



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Situation Update

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Mu Traw District Situation Update: The Burma Army conducted air strikes and shelling, planted landmines inside villages, and caused displacement and challenges in Lu Thaw Township (September 2025 to February 2026)

This Situation Update describes events occurring in Lu Thaw Township, Mu Traw (Hpapun) District, during the period between September 2025 and February 2026. Due to the Burma Army conducting air strikes and shelling, and planting landmines on village roads, villagers who lived near army camps of the Burma Army no longer dared to live within their villages. Villagers were forced to displace into forests. When villagers were displaced, they encountered difficulties and challenges in healthcare, education, and transportation. Additionally, villagers also faced challenges because heavy rain and flooding destroyed rice paddies, causing a shortage of rice. The price of rice increased because there was less rice available, resulting in food insufficiency among the villagers.¹

Burma Army shelling caused displacement and difficulties for villagers' livelihoods

Situations of fighting and conflict escalated because Burma Army² soldiers increased their military operations near their army camps and frequently fired shells into villages that were located close their army camps. Shells exploded inside villages, in areas where villagers dwelled, and in villagers' plantation areas. Thus, villagers who lived close to the Burma Army military camps experienced difficulties to travel. Moreover, villagers felt fear to work on their farms and plantation fields to support their livelihoods. In addition, villagers no longer dared to live nor sleep within their villages. Thus, they displaced themselves into forests. Most displaced villagers were from Saw Muh Plaw village tract,³ Hpla Hkoh village tract, and Yeh Mu Plaw village tract, Lu Thaw Township, Mu Traw (Hpapun) District, because these three village tracts are located close to army camps of the Burma Army.

¹ The present document is based on information received in March 2026. It was provided by a community member in Mu Traw District who has been trained by KHRG as a researcher 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. This document combines several received reports with the following KHRG internal log numbers: #26-76-S1 and #25-408-M1/P1.

² The terms Burma military, Burma Army, SAC, Tatmadaw, and junta are used interchangeably throughout this report to describe the Burma military regime's armed forces. Villagers themselves commonly use Burma Army, Burmese soldiers, or alternatively the name adopted by the Burma military regime at the time—from the 2021 coup to July 2025, the State Administration Council (SAC). On 31 July 2025, the military junta changed its name to the State Security and Peace Commission (SSPC).

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

Burma Army air strikes and air reconnaissance intensified villager's challenges

In February 2026, an aircraft of the Burma Army launched two air strikes into Aa--- village, Yeh Mu Plaw village tract. The first air strike happened on 23 February 2026. However, no villagers sustained injuries. The Burma Army conducted the second air strike on 27 February 2026, at 4:50 pm, and the bomb landed on the Ab--- primary school, which is administered by the Karen Education and Culture Department (KECD).⁴ On the same day, after the air strike, the Burma Army conducted air reconnaissance with two drones from 5 pm to 7 pm, intensifying villagers' fear to travel and work inside their villages. Thus, villagers displaced themselves into forests, to rescue themselves from life-threatening risks.

Villagers who were displaced experienced an extreme food shortage because they could not carry much food with them when they were fleeing. Additionally, villagers were afraid to return to their villages to fetch rice from their houses. Thus, some villagers were working really hard to secure enough food. It was extremely hard for some villagers to carry food from place to place and to search for food [while they were in displacement]. When fleeing, some villagers did not have the courage to leave their children [put their children down and make them walk] and carry food [instead], because their children were very young. It was an intense challenge for the villagers to experience.

The Burma Army not only [used aircraft to] conduct air reconnaissance and threaten the villagers, but they also dropped rations for their army camps. The Burma Army increased their military activities, and it was unknown what else [what types of military activities] they would increase in the future. Air reconnaissance intensified the fears of villagers who were living close to army camps of the Burma Army.

Bad weather, [such as] an unseasonal rain, was an additional difficulty for villagers when they displaced in forests. Regarding healthcare, villagers got illnesses and fevers due to the wetness from the unseasonal rain. It was hard for villagers to access treatment as there was a lack of medicine [in the forest], and the clinics were located far [from the forest].

A villager stepped on a landmine planted by the Burma Army

In Lu Thaw Township, soldiers from the Burma Army military camp, located close to villages, planted landmines on villagers' roads, which are used for traveling to plantations and transportation. It created security risks for travellers, and it became difficult for villagers to travel. On 24 October 2026, a villager named Saw⁵ A---, 17 years old, from Ac--- village, Ler Mu Plaw village tract, Lu Thaw Township, was travelling and foraging for leaves [to eat]. When he arrived at Ag--- mountain range, [Ler Mu Plaw village tract,] he stepped on a landmine, which had been planted by the soldiers of the Burma Army. Due to the landmine explosion, his right leg sustained injuries. After the explosion, his friends sent him to the Ad---clinic, which is located in Ad---village, Noh Yo Hta village tract, Lu Thaw Township. The clinic is administered by the Karen Department of Health and Welfare (KDHW).⁶ On 25 October 2025, Saw A--- had his right

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.

⁵ 'Saw' is a S'gaw Karen male honorific title used before a person's name.

⁶ The Karen Department of Health and Welfare (KDHW) is the health department of the Karen National Union. It was established in 1956 to address the lack of public healthcare resources in rural Southeast Myanmar. It currently operates a network of community-based clinics in the region, but its capabilities remain limited due to funding constraints.

foot amputated at the Ad--- clinic. Saw A--- stepped on a landmine because the soldiers of the Burma Army planted landmines on villagers' roads, which are located close villages, and which are used for transportation. Whenever villagers travelled, they had to travel with people who take security [people who knew the area's security situation]. It became an obstacle when emergency traveling was required.



On 24 October 2025, a villager named Saw A---, 17 years old, from Ac--- village, Ler Mu Plaw village tract, Lu Thaw Township, Mu Traw (Hpapun) District, stepped on a landmine on a village road when he was foraging for food. His friends sent him to the Ad---clinic where his right foot was amputated. The photo shows his right leg following the amputation. [Photo: KHRG]

Natural disaster caused challenges for villagers' livelihoods

Villagers from Lu Thaw Township encountered various types of difficulties from September 2025 to February 2026. Among the various difficulties, the [shortage of] rice was the most pressing difficulty for villagers. In 2025, flooding damaged paddies; in addition, insects descended [on the crop], causing lower rice production for the villagers. Due to the decline in rice production, and rice insufficiency, almost every household had to purchase rice [that they did not have to purchase before]. The demand for rice supply increased and it caused the price of rice to increase. Additionally, villagers who had adequate amounts of rice for their family sold their extra rice at a very high price. For the villagers who had insufficient amounts of rice, they could not purchase rice, and they did not have enough food to eat.

In addition, villagers from the three village tracts, Yeh Mu Plaw village tract, Plah Hkoh village tract, and Saw Muh Plaw village tract, Lu Thaw Township, were displaced. During the displacement, they faced difficulties to work [to support their livelihoods], and to access safe shelters. They were living in constant fear.

In February 2026, Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)⁷ soldiers did military activities and conquered army camps of the Burma Army which were located inside the village tracts. Thus,

⁷ The Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) is the armed wing of the Karen National Union.

villagers who lived near those village tracts were living with fear while working, farming, and hill farming to support their livelihoods.

Currently [as of March 2026], almost every villager, especially from Ae--- village and Af--- village, Yeh Mu Plaw village tract, and villagers who lived near army camps of the Burma Army, no longer dared to work in farming and hill farming, and it became a big problem for the villagers. The villagers not only faced difficulties to work to support their livelihoods but also that they were forced to displace and hide in forests, because they did not dare to live in their villages. The difficulties that villagers faced were not only due to lack of work but also due to unseasonal rain. When villagers were displaced, they faced one of their biggest problems due to the unseasonal rain: the wetness.

Villagers faced challenges with shortages of medicine

Common illnesses are malaria, diarrhoea, fever and running nose, coughing, acid reflux, postpartum disorders, and season flu. Normally, people who had those diseases could go to any clinic where they wanted to receive treatment. However, there were shortages of medicine in the clinics; thus, the sick patients bought medicines from pharmacies by themselves.

[This was] because the KDHW distributes medicine supplies a maximum of two times per year. Thus, receiving the distribution once in a year was not enough for everyone who was going to the clinics. The nurses from the clinics gave medicine to patients based on the amount of medicine received by the clinics. The nurses prescribed medicine by name to patients if the medicines were purchasable at pharmacies. It became difficult for villagers who could not afford to purchase medicines.

Burma Army aircraft and [unseasonal] weather troubled local students' studies

Students from Lu Thaw Township encountered difficulties accessing education. From December 2025 to February 2026, within the three months, almost all schools were closed, because the Burma Army was conducting air reconnaissance to threaten villagers, and there was no safety or security for students to study inside the schools' buildings. Therefore, students were unable to study inside schools' buildings. So, villagers had built study places in safe forests. Currently [as of February 2026], students were studying and taking exams in forests.

In addition, sometimes unseasonal rain caused difficulties for students and teachers to study. Schools moving to forests also caused difficulties in transporting schools' supplies like books, pencils, pens, and blackboards. Although students were studying in forest, they still lived in fear and stayed alert whenever they heard aircraft doing air reconnaissance.

Due to the various difficulties, there were no Kaw Thoo Lei⁸ government final exams for Grade 9 students of the 2025 to 2026 academic year; there were final exams only for Grade 12. The additional difficulties for schools were that there was an extreme reduction in support for the teachers. Within a year, teachers only received 9,500 Thai baht (287.01 USD⁹), and the amount was insufficient for the teachers to purchase their basic needs. This [insufficient salary] worried villagers that it would lower the motivations of teachers to teach in the future.

⁸ The term Kaw Thoo Lei refers to Karen State as demarcated by the Karen National Union (KNU), but the exact meaning and etymology is disputed; see: Jonathan Falla. *True Love and Bartholomew: Rebels on the Burmese Border*, Cambridge University Press: 1991.

⁹ All conversion estimates for the Thai baht in this report are based on the 13 August 2026 mid-market exchange rate of 33.10 THB to 1 USD, available at: <https://wise.com/gb/currency-converter/usd-to-thb-rate>

Conclusion

This Situation Update reports situations from Lu Thaw Township, Mu Traw District. The situation of villagers' livelihoods, displacement increasing, difficulties accessing education, healthcare challenges, the Burma Army setting up [checkpoints] on roads, the Burma Army's military activities, [including] shelling, landmines, and air strikes are written in this report.

Further background reading on the situation in Mu Traw (Hpapun) District in Southeast Burma/Myanmar can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- [*Stolen Childhoods: Violations of children's rights, urgent needs, and local agency in rural Southeast Burma during the conflict*](#), October 2025.
- [*"Photo Set: Burma Army human rights violations in Southeast Burma \(January to June 2026\)"*](#), July 2026.
- [*"Mu Traw District Incident Report: Burma Army air strikes killed three villagers, injured 12 villagers including a child, and caused destruction to villagers' buildings in Lu Thaw Township \(April 2026\)"*](#), July 2026.

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.

