



Incident Report

September 24nd, 2020 / KHRG # 20-74-11

Hpa-an District Incident Report: *Four children injured in a UXO explosion in T’Nay Hsah Township, July 2020*

On July 21st 2020, four children were injured in a UXO explosion in Thee Wah Poo village, Thee Wah Poo village Tract, T’Nay Hsah Township, Hpa-an District. They were later admitted to the Myawaddy hospital. One of them, Saw¹ H---, lost his right hand in the blast and had to be transferred to Mae Sot, Thailand for treatment. Saw H---’s mother is now worried about the future of her son, as she cannot support his education.²

Part 1 – Incident Details

Type of Incident	UXO explosion resulting in multiple injuries
Date of Incident(s)	July 21 st 2020
Incident Location (Village, Township and District)	Thee Wah Poo village, Thee Wah Poo village tract, T’Nay Hsah Township

Victim Information				
Name	Saw H---	Saw K---	Saw P---	Saw M---
Age	12	10	10	12
Sex	Male	Male	Male	Male
Ethnicity	Karen	Karen	Karen	Karen
Family	Children	Children	Children	Children
Position	Schoolchild	Villager	Villager	Villager
Village	Thee Wah Poo village	Thee Wah Poo village	Thee Wah Poo village	Thee Wah Poo village

Part 2 - Information Quality

1. Explain in detail how you collected this information.

¹ Saw is a S'gaw Karen male honorific title used before a person's name.

² The present document is based on information received on July 23rd, 2020. It was provided by a community member in Mu Traw 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. The parts in square brackets are explanations added by KHRG.

KHRG staff interviewed P'Doh³ Saw Hser Htee Nay Thaw, the Karen Education and Culture Department (KECD),⁴ Education Administrator for T'Nay Hsah Township, as well as a teacher from Thee Wah Poo and the mother of one of the victims.

A KHRG researcher also followed up on the case with the Thee Wah Poo village tract administrator.

2. Explain how the source verified this information.

The sources found the injured children and took them to the hospital.

Part 3 – Complete Description of the Incident

Describe the Incident(s) in complete detail.

On July 20th 2020, two local children saw a piece of UXO in an agricultural area beside the Meh Pleh River, Thee Wah Poo village, Thee Wah Poo village tract, T'Nay Hsah Township, Hpa-an District. One of them picked it up, but the other took it and threw it away. On the next day, during the school lunch break, a local schoolchild named Saw H--- joined three other children [Saw K---, Saw P--- and Saw M---] who were guiding cows and playing close to where the UXO was thrown. One of them, Saw P---, picked it up because he saw his friends throw it away the day before. He gave it to Saw H---.

The four children formed a circle around the UXO. Saw H--- then hit it with a stone, causing it to explode. All of them sustained injuries, mostly to their heads, legs, hands and chests. Saw H--- was the most seriously injured. His right hand was blown off by the blast.

Villagers nearby heard the explosion. However, they thought that people were conducting blast fishing activities in the river, so they did not go to the incident place until one of the injured children ran back to the village for help. According to Saw Bleh Ku, a local teacher: *“At the time of the incident, it was the mid-day class break. I went back to my house and had lunch. I heard the explosion [...] I thought someone was fishing with bombs [some people in their community used to do this].”*

After villagers learned about the incident, they rushed to the scene. Saw H---'s mother reported: *“I was calling my son: ‘My child!! My child!!’ My son could not respond anymore because he was unconscious. [...] When we found them [injured children], they were lying on the ground beside the river and none of them could talk to us anymore.”*

After the incident, the village tract administrator and the children's parents took the injured children to the Thee Wah Poo clinic. The local health workers could not treat such serious injuries, so they sent the four children to Ra M'Tee (Myawaddy) Town hospital. Saw H--- was ultimately transferred to the Mae Sot general hospital due to the gravity of his injuries. Part of his forearm had to be amputated.

Saw H---'s transfer to the Mae Sot general hospital was arranged by the KECD and a cross-border healthcare organisation. According to the interviews conducted by KHRG, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) covered the cost of the medical expenses for

³ P'doh is a title meaning 'governor' or 'minister' within the government or military.

⁴ The Karen Education and Culture Department is the education department of the Karen National Union. Its main goals are to provide mother tongue education services to rural Karen populations in Southeast Myanmar, as well as to preserve the Karen language, culture and history. Despite being an important education provider in the region, it is not officially recognised by the Myanmar government.

all four victims.

Saw H---'s mother and teacher are now concerned about his reintegration into the community, and wonder whether he will face isolation or discrimination because of his missing hand. Saw H---'s also expressed worries about his ability to write and continue his studies, but his teacher reassured him: *"Of course you will be able to write. Look at me, my hand is not good [one of his hands is missing] but I can still write, so there is no need to feel depressed."*

According to Saw H---'s widowed mother, a good education is paramount to overcome all the barriers her son might face as a person with a physical disability. However, she does not have money to support his education: *"Even though my son is disabled, I want my son to access education so if anyone can help him for his education, he will have a better future."*

Adult villagers from Thee Wah Poo have attended Mine Risk Education (MRE) trainings in the past, and there are awareness posters on the school's walls. However, the injured children told local villagers that they had never seen a similar UXO [on posters or in the hands of soldiers] before. They added that it just looked like the handle of an umbrella, which made them curious.

Nobody could confirm which type of UXO caused this incident. Given the description made by the victims, who were also showed pictures of different types of UXOs, the KECD Education Administrator for T'Nay Hsah Township thinks it was a grenade.

Part 4 - Permission for Using the Details

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

The mother of one of the victims and the two other interviewees gave KHRG permission to use this information.



This photo was taken on July 24th 2020 at the Mae Sot general hospital, Thailand. It shows Saw H--- lying on his hospital bed. He lost his right hand in the blast and sustained serious injuries to his head, face and legs. (Photo: KHRG)



KHRG received this photo on July 26th 2020 from a KECD staff in Thee Wah Poo village, Thee Wah Poo village tract, T'Nay'Hsah Township. It shows fragments of shrapnel from the UXO explosion. (Photo: KECD)

Further background reading on the consequences of landmine and UXO contamination in Southeast Myanmar can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- [“Southeast Myanmar Field Report: COVID-19, armed conflict, landmines and sexual violence, January to June 2020”](#), September 2020
- [“Mergui-Tavoy Situation Update: UXO and landmine contamination, ethnic tensions, physical abuse by a KNLA soldier and extortion by local Myanmar government officials in Ler Doh Soe, Ler Mu Lah and K’Ser Doh townships, November 2018 to January 2019”](#), October 2019
- [“Nyaunglebin Situation Update: Logging and gold mining activities threatening community livelihoods, land confiscation by the Tatmadaw and landmine contamination in Mone and Shwegyin townships, November 2018 to January 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.