



## Short Update

February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2023 / KHRG # 22-168+178-D1

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## Mu Traw District Short Update: Air strikes and displacement, shelling, food shortages and health care, April to May 2022

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*This Short Update describes events that occurred in Bu Tho Township and Lu Thaw Township, Mu Traw (Hpapun) District during the period between April and May 2022. During April and May 2022, the State Administration Council (SAC) conducted air strikes twice in Day Bu Noh area, Lu Thaw Township resulting in the displacement of villagers. The first air strike injured a boy from Pay Kay village tract, and the second air strike destroyed multiple community buildings and damaged a villager's house. On April 28<sup>th</sup> 2022, an air strike was also launched in the area surrounding Meh Nu Hta village, Bu Tho Township but there were no casualties or damage to buildings. In P'Na Aay Per Hkoh area, Ler Muh Plaw village tract, Lu Thaw Township, the SAC has been firing mortars every few days. As a result, villagers that live there face food shortages because they have difficulty in carrying out their livelihood activities. When villagers become sick, they go to get treatment at healthcare centres that have been set up by the Karen Department of Health and Welfare (KDHW) in some villages. However, there are also shortages of medical supplies in these healthcare centres and therefore some villagers need to buy medicine from the local shops.<sup>1</sup>*

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### Air strikes and displacement

On April 28<sup>th</sup> 2022, the State Administration Council (SAC)<sup>2</sup> conducted an air strike [number of bombs unknown] in the area surrounding Meh Nuh Hta village, Pah Heh village tract<sup>3</sup>, Bu Tho Township, in response to an attack [that same day]<sup>4</sup> on one of its outposts along the Salween River by soldiers from the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)<sup>5</sup>. No buildings were damaged in the air strike as the bombs landed outside the village. No villagers were injured because the

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<sup>1</sup> The present document is based on information received in May 2022. It was provided by a community member in Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) 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.

<sup>2</sup> The State Administration Council (SAC) is the executive governing body created in the aftermath of the February 1st 2021 military coup. It was established by Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on February 2nd 2021, and is composed of eight military officers and eight civilians. The chairperson serves as the de facto head of government of Myanmar and leads the Military Cabinet of Myanmar, the executive branch of the government. Min Aung Hlaing assumed the role of SAC chairperson following the coup.

<sup>3</sup> A village tract is an administrative unit of between five and 20 villages in a local area, often centred on a large village.

<sup>4</sup> Karen Information Center (KIC), "[Military Council Responds to Loss of its Army Base with Multiple Airstrikes](#)", *Karen News*, 9 May 2022.

<sup>5</sup> The Karen National Liberation Army is the armed wing of the Karen National Union.

KNLA informed villagers about a possible [SAC] air strike in advance [the villagers were able to evacuate ahead of time].

At 4 pm on April 29<sup>th</sup> 2022, two SAC military aircraft [jets] conducted air strikes [number of bombs unknown] in Day Bu Noh area, Pay Kay village tract, Lu Thaw Township, injuring a boy [age unknown] from B--- village [in Pay Kay village tract]. The boy was injured in his ribs and he was admitted to the Karen Department of Health and Welfare (KDHW) clinic in Day Bu Noh village. At 4:30 pm on May 1<sup>st</sup> 2022, the SAC conducted another air strike, dropping 10 bombs (all of which exploded) into Day Bu Noh area using two military aircraft [jets]. No villagers were injured this time, but a hall belonging to the KNLA and a building that was used for sewing were completely destroyed. A house of a villager was also damaged in this air strike, which left holes in the roof and walls from the explosions.

In Day Bu Noh area, there are still a number of families who have not returned to the village since they first fled [from the first air strikes<sup>6</sup> that were conducted] in March 2021. Air strikes have occurred in Day Bu Noh area four times already [since March 2021] and therefore, villagers who have returned to the village always have to stay alert. This means that some villagers come back and stay in the village, but flee when they receive news from the KNLA, that there is going to be a possible air strike in the area. When villagers flee, they go and stay in the forest and then go back to the village after a few days.

Although air strikes have not taken place in P'Na Aay Per Hkoh area, Ler Muh Plaw village tract, Lu Thaw Township, SAC military jets have been conducting reconnaissance in the area, both day and night. As a result, villagers in the area have been living in fear and constantly fleeing and returning. The approximate number of displaced people in Lu Thaw Township is likely up to 10,000. Some displaced villagers don't have tarpaulin [to build their shelter in the forest] and therefore, they face many difficulties when it rains.

## **Shelling**

SAC troops [battalion number unknown] in P'Na Aay Per Hkoh area, Ler Muh Plaw village tract, Lu Thaw Township have also been indiscriminately firing mortars [lasting from 15 minutes to half an hour]. They indiscriminately fired them once every two or three days, repeatedly [throughout April and May 2022]. However, there have not been any injuries, death or damage due to the SAC shelling. [Some mortar shells landed in the village and some landed outside the village.] The mortar shells that SAC troops have been firing in P'Na Aay Per Hkoh area are believed to be 120 mm mortars.

## **Food shortages**

Villagers [in Pa'Na Aay Per Hkoh area] face food shortages because it has been many months that they have had difficulty working and carrying out their livelihood activities, due to SAC military activities in the area. Villagers try to solve the issue themselves by helping each other and sharing the food that they have with each other. Villagers from villages who face a better situation also try to help displaced villagers by sharing what they have with them. Almost every family from villages such as Khaw Khee Der, Paw Khaw Hkee, K'Neh Muh Der, and Khoh Tha Loh Der have run out of rice [that they grow themselves] and therefore have to purchase it. However, food prices are very expensive these days, and villagers are also facing financial problems. Therefore, they need to look for work [day labour] whenever possible in order to

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<sup>6</sup> See KHRG, "[A Worrisome Escalation: Tatmadaw airstrikes kill at least 16 villagers, displace thousands in Mu Traw and Kler Lwee Htoo districts, March 2021](#)", May 2021; KHRG, [Military Atrocities and Civilian Resilience: Testimonies of injustice, insecurity and violence in Southeast Myanmar during the 2021 coup](#), November 2021.

afford food. Some villagers also do craftwork such as weaving baskets and mats as a way of earning money. Some sell their livestock and purchase food with the money that they get.

Villagers from almost every village located near the road going from Ler Doh Town [Kler Lwee Htoo District] to Brigade 2 [Taw Oo District] and through Kyaw Hta [Lu Thaw Township, Mu Traw District], have been facing difficulties and food shortages. [Villagers often have to cross this road to get to other places.] SAC troops use [this road] to transport their rations and ammunition [and would also fire mortar shells into areas near the road to threaten villagers and the KNLA]. Due to transportation difficulties and restrictions, it is hard for organisations to come and provide humanitarian aid in the area. Villagers sometimes receive support from individual donors [Karen people] who come back from a third country [resettlement abroad] and Thailand. Some of the organisations that villagers usually receive support from include the Committee for Internally Displaced Karen People (CIDKP) and Karen Office of Relief and Development (KORD). Organisations such as Karen Women's Organisation (KWO) and Karen Teacher Working Group (KTWG) also sometimes provide aid and support. KORD usually provides cash for villagers to purchase food, and CIDKP support includes medical supplies, clothes, and tarpaulin. Another organisation that has been operating in the area is Free Burma Rangers (FBR)<sup>7</sup>, which sometimes provides support such as clothes and medical supplies to villagers.

## Health care

Regarding the healthcare situation [in Pa'Na Aay Per Hkoh area], healthcare centres have been set up by KDHW in some villages. Therefore, villagers go to get medical treatment from those healthcare centres when they become sick. When villagers who are displaced become sick in the forest, their family members or relatives have to travel to nearby places where there is a healthcare centre to get medicine for them. However, there are not sufficient medical supplies at these village healthcare centres and thus, some villagers have to buy medicine from the local shops. Some villagers don't have money to buy medicine so they take them without paying at first. They pay back the shop owner later when they have money. The most common diseases in the area are malaria, dengue fever, runny nose, and diarrhoea. Both young and old people also suffer from osteoarthritis in their knees.

Further background reading on human rights violations in Mu Traw District in Southeast Burma can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- [“Mu Traw District Incident Report: Two villagers were seriously injured in landmine explosions in Lu Thaw Township, April and May 2022”](#), January 2023.
- [“Mu Traw District Situation Update: SAC indiscriminate mortar shelling, an attack of a villager by an SAC soldier, People's Defence Force \(PDF\) activity and a landmine incident, February to April 2022”](#), December 2022.
- [“Mu Traw District Situation Update: SAC shelling, displacement of villagers, livelihood challenges, healthcare and education situation, and landmine incidents, April to May 2022”](#), July 2022.
- [“Mu Traw District Situation Update: Arrests, threats and physical assault of villagers, mortar shelling, air strikes and a landmine incident in Bu Tho and Dwe Lo townships, December 2021 to March 2022”](#), July 2022.

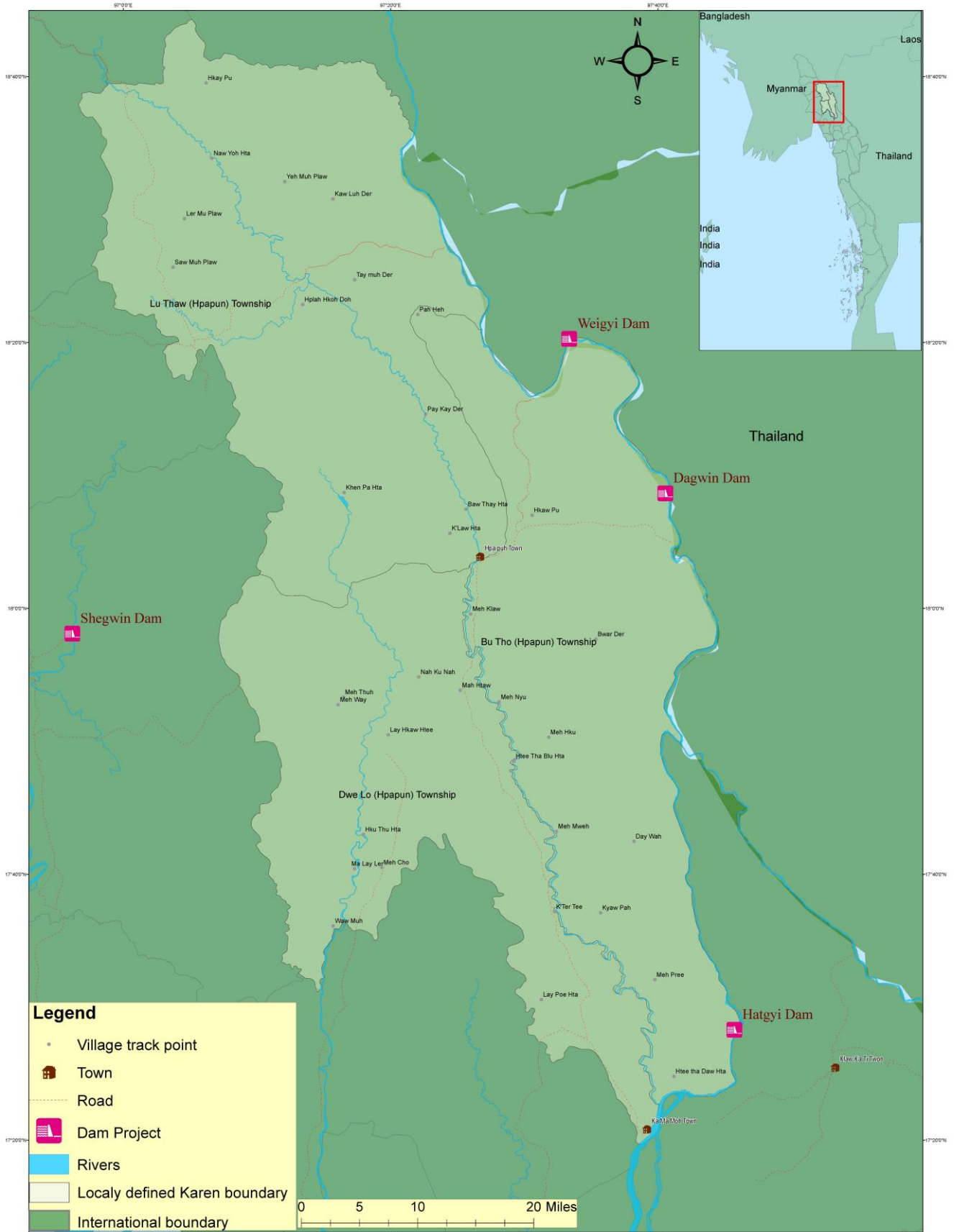
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<sup>7</sup> Founded in 1997 in response to Tatmadaw offenses, Free Burma Rangers (FBR) is a multi-ethnic humanitarian relief organisation that specialises in providing emergency health care, shelter, food and clothing to civilians in war zones and prioritises assisting IDPs. In addition to their relief activities the FBR also conducts capacity building trainings (sometimes jointly with KHRG), documents human rights violations and advocates regularly on the situation in Burma/Myanmar. There are currently 71 active FBR teams that go on 2-4 missions a year.

### **About KHRG**

Founded in 1992, the Karen Human Rights Group is an independent local organisation committed to improving the human rights situation in Southeast Burma. 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](http://www.khrq.org).

# Mutraw (Hpapun) District



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