



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Situation Update

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Taw Oo District Situation Update: SAC indiscriminate shelling causing death and injury, travel restrictions, and villagers' livelihood, education, and healthcare challenges, from January to March 2023.

This Situation Update describes events that occurred in Taw Oo (Toungoo) District from January to March 2023. During these three months, the SAC continuously shelled into villages, killing two villagers, including a 16-year-old, injuring four other villagers, and destroying villagers' houses. The SAC planted new landmines at the entrance of villages. Moreover, the SAC set up more checkpoints causing difficulties for local villagers travelling. Children and women died due to the difficulty in accessing healthcare. Additionally, students in Taw Oo struggled to continue their education, due to the lack of enough schools and textbooks in their villages.¹

This Situation Update outlines the State Administration Council (SAC)² military activities, and villager's livelihoods, education, and health care challenges in the five areas in Taw Oo District, namely Kaw Thay Der, Khoh Hkee, Maw Nay Pwa, Per Htee, and Day Loh areas, from January to March 2023.

Intensification of SAC military activities

From January to March 2023, fighting regularly broke out [between SAC troops and resistance armed forces] in Thandaung Town [13 Mile Town] due to the intensification of SAC operations, including occupation [of villages] and [the imposition of] travel restrictions. SAC soldiers were living in villages [in the nearby area], and threatened villagers, thus, local villagers did not dare to stay in [their own] village. During the period, the SAC burned seven houses in 13 Mile Town and planted landmines at the villages' entrance gates.

On March 5th 2023, the SAC soldiers living in Thar Say Der village, Shan Lel Pyin Gyi village tract³, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, Taw Oo District set an army camp outside of the village and

¹ The present document is based on information received in April 2023. It was provided by a community member in Taw Oo 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 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 Burma/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.

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

shelled mortars [into the village], killing a 16-year-old villager. The shrapnel penetrated his arm, and he was sent to the Htoh Lwee Wah hospital. On April 6th 2023, the SAC shelled into K’Neh Htee Der village, Day Lo Mu Nu Hta village tract, Htaw Ta Htoo Township, killing one villager and injuring four more. The SAC soldiers also shelled mortars into the villages and destroyed villagers’ houses.

On April 11th 2023, SAC soldiers entered Htoh Lwee Wah high school, located in Per Htee area, near Daw Ku village, Htaw Ta Htoo Township. They took photos and searched the school garden. Additionally, some SAC soldiers looted local villagers’ belongings and destroyed villagers’ properties. Villagers from the area were in fear and were displaced due to the SAC increased operations and frequent fighting [near villages]. SAC soldiers posted at the checkpoints questioned and threatened villagers. It became difficult for villagers to go to the market to buy food.

Livelihood challenges

Villagers residing in Per Htee and Day Loh, hill areas, are farmers; growing beans is their main occupation. It is also common to work on durian and betel nut plantations. Villagers sell their organic fruits in [the local] market, but the price [value of goods] has fallen, leading to serious livelihood difficulties [to secure income]. In addition, villagers encountered difficulties to travel to the local market to sell their fruits, as SAC soldiers set checkpoints on their way.

Education challenges in Taw Oo

The five areas in Taw Oo District have three Kaw Thoo Lei [Karen Education and Culture Department (KECD)⁴] high schools; namely Htoh Lwee Wa school, Buh Hsa Hkee school, and Ler Htaw Doh school. Between 2021 and 2022, there has been an increase in the number of students enrolling in Karen National Union (KNU)⁵ schools. Due to this increase in enrolment, schools did not have enough textbooks and school stationery for each student. Taw Oo District has 168 [middle] schools with [around] 8,251 students. Some students who finished [their education in] government schools helped with teaching and management [at the schools] in the villages that have too many students. [Few] students [in Taw Oo] attended school until they graduated; the majority of the students dropped out of school to work abroad. Some students encountered difficulties [in continuing their education] due to not having school in their village.

Healthcare challenges in Taw Oo

From January to March 2023, many villagers got illnesses, such as high blood pressure, diarrhoea, or seasonal illness. Many children got diarrhoea and [some] children died due to it. Many women who had high blood pressure died while giving birth to their children. Once a month, nurses and doctors [from the area] rotate [travel] around the villages to inform [villagers] about vaccinations. [Some] Villagers got COVID-19 vaccinations. The Karen Women Organisation (KWO)⁶ also informed about healthcare for villagers.

⁴ The Karen Education and Culture Department is the education department of the Karen National Union (KNU). Its main goals are to provide mother tongue education services to rural Karen populations in Southeast Burma, 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 Burma government.

⁵ The Karen National Union (KNU) is the main Karen political organisation. It was established in 1947 and has been in conflict with the Burma government since 1949. The KNU wields power across large areas of Southeast Burma and has been calling for the creation of a democratic federal system since 1976. Although it signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement in 2015, relations with the government remain tense.

⁶ The Karen Women’s Organisation (KWO) is a Karen community-based organisation formed in 1949 to support women in its operational areas across Karen State and in refugee camps along the Thai-Burma border. KWO works to empower women, fights against all forms of oppression of women and children, and provides support

Civilians faced difficulties mostly in sending patients to hospitals. [Since the coup,] transportation [travelling in the area] has been difficult to arrange for villagers because SAC military activities happen [almost] every day. In addition, villages do not have sufficient medicines. [The majority of the hospitals are in the city, so] some villagers faced difficulties in getting check-ups for their health in the hospital.

Further background reading on the situation in Taw Oo District, in Southeast Burma, can be found in the following KHRG reports:

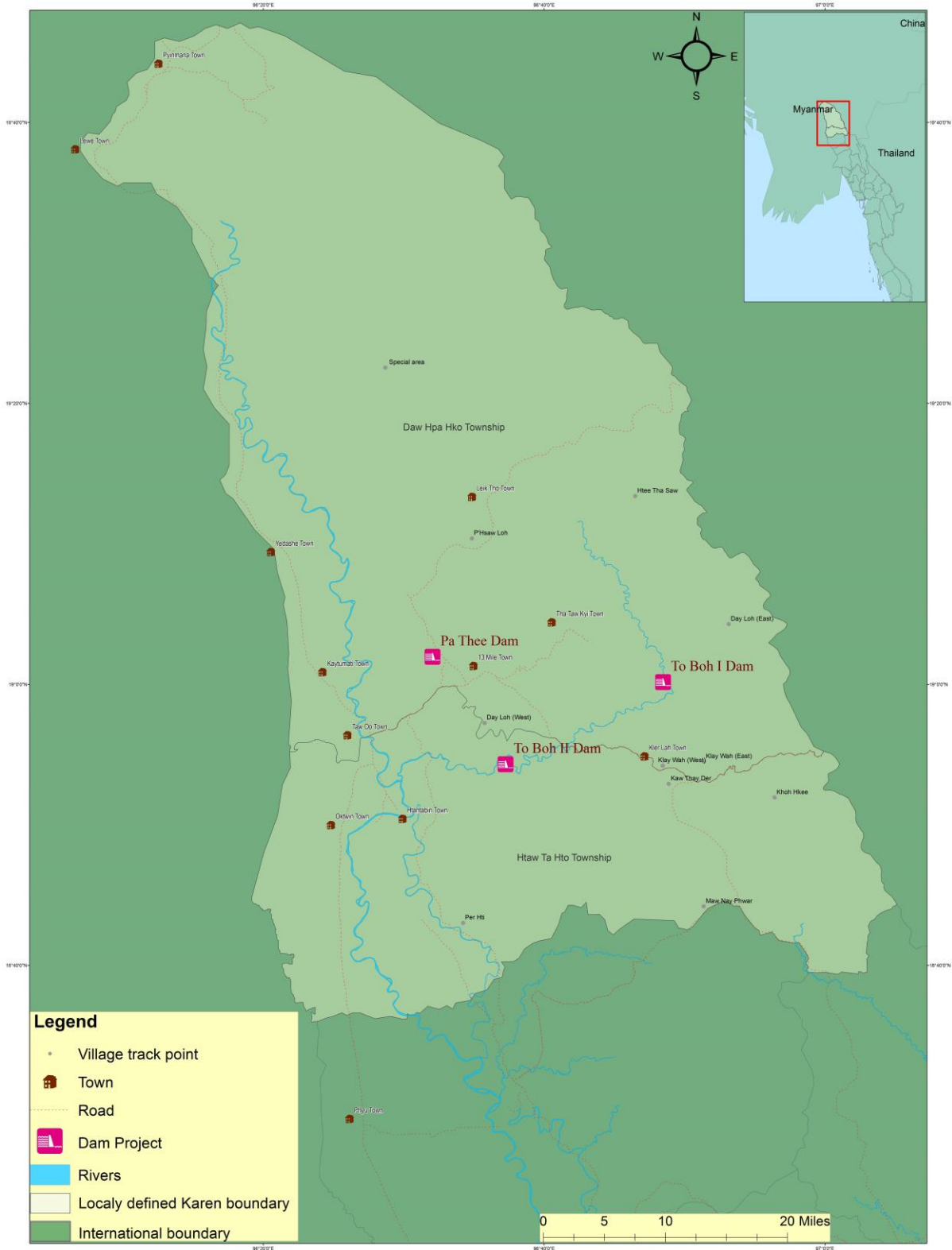
- [“Taw Oo District Short Update: Air strikes, displacement and property damage in Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, July 2023”](#), August 2023.
- [“Taw Oo District Situation Update: Killing, arbitrary arrest, SAC military activities, and education, healthcare, and livelihood challenges, from March to June 2022”](#), July 2023.
- [“Taw Oo District Incident Report: A male villager was severely injured and a female villager died from SAC indiscriminate shelling in Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, in June 2023”](#), July 2023.

About KHRG

Founded in 1992, 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.

for communities in their operational areas. The organisation promotes women’s leadership, gender sensitivity, and runs health and education programs.

Taw Oo (Toungoo) District



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