



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Incident Report

July 1st 2022/ KHRG # 22-32-11

Dooplaya District Incident Report: A 15-year-old female student reported being sexually assaulted by a school committee member, November 2021

This Incident Report describes events that occurred in Noh T'Kaw (Kyainseikgyi) Township, Dooplaya District in November 2021. On the night of November 26th 2021, a 15-year-old girl named Naw O---, who lives in E---village, Hteh Wah Law village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, Dooplaya District reported being sexually assaulted by a G--- High School committee member named F---, a 54-year-old male living in A--- village, Noh Taw Plah village tract, Noh T'Kaw Township, Dooplaya District, after he asked her and two other female students from the school to help peel betel nut at his home. After the incident occurred, it was difficult for the victim to continue her education. Although the case initially seemed to have been brought to local authorities, the family eventually decided not to pursue the case further. The school had also been waiting for a decision by local authorities before taking action, but in the meantime, F---'s contract ended and he left the school.¹

Part 1 – Incident Details

Type of Incident	Sexual assault
Date of Incident(s)	November 26 th 2021
Incident Location (Village, Township and District)	A--- village, Noh Taw Plah village tract ² , Noh T'Kaw (Kyainseikgyi) Township, Dooplaya District

Victim Information	
Name	Naw O---
Age	15 years old
Sex	Female
Ethnicity	Karen
Family	Single

¹ The present document is based on information received in February 2022. It was provided by a community member in Dooplaya 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.

² A village tract is an administrative unit of between five and 20 villages in a local area, often centred on a large village.

Occupation	Student
Religion	Buddhist
Position	Villager
Village	E---village, Hteh Wah Law village tract, Kaw T'Ree (Kawkareik) Township, Dooplaya District

Perpetrator Information			
Name(s)	Age	Position	Village
F---	54	School committee member	A--- village, Noh Taw Plah village tract, Noh T'Kaw Township, Dooplaya District

Part 2 - Information Quality

1. Explain in detail how you collected this information.

The KHRG field researcher first found out about the incident from Naw³ R---, a teacher at H--- school [another local school] who lives in H---village, Noh Taw Plah village tract, Noh T'Kaw Township, Dooplaya District. The researcher also talked with two teachers from G--- High School (the victim's school) in A--- village, Noh Taw Plah village tract, the mother of the victim, and the victim herself.

2. Explain how the source verified this information.

The information was provided by the victim herself, the victim's mother, two teachers (Naw Y--- and Naw P---) from the victim's school in A--- village. The victim talked about the incident with the people who are close to her.

Part 3 – Complete Description of the Incident

Describe the Incident(s) in complete detail. For each incident, be sure to include 1) when the incident happened, 2) where it happened, 3) what happened, 4) how it happened, 5) who was involved, and 6) why it happened. Also describe any villager response(s) to the incident, the aftermath and the current living situation of the victims. Please use the space prepared below, and create an attachment if needed.

Fifteen-year-old Naw O---, who lives in [is from] E--- village, Hteh Wah Law village tract, Kaw T'Ree (Kawkareik) Township, Dooplaya District [but is studying in A--- village, Noh Taw Plah village tract, Noh T'Kaw (Kyainseikgyi) Township, Dooplaya District] reported to KHRG that she was sexually assaulted by a G--- High School committee member named F---, a 54-year-old male living in A--- village, Noh Taw Plah village tract, Noh T'Kaw Township, Dooplaya District on the night of November 26th 2021.

According to Naw O---, she accompanied two of her female school friends to the house of the G--- High School committee member, F---, on the evening of November 26th, after they had

³ Naw is a S'gaw Karen female honorific title used before a person's name.

been asked to go to his house to help him peel betel nut. They had been told they would receive some pocket money in exchange for their work. The three female students live at the G--- High School dormitory (the dormitory is situated in the G--- High School compound).

On the evening of November 26th 2021, the school committee member, F---, picked up the three female students at the G--- High School dormitory and brought them to work at his house. According to Naw O---, the three female students helped peel betel nuts for a few hours.

Due to the late hour that they finished, the girls stayed the night. The three girls (along with a 15-year-old female villager from A--- village) stayed the night and slept together in the same room. Naw O--- was sleeping in between the other girls. Naw O--- stated that during the middle of the night, she felt cold and realised that the blanket that she had covered herself with when she went to sleep had been pulled away. She could feel something touching her thigh. At first she thought it was a cat, but then realised that it was a hand. When she grabbed her torchlight, the hand pulled away. She then turned on her torchlight and saw the school committee member sitting nearby on the steps, with his back to her. From what she could see, he was not wearing his shirt, just short pants. She then turned the light off and tried to go back to sleep. She was not able to sleep the rest of the night, and was afraid. She added: *"I felt really sad."*

The next morning, she and the other students continued working, but she felt too discouraged to work. When she could not control her tears thinking about what had happened to her, she told her friends that she wanted them all to return to their dormitory. They were each given 1,000 kyats [USD 0.56]⁴ for the work they had done before they returned to the school. They returned to G--- High School at 1:30 pm. She first talked about the incident with one of her friends who lives in the same village with her while they were returning home.

She called her mother that evening, and the next day, on November 28th 2021, her mother went to meet her at her school. Her mother met with two teachers. The teachers told her that they would handle the case, but [at the time of the interview with KHRG on January 3rd 2022] Naw O---'s mother said that she had not yet heard any reply from them. She then returned home, but told her daughter to stay at the school, believing it would be better for her to finish out the academic year: *"My daughter wanted to come back with me. I am afraid the news about this will spread that is why I let her stay there. I will let her finish school there this year. Next year, I will remove her from the school. She will surely be embarrassed among her friends. She is convincing herself and her friends also [try to] convince her to finish her studies [the academic year]. I don't want this kind of situation to happen in the future so my daughter will be able to study without any disturbance."*

According to one of the teachers with whom Naw O---'s mother had spoken, after the incident happened, the parents from the same village as the victim, and who keep their children - especially their daughters - at the dormitory did not want to keep their children at the dormitory anymore. [Information about the incident circulated among the other students, who then told their parents.] She added that the school's head secretary encouraged the parents to let their children live at the dormitory until the end of the school year as there were only two or three more months to be finished. If the students dropped out from the school, they would lose the whole year. That is why the parents waited until the end of the academic year to move their children to another school. [A total of 11 children (four male, seven female) from E--- village were studying at G--- High School. When the school year resumed, all seven female students went to study at N--- refugee camp in Thailand.]

Naw O--- is afraid she will be harmed by the perpetrator. According to her teacher, at one point

⁴ All conversion estimates for the kyat are based on the June 8th 2022 mid-market exchange rate of 1,000 kyats to USD 0.54 (taken from <https://wise.com/gb/currency-converter/mmk-to-usd-rate>)

she asked to stay with her because she was afraid to stay in the dormitory, but the teacher thought that it would lead to rumours. Naw O--- stated: *"I want this case to be solved. I worry I will be threatened. It didn't happen in my village so I am afraid. I am away from my parents. I do not know anything about whether this case will be solved by the local authorities from A--- village. I would like this case to be solved. I am thinking of dropping out from the school. I am afraid of him [the school committee member] and would like to stay away from him. Actually, I want to study, but I am afraid to continue to study and stay here. I feel embarrassed staying among my friends. I don't want this kind of situation happening to my friends."*

After the incident, Naw O--- was not as active as she used to be. However, after a few weeks, she began to play and work on her studies as normal. Naw O--- told another teacher: *"This incident became my nightmare and [the source of my] worries."* Naw O--- also said that she does not dare return to G--- High School for the next academic year.

The G--- High School teachers would also like to see a resolution to the case, but noted that the decision about dismissing the school committee member is up to the local authorities in the area. Thus, the school's decision on whether F--- will be dismissed from the school or not is still on hold.

One of the G--- High School teachers added, *"It is a violation of her rights both physically and mentally by looking at [if we consider] child rights, women's rights and youth and student rights."* Another teacher stated, *"It would not be alright for this case to disappear. [...] How can this child depend on us (authorities) [if we do not resolve the case]?"*

Update from June 3rd 2022: Despite the initial interest by the teachers and the victim in seeking justice regarding this incident, no further action has been taken. The school committee member continued to work at the school following the incident. He has since left the school, but not because of a decision by the school or local authorities. Rather, he left because his three-year term had ended. There are currently no judicial bodies undertaking this case either because the victim's family did not want to report this case to the authorities. The victim's parents said they do not want to report this case to the court as they would not know what to say in court. The parents also worry that the perpetrator is good at talking and will reject the accusation of sexually assaulting their daughter, Naw O---.

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, the victim's mother, and the two teachers gave KHRG permission to use and publish this information.

Further background reading on the human rights situation in Dooplaya District in Southeast Burma can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- ["Dooplaya District Situation Update: Killing, fighting, indiscriminate shelling, air strikes and displacement, March 2022"](#), May 2022.
- ["Doo Tha Htoo District Incident Report: SAC and BGF tortured and killed a female villager in Bilin Township, December 21st 2021"](#), January 2022.

- ["Kler Lwee Htoo District Short Update: SAC troops fired mortars into a village, injuring three villagers, December 2021"](#), January 2022.
- ["Doooplaya District Situation Update: Indiscriminate shelling, fighting, forced labour, peace talks, and the COVID-19 pandemic, August to September 2021"](#), February 2022.

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.

Dooplaya (Southeastern Karen State) District

