kyine, and the three personnel from the Ministry told the villagers that they would reconstruct the houses that were

² U is a Burmese title used for elder men, used before their name.

³ All conversion estimates for the kyat in this report are based on the December 18th 2019 official market rate.

⁴ The Karen National Union is the main Karen group opposing the government.

destroyed and told them not to worry as it was a temporary relocation.

Many villagers faced difficulties at the relocation site as they had inadequate housing equipment and the newly built huts were too small for large families. Ma S--- elaborated on this problem: *“These people are poor. They [the village administrator] should not have done that to them [...].”* Ma S--- testified that she spent 50,000 kyats [33.19 USD] to build a tent there, and elaborated on the difficulties she faced in relation to the high-cost of building the tent: *“When we built it, it cost us 50,000 kyats. I had to sell goods [snacks] at the school to save money. It was for buying leaves [to make a] roof for my tent.”*

In August 2019, villagers were allowed to return to K---. Although villagers were allocated lands in K--- after the road construction activities ceased, houses that were destroyed were not reconstructed, as promised. As of December 17th 2019, five households had returned to the village, while the others remained at the relocation site because they could not afford to rebuild their houses.

Part 4 - Permission for Using the Details

Did the victim(s) provide permission to use this information? Explain how that permission was provided.

The victim gave KHRG permission to use the information for publication.



These two photos were taken on May 3rd, 2019 in L--- village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District. The photo on the left shows dismantled houses after villagers were forced to relocate. The photo on the right shows their temporary settlement. [Photos: KHRG]



These two photos were taken on May 3rd, 2019 in L--- village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District. These two photos show the road that was constructed in K---.

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

- ["Hpapun Situation Update: Militarisation, extortion and gold mining activities harming villagers in Dwe Lo Township, June to July 2019"](#), (November 2019)
- ["Hpapun Incident Report: Physical abuse against a child and confiscation of property by a BGF Corporal in Dwe Lo Township, May 2019"](#), (September 2019)
- ["Hpapun Incident Report: Physical abuse by a BGF soldier in Bu Tho Township, April 2019"](#), (August 2019)

About KHRG

Founded in 1992, the Karen Human Rights Group is an independent local organisation committed to improving the human rights situation in Southeast Myanmar. KHRG trains local people to document and gather evidence of human rights abuses, and publishes this information to project the voices, experiences and perspectives of local communities. More examples of our work can be seen online at www.khrq.org.