

## **Stepping into Uncertainty: Refugee and IDP Experiences of Return in Southeast Myanmar**

### **Appendix: Raw Data Testimony (March 2019 to March 2020)**

This appendix includes the full texts of 43 pieces of KHRG field documentation (raw data), which serve as the dataset for **Stepping into Uncertainty: Refugee and IDP Experiences of Return in Southeast Myanmar**. KHRG received this information from March 2019 to March 2020.

KHRG trains villagers in Southeast Myanmar to document individual human rights abuses using a standardised reporting format, conduct interviews with other villagers and write general updates on the situation in areas with which they are familiar. When conducting interviews, villagers are trained to use loose question guidelines, but also to encourage interviewees to speak freely about recent events, raise issues that they consider to be important and share their opinions or perspectives on abuse and other local dynamics. KHRG translates all documents for publication and undertakes minor edits only for security and clarity.

Between March 2019 and March 2020, KHRG researchers conducted 43 interviews with 44 persons across Southeast Myanmar for the purpose of this report. These interviews were held with a diverse group of people to ensure that their perspectives were representative of different segments of the population. **'Stepping into Uncertainty'** directly references these unpublished interviews.

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**Source #1**

Source doc #	Source #1
Log #	20-24-A3-11
Interview date	February 16 <sup>th</sup> 2020
Location	Ta Kreh (Paingkyon) Township, Hpa-an District
Full Text	<p><b>Hpa-an District Interview   Naw A--- (female), Mae La Ta Law Thaw repatriation site, Ta Kreh Township</b></p> <p><b>Status:</b> UNHCR-repatriated refugee  <b>Temporary shelter or IDP camp:</b> Beh Klaw [Mae La] Camp  <b>Return date(s):</b> February 2019</p> <p><b>Ethnicity:</b> Karen  <b>Religion:</b> Buddhist  <b>Marital status:</b> Married  <b>Occupation:</b> Farmer  <b>Position:</b> Villager</p> <p><b>How many family members do you have?</b>          I have six family members.</p> <p><b>How many children do you have?</b>          I have four children. My oldest child is married and she lives in Beh Klaw [Mae La] camp with her family.</p> <p><b>How many children live with you now?</b>          There are three children—one boy and two girls.</p> <p><b>Where did you live before you return?</b>          I lived in Beh Klaw [Mae La] Camp, Zone-C #---.</p> <p><b>Where is your village of origin [in Myanmar]?</b>          My origin village is Ba--- and it is in Lu Pleh [Hlaingbwe] Township.</p> <p><b>How long had you been lived in Beh Klaw?</b>          I had been living there since I was 14 years old. At first, I lived in a Thai village for 10 years and then I entered into the camp in 2005.</p> <p><b>So you have a UN identification card, right?</b>          Yes, I do.</p> <p><b>Had you ever been relocated before you went to the camp?</b>          Of course, I experienced that.</p> <p><b>Could you please explain it more for me?</b>          It was when I was around 12 years old and was looking after cows and buffalos with my friends. We did not feel secure to return to the village because the Myanmar government military was</p>

patrolling in our village and all of the villagers had fled to other places. Therefore, we could not eat and meal the whole night, and so we just had to eat sugarcane.

**Anything else?**

When I was about the age of my daughter, the Myanmar military [Infantry Battalion (IB)] #28 was the most prevalent and dangerous unit. For this reason, the villagers were always being displaced separately. My family lived in a house near our farm and it was a little far from the other houses. The [IB] #28 troops approached my village and entered my house. Immediately, they looted all of my families treasures, such as silver necklaces and coins, including around three precious green and red stones, and then some of my mother's [who passed away] clothes, such as woven Karen sarongs, blankets, blouses, and the woven shirts of my father. At first, my older sister tried to protect that family property by refusing to unlock the box. However, the Tatmadaw soldiers took the whole box. When my sister tried to get it back, they kicked my sister. And Tatmadaw soldiers on the steps also kicked another older sister who was coming back from the rice shop. During that situation, I was weeping and could not do anything. Another older sister who was looking after the cows rushed back home when she heard the sound of crying. Then she also tried to get that box back. However, she was also unsuccessful because the Tatmadaw soldiers hit her with the butt of a gun. She is now living in Bb--- [Thai] village. This incident occurred when we were children and I can still remember it well.

They regularly arrested villagers and forced them to porter for them. They also accused my father of being Kaw Thoo Lei [Karen National Liberation Army or Karen National Union]. At the time of that incident, when we saw them coming to the village, my father was running from them and entered into the paddy field. They shot around ten bullets at my father. I was also trying to follow my father into the field. Fortunately, it was when the paddy plants produced fruit so they could not find my father. My father hid in the paddy plants and he heard us crying as we tried to get the box back from the Tatmadaw. He thought that the Tatmadaw had tortured us. However, he could not return to us. Then he ran to the other side of the farm. He asked one of the married women to check whether or not we were fine.

At that time, my mother had saved for us those inherited treasures, such as silver necklaces.

**Why did you decide to return?**

I had been living in another country for a very long time and I was tired of it. So I decided to return. When I got the UN Identification Card, I was asked, "If the situation in your country improves, will you return?" I replied yes, and then they continue, "Will you resettle to a third country?" I answered, "No." This is what I had registered in my UN documentation. I did not feel happy to stay there anymore. This is my country—the country where I was born and the Karen country [State], so I love to live here because I can enjoy freedom of movement [for our livelihoods]. When we lived in Thailand, we were in a community without Karen and our relatives, so whenever we collected even one piece of fruit or anything from the Thai villages, they scowled and quarrelled with us. We had to live there for so long, so I did not love to stay there anymore. Then I returned to the community where my friends were and to the country where I grew up. I do not want to go further [resettle to a third country] anymore.

**Do you think about returning to your village of origin?**

I think I cannot return anymore because all of my father's lands were confiscated by the Border Guard Force [BGF] and those lands are now filled with plantations, like rubber trees. Even if I could return, I would not be able to get back a single acre of our land. Last year, I returned to my village and I saw BGF rubber plantations on the entire area of my father's lands. Therefore, I cannot go back anymore.

**How long have you returned here?**

It has been three years.

**When did you return?**

I lived here for three rainy seasons [three years], I lived in my house [another place] for two rainy seasons and I also lived in the forest for one rainy season. [So she probably returned in 2014 – around six years before this interview.]

**How did you return?**

Firstly, I returned to this place [visited the place, prepared the place, and made sure it is was safe to return to] and then I applied for repatriation [the official UNHCR process]. Furthermore, they interviewed us [several times] and then they sent us back [to the place we decided to return to] through Myawaddy town [across the Thai-Burma Friendship Bridge].

**When was that?**

It was last year [2019], on February 20<sup>th</sup>.

**So you personally returned here before the official repatriation, correct?**

Yes, that is correct. At that time, I just returned and worked on other people's farms and depended on my relatives.

**What were you promised by the responsible people [the repatriation committee]?**

They told us that we could report anything if we had a difficult situation. Whether it is a good situation or not, we just have to struggle for our livelihoods like this. Last year, they revisited us and they asked us, "How have you used the money you received for the repatriation?" I replied to them, "I bought posts and wooden planks for housing because it will not be easy to get wood and bamboo in the future." Even though I could not construct a big house, I just built a little better house so that we can live [with all of our family members].

**What organisations were they from?**

I do not know [the organisation], but we were sent here by the UN.

**Can you explain to me more in detail about your experiences on your way to here?**

We were tired of living in the camp. There is no freedom of movement. We would like to go somewhere, like be able to collect vegetables from outside of the camp, but the Thai [authorities] would not allow us to go anywhere so we would sneak out of the camp and work as day labourers [for our family income]. We learned about the situation in Karen [State] and that people there could live, so we thought that we would be able to live like them. We also moved step by step [to Karen State]. Later on, we decided to return.

**How was your trip from Beh Klaw to Myawaddy and then to this area?**

We returned by car with the arrangement of [UNHCR] staff to this return site.

**Were you given a medical check before you returned?**

Yes, we were.

**Did any health workers follow you along the way to the return site?**

No, they did not.

**Did you face any difficulties on your way?**

It was extremely hot and cramped [in the back of the trucks] with children like that.

**Did you have a house in the camp?**

Yes, I did. However, I handed it over to my daughter and now the house has been destroyed. They are not allowing people to collect bamboo and wood from the forest [outside of the camp]. Therefore, she cannot live in the house anymore and she has to sneak out from the camp for daily labour work opportunities.

**What organisations arranged your transportation by truck to the Myanmar side?**

People from Ker Rer Poo [KNU/KNLA-PC headquarters in Mae La Way Ler Moo]. [Actually, the Myanmar government arranged the transportation.]

**How many of your children returned with you?**

Three of my children returned with me. My daughter is still in the camp with her family.

**Did you receive enough food for your return?**

We just got one sack of rice, one pot, one plate, one blanket, and one pack of noodles per family. We also got one sarong for each woman and one longyi for each man.

**Where did you get them?**

We got them in Myawaddy.

**Do you know [which] organisation [gave them to you]?**

No, I do not.

**Were those supports sufficient [for your family]?**

No, they were not. They were not even enough for one day of food and [the sack of rice] did not even last one month.

**Did you receive any money on your way?**

Yes, we did.

**How much did you get?**

It depended on the number of family members. Families with more members got more money.

**How about your family?**

I got 400,000 kyats for my family.

**How much did you get on the Thailand side?**

We got 9,300 baht per adult and 7,500 baht per child.

**How many adults are there in your family?**

There are four adults and one child.

**Did you feel safe on your way to here?**

Yes, I did.

**How is the security situation in this area?**

It is safe.

**Which armed groups are active in your area?**

There is only the KNU/KNLA PC.

**Have you ever heard about unexploded ordnance [UXO] exploding in your area?**

No.

**Did you receive Mine Risk Education [MRE] training?**

Yes, we did. In the camp, before I returned.

**Who provided it to you?**

They are the same group as the repatriation arrangement [committee].

**Can you enjoy freedom of movement?**

Yes, we can.

**Are there any natural disaster-related issues in your area?**

No, there has not been flooding that would have displaced us.

**Who are the local authorities in this area?**

There are only [KNU/KNLA-]PC and KNU.

**What organisations arranged everything for the repatriation?**

I do not know. I just got information that we could apply for the return so I did it. Next, they called us for interviews around four times and then we could return. I think that the BGF drove us here from Myawaddy with the involvement of the Myanmar government. I do not exactly know.

**Did you receive any other supports?**

No. There are not. [adding] I do not know whether people will take account of what we raise or not. We are afraid [shy to state] our ideas.

**Are there any women in management roles? For example, village leaders.**

No, there are not.

**What is your water source?**

I access water from a pipe.

**Who build the water supply for you?**

I do not know. It might be from some support [humanitarian aid].

**Do you receive any hygiene or sanitation materials—for example, soap?**

No, I do not. I have to buy everything. However, we received a toilet bowl and then we had to build our own toilet.

**Who provided it?**

I do not know.

**Do you have access to electricity?**

No, we do not. We just have to buy a solar panel.

**How do you cook?**

I cook with firewood.



**Is it easy to get firewood? How far is it?**

It is now easy [...] to get firewood. However, we are not sure how it will be in the future.

**Do you have enough space in your house for your family?**

Yes, we do.

**Do you have enough blankets, mats, and mosquito nets?**

No, we do not have enough, because we just have what we brought from the camp.

**Do you receive any other support?**

No, we do not.

**If any of you are sick, is it easy to access healthcare services?**

We just go to the Mae La [Thai village] government clinic for blood tests and medicine.

**Is it easy to get there?**

It depends on the Thai [authorities]. It is easy when they give us permission [to enter the camp]. However, it is hard when they do not. Then, we have to return [to the repatriation site] just like that. Later on, we have to buy medicine from shops in our area. We do not have a clinic in our area, so it is very hard. It would be great if we had one in this community, so that we could easily get medicine and treatment here.

**What are the common illnesses in your area?**

We usually face malaria. One of my daughters and my husband got malaria at the beginning of the rainy season, last year.

**Did health workers test you for malaria?**

Yes, they did. The results were negative. Then I went to a Thai [clinic]. The test is free. However, we have to buy medicine for the treatment.

**So you do not have a clinic in your area, how about a school? Can repatriated children go to school?**

Yes, they can. My daughter also goes to school.

**Do you think the quality of the education is good?**

Yes, it is good.

**Up to how many standards does the school go?**

It goes up to standard seven.

**Are there any problems for the children to go to school?**

No, there are not.

**What work do you do for your livelihoods?**

We work on a farm, cultivating beans, ethanol corn, and paddy. However, we could not harvest paddy this year.

**Did you receive land for farming?**

No, we did not.

**Where do you farm?**

We just bought land to build a house.

**How about the farm?**

We just rent the farm from other people.

**You said you could not harvest paddy this year, so how will you overcome this issue this year?**

We just have to work on the farm again.

**Do you have other job opportunities, such as day labour?**

Yes, there are some. My children are involved in day labour, such as corn processing.

**How much do they get per day?**

They each get 150 baht per day.

**Did you or any of your family members receive any vocational training in the camp?**

No, we did not.

**Is it easy to get a job?**

I do not work outdoors, only my children do. I just work at home collecting T'La Aww leaves [thatch] and I look after my livestock, such as pigs and chickens.

**Do you have any documents—for example, a National Identification Card [ID], household registration?**

Yes, we have IDs.

**Where did you get it?**

I got it from Bc--- [village].

**Who arranged it for you?**

Maybe they were people in K'Rer Pu [KNU/KNLA-PC leaders in Mae La Way Ler Moo].

**Have you received any support from the Myanmar government?**

No, we have not received anything.

**Will your daughter who stayed in the camp return here?**

She might return and live with me, but she might not return through the official process [as I did]. She does not have a house in the camp anymore.

**Why doesn't she apply for official repatriation?**

She does not want to do it. She might return to me when she decided that she does not want to stay there anymore.

**Do you know about the 2020 election?**

No, I do not.

**Is voter registration available?**

No, it is not available in our community yet.

**Do you think you will register for voting?**

I am not literate, so it depends on the people who have knowledge [local authorities]. If they ask me to register and others do it, then I will do it. If not, I will not do it.

**Can you participate in decision-making?**

I think it is okay if we feel confident to raise our opinion. I do not know whether people will take account of what we raise or not. We are afraid [shy to report] our ideas.

**Were your rights abused while you were in the camp?**

There was only one thing: we could not leave the camp. When section leaders told us not to go outside, then we just had to live in the camp, so we could not go anywhere. If we needed to go out, we had to get a permission letter. They cost 200 each. We had to do that in order to work as day labourers outside the camp. I could not endure it anymore, so I decided to return.

**Can you enjoy full religious freedom?**

Yes, I can.

**What is your most pressing requirement?**

I need land to farm, and livestock in our own garden. That would be helpful for me and I would not have to rent land. I would also not have to get loans from the boss and then I would be able to buy a tractor for farming and I would be able to get more benefits from farming. Currently, we have to rent the land and the motor machine [farming equipment]. We also have to get loans [for material], such as insecticide, and we have to pay them back by the end of the harvest, so our crops are almost gone.

**Do you think you will stay here permanently?**

Yes, I do. I will not go to other places.

**What supports do you think our Karen leaders should provide for you?**

Actually, we should not have to buy land to build our houses. They should provide land for our house and farming.

**Do you have any other else?**

It would be helpful if we could buy animals, such as two or three goats. [Authorities should also provide animals.]

**Do you regret returning?**

No, I do not. However, I dream of having animals to breed for my family's livelihoods. There should also be more freedom for our animals to access food. Our animals can graze on other people's farms [pastures] because they are Karen and our friends, so they do not argue with us. On the other hand, if our animals eat their plants, the landowners warn us in Karen, so we understand it and we can solve the problem peacefully. It is not easy in Thailand or in a third country either.

You see, we can untie our pigs and goats around the community. We cannot do that in Thailand, so we have to follow our animals all the time. We have been able to move around more freely and access land since we returned to our Karen community.

**Do you have anything more to add?**

No, I do not.

**Thank you very much for giving us your time.**

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**Source #2**

Source doc #	Source #2
Log #	20-2-A5-11
Interview date	December 30 <sup>th</sup> 2019
Location	Noh T’Kaw (Kyainseikgyi) Township, Dooplaya District
Full Text	

**Dooplaya District Interview | B--- (female), C--- village, Kya In village tract, Noh T’Kaw Township**

**Status:** UNHCR-repatriated refugee  
**Temporary shelter or IDP camp:** Noh Poe Camp  
**Return date(s):** February 2019

**Ethnicity:** Karen  
**Marital status:** Married  
**Occupation:** Day labourer  
**Position:** Villager

**What do you do for a living?**  
 Since I came back here, I have not had any stable work to do.

**How many people are there in your family?**  
 There are five people in my family.

**I know that you used to live in a refugee camp. Then, you returned to Burma. I would like to know: where did you come back to live? What is the name of the village to which you returned?**  
 I returned to C--- village, Noh T’Kaw Township, Dooplaya District.

**When did you go to the refugee camp in Thailand?**  
 I went to the refugee camp in 2007.

**Why did you go to stay there?**  
 It was not stable to live in Myanmar. Also, it was difficult to access work and education. I already had a child when I went to the refugee camp. We could not afford to send our child to school [in Myanmar].

**Which refugee camp did you go to?**  
 It was Noh Poe refugee camp.

**How many years did you live in Noh Poe refugee camp?**  
 I lived in Noh Poe refugee camp for 13 years.

**Why did you decide to return to Burma?**  
 We received less and less support in the refugee camp. It was difficult to travel in order to find work for our livelihood because we were not free to travel [in Thailand]. We lived under the law

[of the Thai government] so we had to follow the law. The food aid is getting reduced. The other aid such as housing materials is getting reduced too.

**When did you come back?**

I returned to Burma on February 22<sup>nd</sup> 2019.

**Why did you come back? Were you forced to return? Did you just want to come back?**

I just wanted to come back. I was not forced to come back. I did not have any land to work on when I lived in the refugee camp.

**Did you come back on your own? Did you come back with the arrangement of local authorities?**

I came back with the arrangement of the UN [UNHCR].

**How long have you been in the village since you came back?**

I have been living in the village for 11 months.

**Were you informed about the situation in Burma where you were going to stay before you returned? If you were informed about it, was the situation similar with what you have been told?**

Before I returned, I tried to find information about the situation in Burma. Also, I received the information letter about the return programme. According to the letter, the Myanmar government is willing to welcome refugees warmly and they will support the refugees fully in terms of education, healthcare, livelihood and housing. When we first came back to Burma [Myanmar], they supported us and they gave us aid but it was just enough for one month. We received rice, oil and other food [from the Myanmar government] but it was just enough for a month. The Myanmar government provided 93,000 kyats [per person]. The Red Cross, Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement also gave a small donation to us such as clothes and some financial help. If I combine all the money I received from the Red Cross, Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement and the Myanmar government, I got 470,000 kyats in total. I received 93,000 kyats and food such as rice from the Myanmar government but it was just enough for a month.

When I arrived in Myawaddy town, we were told that we could apply for our household registration and ID card but [in the end] they [the Myanmar government] did not make it for us. They just gave us a temporary household registration letter. Later, we just had to apply for ID cards and household registration documents when we arrived in the village. We just made it with the help of local authorities in the village. It was easy to apply for because they gave us a recommendation letter, so we did not have to pay any fee.

Everything was going well when we travelled from Noh Poe refugee camp to Myawaddy. They [the Thai government] took all the necessary measures to protect us during the trip. It was 3 PM when we arrived in Myawaddy. Then, we ate rice and we took a rest. They [the Myanmar government] took photos of us as they held a welcome ceremony. Then, we were told that there was no car for us [to go back to the return site]. For the refugees who were returning to other places in Karen State, cars had already been arranged to bring them to their return places. As for those of us who returned to Kyainseikgyi Township, there was no car. So, we were told that we would have to sleep overnight [in Myawaddy]. I asked many questions about what was going on. Then, we were told again that we would not have to stay overnight. [However,] the Kyainseikgyi township administrator [Myanmar government official] did not come to get us [in Myawaddy]. Actually, he was responsible for taking us home. Instead, the Kyaikdon town

administrator came to get us because some refugees had to go back to Kyaikdon town. However, he just came to us with his own small car. I think he hired trucks in Myawaddy to take us home. Therefore, we just came back to the village with big trucks as there were many refugees from Noh Poe and Thaw Pa refugee camps. There were two big trucks. We got dirty all over our bodies when we got into the big truck because there was powder from charcoal and cement. We could not wash our clothes when we got to the village because it was very dirty. Anyway, we were dropped at the big office in Kyainseikgyi town. We arrived in Kyainseikgyi town at 3 AM. Even though Myawaddy and Kyainseikgyi are near, it took a long time. In the morning, nobody came to take us. As my village is near Kyainseikgyi town, I informed them that I would like to take a taxi and I would go back to my village on my own. However, they did not let me go. There were many children who were hungry in the morning. They cried a lot because they were hungry. But they still did not let us go. They said that we can only go if other people [local authorities] come to sign the [reception] letter. I did not have time to contact my village head when I came back. Therefore, my village head did not know the situation in advance. In the afternoon, my village head came to take us. Many children were crying as they were hungry. They had not eaten anything yet. Even though I know how to go back to my village, they would not let me go. Many refugees were angry at them and they complained because it was already time to go back. When my village head came to sign the letter for me, I still had to take a taxi on my own. Nobody gave me a ride.

**How many households of refugees came back together with you?**

I think more than ten households from Noh Poe refugee camp came back together with me. There were more than 100 people from Noh Poe refugee camp. However, we faced some difficulties when we came back but nobody knew it. We did not know that we would face these difficulties if we returned. Before we returned, we thought that we would not face any challenges if we came back. We thought that we would be able to come back smoothly. We thought that we would receive full support and full protection.

**Did you get a medical check-up before you return?**

Yes. I had to take medicine once per month [when I lived in refugee camp] because I have high blood pressure. Before I returned, a doctor gave me enough medicine for three months. Since I came back to the village, I have not suffered from high blood pressure anymore. I am so blessed.

**Were there any organizations that looked after you along the way when you came back?**

There were many organizations looking after us along the way from Noh Poe refugee camp to Myawaddy. They were the Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees, United Nations staff, Thai soldiers, and Thai police officers. I do not know the names of other organizations.

When we arrived in Myawaddy, there was no protection for us. There is a checkpoint in Myawaddy. They questioned us a lot. It took a long time. The [Myanmar government] officers at the checkpoint scolded us because they said that we did not give them information. They scolded us for a long time.

**Were there any doctor or health workers with you when you came back?**

There were many Thai police officers and other Thai people together with us when we came back from Noh Poe refugee camp to Myawaddy. I do not think we had any doctor with us.

**How long did it take when you came back from Noh Poe refugee camp to the village?**

It took a day.

**Were there any refugees who immediately got health problems during the trip?**

No. Everyone was fine when we were in the car. Nobody got health problems during the trip.

**Were you allowed to bring your property with you when you came back?**

Yes.

**Did you receive enough food during the trip?**

As for me, I can easily get carsick. Therefore, I did not want to eat anything during the trip. But some of my friends said that they did not get enough food during the trip. When we arrived at Uthe mpiem refugee camp, we took a break. During the break, each person received one styrofoam box with food [Paka Paung] but my friends said that it was not enough for them. Therefore, I told my husband to go and ask for another box for them. When my husband went to ask for more food, they [Thai authorities] said that they would only provide one food container to each person. As I did not want to eat food, I gave my food container to my friends.

When we arrived in Myawaddy, they [Myanmar government authorities] gave us rice and eggs to eat. However, I knew that things did not go well with food service. I got a letter card, so I could go to eat in the dining room. If we did not get a letter card, we could not go to eat. When letter cards were distributed, I got one. Some of my friends did not know what was going on so they did not get a letter card for food. So I told authorities that some of my friends did not get letter cards. Even though we received letter cards, not everyone had a chance to go and eat in the dining room. There was a couple: a husband and wife. The husband got a letter card and he went to eat but his wife could not go because all the letter cards were already gone. Had I not gone to inform the food providers, she would not have gotten any food. Some people [refugees] felt uncomfortable to tell the food providers. I just had to inform the food providers that they had not yet gotten food.

**Did you feel like you were safe during the trip back to Burma?**

During the trip in Thailand, there were Thai police cars in front of us and behind us on the way. Everybody moved away when we were coming along. No other car was in our way. During the trip in Burma, there was nobody who looked after us. There was no protection for us. We just had to ask [other people] about the situation. When I arrived in Myawaddy, I asked them [Myanmar authorities] whether they had prepared transportation for us or not. As soon as I knew that there was no transportation for us, I just wanted to hire a taxi in order to go back to the village. The Kyaikdon town administrator told us that we did not need to hire a car. Instead, he hired a truck for us. It was not comfortable taking the truck because there was cement and charcoal powder inside the truck. Also, many babies were crying.

**Please tell me about the security situation in the village where you live now.**

There is nothing to worry about regarding security. We do not have any problems regarding security. We can stay safely.

**Do you think you are safer here than when you lived in refugee camp?**

Compared to the refugee camp, the situation here is not stable because you already know that the situation in Burma is not as good as in Thailand.

**What is the biggest concern regarding your security?**

I do not have any big concern.

**Have you seen or faced any human rights abuse since coming back to the village?**

No. I have not seen any abuses here.

**Are there any landmines or UXOs in the village?**

There is a UXO in this well. People said that Tatmadaw soldiers shot at the village with big weapons [artillery] many years ago, before we came back. It fell down the well. It has not exploded yet.

**Is there any person who will take responsibility to remove this UXO from the well?**

No. People told us that there is a UXO in the well. The UXO is covered with soil. So, it goes under the soil even though it is in the well. The landowner said that he was going to make the land even but his nephew told him that there is an unexploded mortar shell in the land. The Tamadaw shot at the village during school time. Some students died due to the attack. It was three years ago.

**Have you attended any landmine workshop?**

Yes.

**Do you have any concerns regarding this UXO as there is nobody who will take responsibility to remove it?**

I do have concerns because I do not know when it will explode. So I told my children not to go near the UXO. Even though many people in the village know about it, there is nobody who takes responsibility to remove it.

**Did you inform any local leader about it?**

No. We did not inform any local leader because we thought that we were not going to stay in this village forever.

**Did you come back to live in this village because you did not have any land to live on [in other places]?**

I just came back to stay in this village because I did not have any land to live on. As I do not have any land, the local authorities provided me one and a half acres of land in Bd--- village. They gave us land just recently, in the rainy season. They asked us whether we had land or not. They provided us with land because we did not have any land. We have already gone to clear the land. I mean they are the authorities from other places. They are not the authorities from this village. They told us that we needed to clear the given land and that we needed to build a house. As we came back just recently, we were unable to build a house on the land immediately. The land is still empty up to now. They told us to build a house. If not, it would be difficult for us to get the land. At least we have to show something. It would not matter if we build a small hut. However, they told us that we could not sell this land. We could stay on the land forever but we could not sell the land if we wanted to leave the land.

**As you did not have land to live on in Burma, did you contact your relatives for help when you came back? Which land are you living on now? Whose land is it?**

When we decided to return to Burma, we contacted our relatives for help if we came back because we did not have any land on which to stay. Our relatives told us that we could stay on their land if we came back. Currently, we are living on our mother's land. There are many households in our family. We can live on our mother's land, but we do not feel comfortable, as there are many people. Therefore, my youngest aunt told me that we could go to stay on her land, as she does not live on her land, so we built a house on her land.

**Have you ever seen any landmine or UXO with your own eyes since you came back here?**

No.



**Do you feel like you are free to travel here? Is there any restriction on freedom of movement here?**

No. We can travel freely.

**Did you get enough water when you came back here?**

We have had to go and get water from a far place since coming back to stay here. We cannot get water here during the hot season because it has already dried up. Therefore, we have to buy water during the hot season. We do not have access to water in this village because we do not have a well. So, we have to go and get water from another place. It is so far. We only have the old well but we do not have water in the well. That is why we plan to rebuild the old well in order to get water. However, there is a UXO in the old well. People said that this UXO should have exploded a long time ago, so it will not explode anymore. However, I will not stay near the well if people rebuild it. I know very well about the UXO. I told my husband that I am concerned about the UXO because we cannot tell exactly whether or not the UXO will explode. What will they do if the UXO explodes when they rebuild the well? My aunt said that she is going to rebuild the well in the hot season. We suggested to her not to rebuild the well. It is better to dig a well in another place. Many people also told her not to do it. We do not know what she is going to plan. We have to go and get water from a place very far away. People said that we will have to buy water during the hot season.

**Did you receive any support from other organizations? I mean housing material**

We do not receive any support. We just had to buy bamboos in order to build our house. The price of one bamboo is 2,000 kyats.

**Is there any assistance provided by [humanitarian] organizations?**

No.

**Are there any women who are local community leaders here?**

No. I have not seen anyone.

**Do you have access to basic needs such as food and water? Is the drinking water clean?**

I think the drinking water is clean because we go and get water from the well. As for the food, we can find it on our own, so we can have daily food. It is just enough.

**What about toilets? Do you have enough?**

We had to build our own toilets.

**Do you get hygiene products such as soap?**

Yes. We have to buy them. Actually, we have had to buy everything we need since coming back here.

**Do you have enough blankets, mats and pillows?**

We brought everything that we needed for our bed from the refugee camp. Nobody supports us here. If we need something, we just have to buy it.

**Can you easily get something you need here?**

Yes. We can easily get what we need here only if we have money. If you have money, you can get anything you need.

**You said that you need to worry about your security. For example, are you okay to sleep**

**alone in your house?**

Even though I stay together with three of my children, I am afraid to sleep. I have to go and sleep with my little brother.

**Why?**

I am afraid to sleep alone because there are Bamar and Mon people who come to work on other people's plantations in the village. We are afraid of them. We are not afraid of Karen people in the village because we know that they are Karen. I heard that [outside] people secretly attack villagers. Also, I heard that they enter secretly into villagers' houses. Even though I have not experienced that kind of situation, I am afraid of it.

**Do you have a waste management system here? How do you manage rubbish and waste?**

We do not have any special place to keep our waste here. We have a big hole in the ground. We collect rubbish, plastics and other wastes and then we put them in the big hole. Then, we burn them.

**Do you have access to electricity here?**

No.

**So how do you cook?**

We use firewood for cooking.

**Where do you get firewood?**

We have to find it on our own.

**Do you think your current house is big enough for your family?**

It is big enough for my family, but we need to repair it as we built a bamboo house. To repair the house, we have to buy house materials. One bamboo pole costs 2,000 kyats. We have to repair our house because some of the bamboo poles have already decayed.

**Is it strong enough to protect you from bad weather?**

Yes. I think so. It was just built a year ago.

**Do you have enough blankets, mats and mosquito nets for your family?**

Yes.

**Do you mean that you brought all of them from the refugee camp?**

Yes.

**Do you have access to healthcare services in your area?**

We do not have access to healthcare services here. All of my children already got enough vaccinations when we lived in the refugee camp. If we are sick, we have to buy medicine. We have to buy everything. We do not get even one pill or paracetamol for free.

**Is it hard to go and get healthcare services?**

No. It is easy but it costs a lot of money.

**Do you think that the healthcare services provided are of good quality?**

No. We do not have good quality healthcare services, but we can get good quality if we pay a lot of money. You will never get good quality if you cannot afford it.

**What are the most common sicknesses affecting the returnees?**

The common sickness is malaria. We just go and get two blister packages of medicine but we have to pay 4,000 or 5,000 kyats. My husband got one injection and he had to pay 7,000 or 8,000 kyats.

**Do children have access to education in your area?**

Yes. Our children can go to school here because we returned with the management of the UN [UNHRC]. If we had returned on our own, our children could not have gone to school. School teachers said that we cannot go to school if we do not have any document[ation]. But we have documents as we came back under the management of the UN [UNHCR]. So, we can show school teachers our children's report cards and school transfer letters [from the refugee camp]. If we can show them these kinds of documents, they have to accept our children. They said that they will only accept us if we can show them documents.

**Do you think that the quality of the education provided is good?**

The quality of teaching Burmese and Math is good but the quality of teaching English is poor.

**Do you think there is a good relationship between students and teachers in the school?**

I think they have a good relationship. As for our children, they are weak in the Burmese subject. So the school headmaster recommended that we send our children to tuition class [extra class after school]. If we send our children to tuition class, we would not be able to afford the tuition fee, so we decided not to send our children to tuition class. Some of our relatives have Burmese language skills, so they teach Burmese language to our children for free.

**What are the main challenges in accessing education?**

No. I do not see anything.

**Does the Myanmar government recognize your children's school transfer certificate from the refugee camp?**

Yes. They recognize it. That is why they accepted our children in school. Actually, they accepted us because we returned to Burma with the management of the UN [UNHRC]. They will accept us as long as we do not come back on our own.

**Can you earn enough income to cover the needs of your family?**

I just work as a day labourer. It means that I do not have work every day. Only my husband goes to work to earn income. I cannot work every day as I have to take care of my children at home. I do not have a stable job to do.

**What does your husband work?**

He works as a carpenter.

**You told me that you got the land. How many acres of land did you get?**

I got one and a half acres.

**Who provided the land? The KNU or the Myanmar government?**

I think it was the KNU.

**Do you know the KNU leader?**

No.

**Do you think it is enough land to work on in order to secure your family's livelihood?**

I don't think it is enough. I already went to see the land when we cleared it. We can just build a house, well, and toilet and we can just grow some vegetables on the land. It is not very wide.

**Do you think every returnee will get land?**

No. Not every returnee gets land. As for us, we actually will not get land. They [local authorities] said that only those people [returnees] who were born in Bd--- village will get land. Therefore, I got land as I was born in Bd--- village. Then, the village head managed the land provision for me as I was born in Bd--- village. However, I am not sure that I will get the land because I cannot build a house on the given land. The village head already informed us two times that we had to build a house on the land but we have not yet been able to build it. That is why I cannot say that I will get the land for sure. If I cannot actually build a house, I will not get the land.

**Do you think you will be able to survive if you do not receive any help, such as land?**

No. I do not think so because our children need land for their future. We also lack basic necessities in our house.

**Do you have other work to do?**

No.

**Did you receive vocational training in the refugee camp?**

No. [...] There have been many vocational trainings but I have not been able to attend the trainings as I have had to take care of my young children at home.

**Did some of your relatives or other returnees have to leave the village to find a job?**

I never heard that they left the village to find a job. Usually, they work as day labourers in the village.

**Did anyone go to other countries to find a job? For example, did they go to Bangkok to find a job?**

I heard that they would like to go to other countries in order to find a job but they said that they could not afford the visa or passport fee. If they had money, they would like to go. Even my husband, he would like to go and get a job in another country but it costs a lot of money to get documents.

**Is there any other work to do in the village?**

No.

**Do you have legal documents, such as ID cards, birth certificates, and household registration documents?**

When we arrived in Myawaddy, we were registered for temporary household registration. We came back to the village. Then, officers from the immigration office [Myanmar government] sent our temporary household registration and our name list to the village head. The next day, we followed the village head [to the immigration office] and we got the ID card and permanent household registration.

**What about your children's birth certificates?**

Yes. We got birth certificates for our children.

**What about a land document?**

No. We have not gotten a land document.

**I mean the land you got. It is one and a half acres of land?**

I heard that they are going to make a land title for us.

**Who will make it?**

The KNU will make it.

**Did you receive any assistance from the Myanmar government after you got legal documents?**

No.

**Were you able to reunite with your family members? I mean did you get to stay together with your family?**

Yes. We got to stay together with our family.

**Have you heard about the upcoming national elections in 2020?**

Yes. I heard about it.

**Do you plan to register for the upcoming national election in 2020? Do you think that you will be able to register and vote?**

I think we will be able to vote as we have ID cards.

**Do you have the opportunity to participate in local decision-making procedures [community meetings, meetings with local authorities, etc.]?**

No.

**Why?**

Actually, I do not want to participate. Also, we do not have an opportunity to participate.

**Does discrimination play a role in this?**

No.

**Do you feel like your rights were violated while you were in the camp?**

No.

**Do you think that you will be able to access justice to solve any case you are facing?**

I do not understand your question very well.

**For example, I mean, if your land and property are confiscated, do you think that you will be able to solve the problem?**

I think I will be able to solve the problem if I have that kind of situation.

**Do you have the opportunity to practice your religion freely?**

Yes.

**What are your most pressing needs?**

Actually, I need so many important things. Even though we have access to education and healthcare, it cost a lot of money to get healthcare services but it cost a little money to get education. Now we do not have any stable shelter such as a house. If we do not have shelter, we do not know where we are going to live.

**Do you think the current situation is sustainable?**

I feel like the current situation is not sustainable.

**Are you worried about your future?**

I worry that fighting will occur in the future. I would be afraid to live here if fighting happens because fighting has happened here in the past. Before I returned to Burma [Myanmar], I already asked the UN staff whether I could go back to Thailand or not if the fighting breaks out in the repatriation area. They told me I could go back to Thailand if the fighting breaks out.

**Do you think that you are likely to be displaced again?**

We cannot say about it for sure because the current situation is not stable because the fighting happens very often in other areas even though it does not happen in our area.

**What do you think the Myanmar government and other actors [KNU, CBOs, NGOs, etc.] should do to help the returnees?**

They should provide shelters [housing] for the returnees. They should ensure that education, healthcare and livelihood opportunities are already arranged in the repatriation sites before the refugees come back. They should provide protection and security for returnees. I think I made a big mistake when I decided to come back because I know the real situation now. I faced a difficult situation myself. I also warned my friends who live in the refugee camp. I told them to make the right decision before they come back because I told them everything I have experienced when I came back.

**Were you not informed about the situation in the resettlement site before you came back?**

Before I came back, I asked other people who already returned to Burma [Myanmar] about the situation. They said that the situation was good. That is why I decided to come back. I asked the people who had already returned to Burma about their return trip. They said that they were warmly welcomed and they were provided with transportation for the trip. When I came back, nobody came to take us. I started to realise that there are no guarantees for us in Burma.

**Do you regret coming back to Myanmar? If so, could you explain why?**

Yes, I regret coming back to Myanmar. If I had known the real situation, I would not have come back. I only knew the real situation when I came back. Therefore, I often share my experiences with other refugees who would like to come back. I tell them to think carefully before deciding to come back.

**Is there anything you would like to add or share? Do you have any other suggestions for the Myanmar government and KNU?**

I do not know what suggestions to give them. I think they also know the situation.

**As I explained you regarding our KHRG work, will you allow KHRG to use your information and picture for documentation and publication?**

Yes.

**We also consider your security before we publish information. We will censor your face and your name.**

Actually, I think we should publish this information because it will be better for the refugees who would like to come back, so that they know the real situation before they come back. It is good for the UN and other organizations in Thailand because they do not know the real situation after we came back. They think that everything is going well for us but actually it is not. They do not

know that things are not going well for us.

**Thank you for sharing this information.**  
Yes.

### Source #3

Source doc #	Source # 3
Log #	20-25-A2-I1
Interview date	February 16th 2020
Location	Ta Kreh (PaingKyon) Twonship, Hpa-an District
Full Text	

#### **Hpa-an District Interview | Naw D --- (female), Mae La Ta Law Thaw repatriation site, Ta Kreh Township**

**Status:** UNHCR-repatriated refugee

**Temporary shelter or IDP camp:** Beh Klaw (Mae La) Camp

**Return date(s):** UNHCR repatriation date: n/s - Self: 7 years ago

**Ethnicity:** Karen

**Religion:** Buddhist

**Marital status:** Married

**Occupation:** Farming (teacher)

**Position:** Villager

#### **Where is your origin village?**

I am from K'Ma Moh [Ka Ma Maung].

#### **Most people [here] are from Brigade #1 [Doo Tha Htoo Distirct].**

Yes. Most people are from K'Ma Moh and Be---

#### **Why did you displace to the refugee camp?**

It was because of the conflict in the past.

#### **When did you go?**

I don't remember the date. I lived in the refugee camp for almost 30 years.

#### **So you have the UN [document].**

Yes, I have.

#### **Why don't you go to any third countries [resettlement]?**

I cannot go because we returned here and [lost] all of our cards [UN document, household ration card, and etc.].

#### **I mean before you returned here.**

It was because we did not want to go.

#### **Why did you return here?**

I thought to return to our own country where we can work on farms, as we cannot work on farms when living in the refugee camp. It is not easy to travel. If you would like to travel to other places, you have to get a recommendation letter or a travel document, and you are allowed to travel only for three to four days. We were not allowed to travel and work, even for a week or a month. We had to pay 200 baht to get a travel document.

**So it costs 200 baht for a travel document.**

Yes, and many people are doing it for travelling. You get a travel document and go to work for one day, you will just earn the same amount of payment as the cost of the travel document.”

**How long have you returned and lived here?**

I think it's been almost 7 years.

**How did you displace to the refugee camp? Did you go there with your family or alone?**

I went there alone.

**How about your parents? Are they still living in the village?**

I do not have parents. They passed away already.

**How about your siblings?**

They are in [the village] in Burma too.

**Do you think you will return to your birthplace?**

I think so if the situation in the country is settled down and peaceful. I don't like living here [in the recent village] because we cannot do anything.

**Is it easy to go back and live with your siblings?**

I think it is not easy because I do not have a place to live and work on, as they have their own land to live and work.

**So it depends on your own decision. Did you feel pressured to return to your village [here in the recent place]?**

No, it was our own decision to return.

**Did they offer the information of the resettlement site before you returned here?**

Yes, they did.

**How did they tell you?**

They said they will visit us after we returned here [in the resettlement site] for six months and they will visit us once in six months. But we haven't see any of them visiting us yet.

**Do they offer you financial support even though they do not visit?**

No, they do not. We just have to work by ourselves. We are living and working as usual here even though we have debts. Although we are now working on hill farms; we are working on someone's hill farms.

**Which organization told you they are going to provide support and visit you if you return?**

I don't remember the organization name. UNHCR I think.

**Did [UNHCR] tell you when you registered to return?**



Yes, we returned a long time ago here and we went back to the refugee camp and registered in the returnees' repatriation list.

**So you cannot go to third countries anymore as your [UN documents] were taken back?**

Yes, we cannot go anymore.

**Do you still have a house in [Mae La] refugee camp?**

No, it has been dismantled already. We had one when we were living there and we sold it to someone else before we returned.

**How about your land? Did you also sell it?**

We did not have land. We also bought someone else's house. In the beginning, we lived in someone's house and later we bought a house. We could not do anything when living there. I taught in the school and my husband worked as a day labourer [outside of the camp].

**How about the things such as pots, pans, plate, and etc. from your house in the refugee camp? Did you get to take them back?**

Yes, we took them all.

**Were you allowed to take them back?**

Yes, we were allowed. [...]

**Did not you come back from Myawaddy?**

Yes, we slept in Myawaddy for one night.

**Did you get a medical check-up before you came back here?**

Yes, we did.

**Was it in Mae La?**

Yes.

**Did you have enough space on the car when you came back?**

Yes, we had and they even sent us here.

**Did you receive any support to return?**

Yes, they covered the travel and food costs.

**How much did you get?**

We got 400,000 kyats each.

**Was it in Thai baht?**

No, we got 400,000 kyats from the Myanmar side.

**How about from the Thai side?**

We got 9,300 baht.

**Was it for everyone, both children and adults?**

No, my son just got 7,900 baht.

**How about food and other things?**

Yes they gave one pot but they did not give plates. They gave us mosquito nets, tooth paste,

money and one bottle of drinking water each.

**Did they give you food [rice] before you came back?**

Yes, they gave it to us in the morning when we came back.

**Did the doctors or health workers follow you when you came back from Myawaddy?**

No, I did not see any doctors or health workers. I just saw the Tatmadaw soldiers.

**How about in Thailand? [From Mae La Refugee Camp to Myawaddy]**

I did not see any doctors or health workers.

**You had to sleep in Myawaddy for one night. Did they treat you well and gave you food?**

Yes, they did.

**Did all of your family members return?**

Yes, but one person is still studying there [in the camp].

**Did you have enough space in the car since you came back from Myawaddy to here?**

Yes.

**Did they give you food?**

We got to eat enough food in Mae La refugee camp before we left and we also got rice packs at the Thai immigration office and we ate in Myawaddy. However, we did not get to eat anything after we left Myawaddy until we reached here to the village.

**How many hours did it take?**

I did not notice. They gave us food to eat in the morning in Myawaddy. I think we got here at noon. We did not get to eat anything on the way.

**Weren't you hungry?**

We were hungry.

**Why didn't you tell them or let them know?**

We were afraid to tell them because there were a lot of Tatmadaw soldiers.

**Weren't there doctors or people to take care of you?**

No. There were three Tatmadaw soldiers including the driver. I thought one of them was the commander.

**How many families or people came back with you?**

There were five families I think, with two cars.

**Did you get any support from the Myanmar side?**

We got over 400,000 kyats for each person.

**How much is over?**

I don't remember.

**How about other things?**

We got two women's tamain [sarong], two men's longyi [sarong], tooth paste, soap, towels, blankets and mosquito nets.

**How about rice?**

No, we did not get.

**Did you feel safe when you came back from Thailand to here?**

No.

**Were you afraid on the way?**

No, we were not.

**Are there any army camps around this area?**

Yes, there are soldiers and army camps around this area.

**Which group of soldiers?**

They are from Peace Council [KNU/KNLA-PC], Karen National Union [KNU], and Border Guard Force [BGF]. And Tatmadaw soldiers too.

**Are you afraid of [living here because of the army camps and armed actors around here]?**

Yes, we are.

**Do they have their own army camp?**

Yes.

**Are you between these armed actors?**

Yes, we are and we are afraid of that. Some people say that the fighting might break out again. The Tatmadaw soldiers sometimes patrol in the area at night. We are afraid of that because we are in the middle of these armed actors.

**Do you think you are safer here than living in the camp? What are the differences between living here and living in the refugee camp?**

There are not many differences. When we lived in the refugee camp, we had to be afraid of Thai policemen. But living in here, we have to be afraid of Tatmadaw soldiers. We are afraid that they will fight each other [the Tatmadaw and the other armed groups].

**How did you decide before you came here?**

We returned by our own decision. We could not do anything while living in the camp and it was not easy to work as day labourers [outside of the camp]. We got rations [rice] from the camp but it was not enough for us. So we had to buy more and we had to find work outside of the camp. It was not easy for us because we had to get a travel document to be able to travel outside of the camp. It was valid for three to four days and it cost 200 baht [9,065 kyats] each travel document. Therefore, we thought the situation might be better here [Mae La Ta Law Thaw] and we decided to return here. In the beginning, we just visited this area. I was teaching in the camp and my husband worked as a day labourer. Then we returned here and built a hut to live in. Sometimes when I could not go for the ration check, they cut our rations. So we had nothing left to eat and we did not have money to buy food as well. Sometimes we had to go to meetings and we were busy teaching at school so we could not go for the ration check. We do not get much [salary] from teaching as well. They asked us to get our ration book with 1,500 or 2,000 baht. We did not have money so we could not get it and we did not get rations either. Therefore, I thought it is not easy to live in the camp anymore. So we returned and worked here. Later people from the camp told us, "Why don't you register for the repatriation list? You might get support." We were afraid

to register in the beginning because some people told us "If you are going to take the support [money] from the Myanmar government, they might cut your throat." We were afraid so we thought for a long time. Later I thought that it was not a problem because there were many people who took the support. If the Myanmar government kills us, that might include many other people, not only us. So we registered but some people who registered said they were afraid to return. There were two families who cancelled their return because they heard they would be sent to the Three Pagodas area or Nay Pyi Taw. I thought to let it go as we already registered and I won't step back anymore. [I figured that] we could also ask about the direction that they take on the way back to make sure where they are going [sending us].

**Could you choose the place that you would like to return to?**

Yes.

**I thought they put you in a random place of the repatriation site.**

They asked us who already had a house in Myanmar. We said we already had a house. They would build houses for those who do not have one yet.

**Did they build a house for those who do not have one?**

I don't see them building for anyone yet. People who returned here already have houses [small houses] for their family. We worried they might build houses far away and we would not dare to go and live there. If we can live around many people [houses], we will be happy to live in the houses that they build.

**Did you get a place or plot to work for your livelihood?**

No, we did not get.

**Did they tell you [that you would]?**

They did not tell.

**So they only said that they'd build the houses for returnees.**

They said they will build houses for those who don't have but they did not build any houses. If they build, we might go and live there as well. The place that we are living now is not our own place/plot either.

**Did you buy this plot?**

Yes, we had to buy everything. We said we didn't get anything from our return.

**Yes. Are there any human rights violations that happened after you returned here?**

No, I think there are no human rights violations. We did not get to eat anything from our crops yet because we have to pay our debts.

**So it will be good if they support you.**

We told them in the beginning if they only support us then we will also try to work by ourselves. When we work, we do not have money so we have to get a loan. We got more and more indebted because of the interest. If there are houses built for the returnees, we might go and live there.

**Is landmine and UXO contamination a problem in your area? Have you seen any of them in this area?**

We have seen unexploded bullets.

**Were you not afraid?**

No, because we did not know. My son even collected many of them.

**Did someone take responsibility to remove them?**

No.

**What did you do?**

We threw them away because we were afraid.

**Is there anyone providing any landmine awareness training?**

I even attended it.

**Was it here?**

No.

**Where was it?**

It was in Mae La Refugee Camp.

**How about here?**

No.

**Are there any authorities that take responsibility to remove them?**

No. I am not sure. People here do not care so much about them.

**Those are dangerous.**

Yes, we are afraid they would explode. The children don't know about them. They just saw and took them. We see a lot [of unexploded bullets] when we are working on hill farms.

**Have any of them exploded?**

No. But we are afraid to keep them too. We just threw them away because it seems like they are going to explode when we burn the trash.

**There are some that exploded.**

Yes. We see a lot of shells and pieces from Tatmadaw soldiers' water bottles when we work on the hill farms.

**Did you try to burn them?**

No. We were afraid to do it.

**Can you travel freely now? Do you have to be afraid of anything such as check points?**

No, there is no check point. We do not go out because we do not have money. We were also afraid to go out last time when we heard people talking about the head cutter [local superstition].

**Yes, it was the same in our area as well.**

Now, we are afraid of the Tatmadaw soldiers. There is a Tatmadaw army camp in Bc---. We are afraid that they will kill us or sexually assault us when we travel at night or after dark. We are not sure whether they would do it or not, but this is our concern.

**Have you heard or seen them commit sexual assault or kill anyone in the area?**

No, not yet. But we are afraid of them.

**Are there problems like floods, heat waves or pollution in your area?**

Even if there was flooding, it did not reach here.

**Did the authorities take measures to address the risks?**

I didn't see anything because there was no flood in this area. We travelled by boat in the rainy season. The water didn't reach to the [top of the] banks. There is no one to take care of each other. We have to pay even when we take the boat. We have to stand on our own feet.

**Who is responsible in this area?**

The responsible person is the village head, village administrator and soldiers.

**Do they help the returnees who returned from the refugee camp?**

No, they don't.

**Did the responsible people help with your return?**

No. they gave us 9300 baht and it was it. Even though they said they will visit us, they've never come until now.

**Which organization gave you money?**

I don't know exactly. I think the Red Cross is included. But we did not ask them which organization. I think UNHCR is also included. I think that it was their organization and we have them both in Thailand and Myanmar.

**Where do you throw the trash?**

We just burn it.

**Is there a place to put or keep the trash?**

No, there is no specific place. Some people throw it into the river.

**Where do you get water?**

We can access water and it reaches to our house.

**Does anyone or any organization help you accessing water?**

Yes, but we have to give them money.

**Which organization?**

I think the organization from Mae La refugee camp.

**Is the water clean? Do you drink it?**

We do not drink it because the water has lots of minerals. We have to boil it but there are a lot of dregs. It looks like the water from Mae La refugee camp.

**Do you have to purify it?**

Yes.

**Do you have access to electricity?**

No, we don't. Last year there was a solar panel distribution but we did not get it. Some people got it and some did not get it. There are a lot of people who haven't got it yet.

**Will you get it?**

I don't know. They said they are going to distribute again.

**Which organization?**

I don't know. I heard that it is from the Myanmar government.

**Did they distribute them to returnees from refugee camps only? Did they distribute to everyone?**

Yes. They said they are going to distribute to everyone but not everyone got it.

**What do you use for cooking?**

We use charcoal. We made [burned] it ourselves.

**Do you have to buy it too?**

Yes. If we do not make it ourselves, we have to buy it. It is hard because we do not have money.

**Is your house fit for every one of your family members to live in?**

It is a bit small and crowded but we cannot build a bigger house yet.

**Is your house strong enough to stand against the weather?**

It is not really strong. We have to be afraid when there is a strong wind.

**Is the wind strong?**

Yes.

**Is it hot or too hot?**

It was getting too hot last year, and this year too. We even get headaches.

**Yes, there are fewer trees and bamboo trees as well.**

Yes.

**Do people do logging? How about the company?**

Yes, people do logging but I am not sure whether it's for a company or not.

**Are they only villagers here who do the logging?**

Yes. There are only villagers from this village. They are not from other villages. We are not allowed to keep any trees in our garden.

**Why?**

They said it will fall into other people's gardens when it grows big. I have some trees in my fence too.

**Are they teak trees?**

Yes. If we cut, we have to let them [KNU/KNLA-PC] know. We have to clean our fence.

**Do you have enough blankets and mosquito nets for everyone?**

They are not enough.

**Did you have to buy them?**

Yes. We had to buy them by ourselves.

**Did they say they would support you?**

Even if they said it, they did not do it. If guests come, we have to borrow from someone else's house and we just help each other when we need anything.

**Is there a clinic?**

There is no clinic.

**How did they tell you before you returned? Did they give you any information about school [education] and hospital [healthcare]?**

They said there is a school. Then they said if we are sick, we can go to Mae La hospital. But now they banned the outsiders from entering the camp.

**Where do you go if you are sick?**

We go to Mae Taw, Mae La [Thai villages] or Mae Sot. It costs a lot of money so we cannot go.

**Where is the nearest place you can go to?**

The nearest place is Bc---. We can go there.

**Bc--- is still far.**

Yes. We cannot go to Bc--- if the sickness is serious. We usually go to Mae Taw.

**The transportation is not good either.**

Yes. There are PC [soldiers and families] mostly. We usually go to Mae Taw. We had to go further than Bc---. We first told them to build a clinic here in the meeting.

**Was it before you came back here?**

Yes, we told them already.

**Did you tell someone who supports you?**

Yes. We have to go to other places which are very far.

**There is a school here right. What grade does this school go to?**

The school is up to grade 6.

**Is it a Karen school or Myanmar government school?**

It is a KED school.

**How is the quality of the education?**

Yes. It is as it should be.

**Do you have to pay for the school fees?**

Yes, but it is not very expensive.

**How about in Mae La?**

It is not different and not very expensive. It depends on the grades. If the students are in higher grades, they have to pay more than for the lower grades. Here in the village, they ask for a small amount of school fees with some rice. But I let my son to go to Bc--- School because they said they would help us. I have to pay 6,000 baht of school fees per year.

**6,000 baht?**

Everyone has to give 6,000 baht when they keep their children at the dormitory. We have to prepare food for them and send it to them. It is a Myanmar government school.



**Did they tell you they would support the children's education?**

Yes, they said that people who have children in school would receive support.

**Did your child also go to school at Mae La refugee camp?**

He is just a kindergarten student now. He cannot even read and write yet.

**Is your income enough for your family?**

It is not enough. I got 1,000 a month within three months for teaching. But until now, I didn't get anything anymore.

**Who gave you the salary?**

They are the villagers. I think I will find another job. But they cannot find [another] teacher. They said they are going to work together with the PC school. So we think we are going to do it.

**Which government school are you teaching in?**

It is a KNU school. But they do not help us. Next year, we are going to join the PC school and they are going to give us 2,000 baht per month. It will help us and our family because we do not get anything this year. We also have to help our family. Our children are also going to school and they do not have pocket money.

**Did you get a plot of land to work on for your livelihood?**

No, we did not get any plot of land. We have to rent the plot of land to work on.

**I thought they might give you land to work for your livelihood.**

No, we did not get any.

**I thought they did not build a house, so they will offer you the plot of land.**

No. If we cannot buy it by ourselves, we will get nothing.

**So people who returned together with you got nothing either.**

Yes. No one got anything. We have to rent the land as well. We had to struggle to be able to build a house and get the land. The house is not good and the termites also destroyed our house's posts. We also have to struggle to be able to buy the land. The posts of the house are Ta La Aw trees. Therefore, they are not very good and they decompose quickly.

**Is there any job/work provided for the returnees?**

No.

**Did you get any vocational training when you were in the refugee camp?**

No.

**Are there any jobs that returnees are working?**

No, they are working as day labourers on hill farms and some are doing logging. Some are going to work in Mae Sot and Bangkok.

**Do you have legal documents, such as ID cards, birth certificate, household registration documents, etc.?**

Yes, we do.

**Who did them for you?**

We made a household registration here. When we arrived in Myawaddy, they also made a temporary household registration document for us. We can renew it when they open and issue ID cards in the village.

**Did you have to pay?**

Yes, we had to pay 300 baht each. In the beginning, they said we have to pay 1,000 baht [45,326 kyats] to redeem the household registration document. Then I said I won't do it because I don't have any money. Later they said [just] 200 baht [9,065 kyats].

**So you have to pay 300 baht for each ID card and 200 baht for the household registration document. Did you get the land title for the land you bought?**

No, we did not.

**I thought they helped you to process documents?**

No. Therefore, I did not pay to get my household registration document. I lost it and I have to make a new one. People who will do the passport pay money to get their household registration but I did not.

**Was it in Myawaddy?**

No. It is here. That is the village leaders extorting money from the villagers.

**Can you use the one you got from Myawaddy?**

Yes, we can but it is just temporary. They told us to renew when there is a process of issuing ID cards in the village. It is not a permanent one yet.

**The one you took from the village is 1,000 baht.**

Before they said that but later it was 200 baht. However, I could not find mine anymore so I did not take it. They already took ID cards in Bc---, they told us to go and show your temporary household registration document. We went there but they did not renew it for us. We had to come back without getting anything.

**Didn't they say that they will renew it?**

Yes, they said that. One of their staff who is doing the ID cards and household registration documents has a very short temper. They told us to wait so we waited for a long time. After many hours waiting, they told us we don't need to do it now. We can do it later. We had to go very far and it was just a waste of money to pay for the car and motorbike fees. We took every document we got, but they did not do anything for us.

**Do you know about the upcoming national elections in 2020?**

No, I don't.

**Can you register to vote?**

I think not.

**Why?**

I don't know where to register. Is it in the town?

**Is there anyone organising for the national election? Will you be able to a vote?**

I think no. I don't want to go as well as I don't know how to travel in town.

**Do you have the opportunity to participate in local decision-making procedures**

**(community meetings, meeting with local authorities, etc.)?**

Yes, there are elections. Do you mean for religious work?

**I mean the responsibilities in the village.**

Yes, we have.

**Does discrimination play a role in this?**

There are elections, for example for the Karen Women's Organization [KWO].

**Is there any discrimination between people here because you are coming back from the refugee camp?**

No, there is not.

**Do you enjoy the right of freedom of religion? Are you banned to worship or practice your religion?**

No, there are no [restrictions].

**Do you think the situation now is sustainable?**

I think not. I feel that way about it.

**Do you worry for your future?**

Yes, I do. I am thinking about where I should flee to if anything happens. We do not dare to flee back into Thailand anymore.

**Do you think you will have to flee again?**

Yes, I think about it but I don't know where we will have to flee.

**Didn't you think about it before you returned?**

I thought about it. But after I returned and lived here, I heard people talking about many things so we got other concerns.

**Didn't you hear anything before you returned?**

Yes, we did not hear anything.

**So you worry more when you hear people talking about many things. If the fighting happens suddenly, where will you flee?**

I don't know where to flee. We do not have any relatives around here. We might just flee into the jungle.

**Won't you flee back into Thailand?**

If we are allowed to flee back into Thailand, we will flee back there.

**Did they tell you anything about it?**

They said we can go back if anything happens but we won't get rations.

**Will you be new people [new refugees] again?**

No. We won't get the rations anymore. If we want to go back we can, but we have to buy them by ourselves.

**Do you think Myanmar government, KNU, PC or any CBOs/CSOs should help the returnees?**

They should but they don't help anything.

**What should they help with?**

They should support us with some food and money as we cannot work properly yet.

**Do you regret coming back here?**

I don't know whether I do regret or not but we are trying to live as we can. Living in the refugee camp or here are not very different. We thought we will live here.

**I have asked you many things already. Do you want to add anything more?**

We want them to come and look after us. They should come to visit us some time.

**They said they will look after you for six months. How long will they support?**

They said they would look after us once in six months. But since we came back we have not seen them. I think they should visit us sometime. We would be happy if they come to us. They told us to contact them if we have any problem. But we could not contact them when our motorbike was broken at night.

**Where did you go?**

We went back to our village. We cannot contact the phone number that they gave us as well. So we had to sleep in other people's house.

**Do you give us permission to use this interview?**

Yes, you can use.

**Source #4**

Source doc #	Source # 4
Log #	19-103-A1-I1
Interview date	November 20th 2019
Location	Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw (Hpapun) District
Full Text	

**Mu Traw District Interview | E --- (male), Bf--- village, Mai Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township**

**Status:** Self/none (but could have gone back to Mae La to register for repatriation and receive assistance)

**Temporary shelter or IDP camp:** Beh Klaw (Mae La) camp

**Return date(s):** 2018/not sure

**Ethnicity:** Muslim

**Religion:** Islam

**Marital status:** Married

**Occupation:** Random [day labourer]

**Position:** Villager

**What work do you do for your livelihood?**

I just do random work [day labour]. I have planted some vegetables in my garden.

**Do you have any responsibility in the village?**

I do not have any responsibility.

**Are you married?**

I have got nine children but there are only three children remaining. The rest passed away already. My oldest son is already married and has got one child.

**How old is he?**

He is 36 years old. My daughter already got married.

**How old is she?**

She is 34 years old.

**Is this your origin place [hometown]?**

Yes, it is.

**How many years have you lived here? Where else did you go to stay?**

I went to stay in Thailand [refugee camp] and I also went to stay in Bg--- village in 2002 and 2003. I stayed there for two years [...]. Then I went back to stay in the village and in September 2009 there was a bomb explosion at the Transportation and Support Unit in Hpapun. Then they [Tatmadaw soldiers] came and arrested the villagers in the village. Bh--- and Bi--- were arrested. According to them, these two boys were hired by the KNU to plant the bomb and each of them got 150,000 kyats from the KNU. They said we [the villagers] kept the money. One of the staff [unclear whether village council or armed group official] let me know and told me, "If you worry for your life, don't stay here. It is dangerous for you." Therefore, I left my village in 2008 or 2009.

**Where did you go?**

I went to Bj--- village, Bk--- area and I stayed there for one year and then moved to Mae La refugee camp.

**When did you go to Mae La refugee camp?**

I went there in October 2010.

**How many years had you stayed there?**

I stayed there about 8 years.

**Why did you decide to come back to your village?**

Because my children are in the village and also my relatives are there. Therefore, I did not tell anything to anyone [responsible authorities] and just came back. My children also told me to come back as I am getting older. If I let the authorities know, I might have gotten the [repatriation] support from them. As I had heard from around 90 refugees from Nu Poe camp, when they went back to Myanmar, they were taken to Yangon and were shown the buildings. They were told that if you can give 3 million kyats, you would be able to stay in these buildings. If you cannot give, you cannot stay here. They had no place to stay and they were just roaming around. I was afraid of that so I did not let anyone know about it and just came back quietly.

**Was it the [Myanmar] government that did that?**

Yes, therefore the refugees from Nu Poe camp were facing difficulties.

**How many years have you returned and lived here?**

It is almost two years.

**Did anyone or people force you to come back to the village?**

No, no one.

**Have you faced any difficulty when you came back to live in the village? Do you face any discrimination?**

No, there is no difficulty because my family is in the village.

**Do the village head or the village administrator restrict the area where you can live? For example, you cannot stay in this village or you cannot go to stay in other villages.**

No, they do not.

**So you can stay in the village freely.**

Yes, when I needed the household registration, I reported it to the village administrator and he wrote the recommendation letter for me to get it from the ministry of labour, immigration and population.

**Were there anyone or any family came along with you?**

No, no one or no family. Only our family came back.

**How many people from your family came back?**

Three people from my family (my wife, my son and I) came back. My oldest son got married and now he's gone to work in Bangkok.

**Did anyone help you on the way when you came back from Mae La to your village?**

No, no one because we rented a special car to our village.

**What problems did you have on the way?**

There was no problem.

**Have you gone back to Mae La refugee camp to get support?**

No, I have never gone back since I came back. Some people who I knew from Mae La refugee camp called me on the phone and told me to come back to Mae La then register in the repatriation list, as each of the returnees gets 9,000 [baht]. Then they will send them back to the repatriation site with arrangement for housing if they have no house or place to go in the site. I just want to rely on myself and stand by ourselves. As I said if one person gets 9,000, four or five of our family members might get a lot. However, I did not go back to camp for this hope.

**Is it 9,000 in baht?**

Yes, it is.

**So you did not get it.**

Yes, I did not get because I did not let those [authorities] knew. If I let them know, they might take me somewhere else. I worried that I could not come back to my family at my village. As we came back permanently, we brought everything from our house [in Mae La to the village]. We did not want to change the car and move our belongings around so we rented the special car that went directly to our village.

**So you brought everything to the village.**

Yes, we brought everything back. We left nothing there.

**Are there any families still staying in the refugee camps or went there?**

I think only Bi---

**Did he also return to the village?**

Yes, he did.

**How many people from their family came back?**

There are 6 people and all of them came back. His brother's family also came back.

**What is his brother's name?**

His brother is Bi---

**There are three families who came back to the village.**

Yes, there are.

**Did the village administrator or someone offer support such as food or water or money to you?**

There was nothing, no.

**Is this KNU control area or Myanmar government control area?**

It is mixed control area; both KNU and Myanmar government control this area.

**Has there been any fighting since you came back?**

There has been no fighting since I came back in this area.

**Have there been any incidents that have happened and the police had to investigate and arrest?**

No.

**The situation you lived here [before you were displaced] and the situation now [after you came back from the displacement], which situation do you prefer the most?**

The situation now is better but we do not have large areas of land or gardens as before. We sold some parts of our lands and divided and passed them to our children. We do not have our own lands so now we are living in the areas of the mosque [on the religious land]. We give 10,000 kyats per year.

**Do you rent it or pay [a] monthly [fee]?**

We just pay to help to buy the materials that are needed in the mosque.

**Do you think it is safer to live in the village or is the security situation like in the past?**

The security is better now because there is no fighting and forced labour like before. We can stay with our family safely now.

**Why did you come back from the refugee camp?**

It is because my daughter called me to go back and stay with them. My son who is working in Bangkok also told me to go back to live in the village. They said we want to stay together with our families.

**This area is a mixed control area; are there any landmines planted by the Tatmadaw or**

**KNU or UXO in the area?**

I think there are no landmines. I never heard it before as well. It is not necessary to plant the landmines here so I think the KNU won't do it either.

**Are there any organizations that work for giving awareness or training about mines even if there are no landmines? For example, if you find the landmines, what you have to do and to whom you have to report?**

Yes, there was a landmine awareness training given at the Bm--- village monastery.

**Which organization?**

We do not know the organization's name. It just might be the organization that eliminates the landmines.

**How far are Bm--- village and Bf--- village?**

It is not so far, just one street between two villages.

**Are there any checkpoints on the way to Hpapun [town]?**

There are no checkpoints on the way.

**Are there problems like floods, heat waves or pollution in your area?**

It is just weather so we are fine with that. There were floods in the past as well. Last year there was flooding in the village but not very much.

**Was there any destruction from the flood?**

No, there was no destruction.

**Did any organization or anyone help you or support you with anything; food, money or anything, after you came back from Mae La refugee camp?**

No, no one but when there was flooding [last year] some people from Myawaddy came and gave us things such as mats, pots, baskets, rice, oil and salt.

**Can you work on your own land or your property after you came back from Mae La refugee camp?**

I bought a plot of land in Bg--- village but the village head Bn--- sold it to other people. I had to pay 50,000 kyats when I bought but they sold it for 250,000 kyats. I still cannot get the land or the money yet.

**Did you buy it when you went to stay there?**

Yes, it was in 2002 or 2003.

**Do you get enough water to use?**

Yes, we do. We can get water from the Yosalin River and we also use a hand water pump [well].

**Do you have enough rice?**

We do not have enough rice so we have to buy it from outside [the shop] sometimes.

**Is there anyone who build a toilet for you as you lived in the refugee camp?**



There is no one. We just do it ourselves.

**Did the UNHCR provide enough things for men and women when you lived in Mae La refugee camp? [sic: the camps are supplied by NGOs, not by UNHCR]**

Yes, they did. We got blankets in the winter. We also got monthly rations.

**What are the differences between living in the refugee camp and living in the village?**

We had to go out of the camp and went to work as day labourers to earn money even if we got monthly rations. But when we live in the village, we just find the solution for food and living by ourselves.

**How do you dispose of your trash?**

We [our family] usually throw the trash in the river. Some dig a hole and put the trash in. There is not much trash in our house as we are a small family.

**Do you have access to electricity?**

We do not have electricity. They distributed solar panels but we missed it. Therefore, we just bought it by ourselves and use the solar panel now to get the electricity.

**Can you cook, use fans and iron with the solar panel?**

We can only use a fan. We cannot cook or do ironing. We use firewood to cook.

**Where do you get the firewood?**

We buy it sometimes and sometimes we go and find it across the Yosalin River [on the other side of the river].

**Do you they sell the fire wood with the cart or the car?**

They sell it with the car.

**How much do you have to pay for one carload?**

It was 60,000 kyats for one carload.

**What are the problems you faced when using the firewood?**

We just have to store the firewood [during the rainy season] as much as we can around our village. We have to use the money that is sent by my son for everything.

**Did you have a house and garden before you left the village?**

We did not have land for housing before we left. We just rented the land and built a house to live in just like now. There was no difference.

**Is the current shelter big enough to accommodate your family?**

Yes, it is big enough.

**Is the shelter good enough to protect your family from bad weather?**

It is hot in the summer and we have to fix the roof every rainy season.

**Is it a permanent or temporary residence?**

It is a permanent residence.

**Do you have enough mats, blankets and mosquito nets for your family?**

Yes, it is enough because I brought them from the camp when I came back.

**Do the health workers from this area provide mosquito nets, blankets or mats?**

They just give the mosquito nets.

**Fine, it is for malaria prevention. Do you have access to healthcare services in your area?**

There is a one hundred beds hospital [Ka Tin Ta Yar hospital].

**How many one hundred bed hospitals are in here?**

There are two hospitals; one is the district one hundred bed hospital and one is the Operations Command one hundred beds hospital.

**Which of these two hospitals is closer to your village?**

The Operations Command one hundred bed hospital is closer.

**Can you get the treatment on time?**

Yes, you can. However, we usually go to the district hospital.

**Can you get the treatment and go the hospital on time?**

Yes, you can. It is also available to go at 9 or 10 pm at night. There are nurses who are on duty all the time.

**How long does it take to get to the district hospital?**

It takes about 10 minutes [from my house] by motorbike or car.

**Is it a Myanmar government or a KNU hospital?**

It is a Myanmar government hospital.

**Do you think the healthcare service is of good quality? Do you appreciate the healthcare service from the district hospital?**

Yes, it is good and I appreciate the service. However, we have to pay the treatment fee.

**Do you think the treatment is worth the fee?**

It depends on the situation. If you are an emergency case, it will be more expensive to get treatment.

**So you have to buy the medicine at a high price.**

Yes, however, the private hospital fee and the public [district] hospital fee are not much different. You can also buy medicine from the private hospital or a pharmacy. The hospital will examine you when you go to the district hospital and after that you can buy the medicine outside at the pharmacy with the prescription that the doctor gives you.

**So you buy the medicine with a prescription from the doctor.**

Yes, it is dangerous to drink the medicine without knowing what your disease is. It is better to buy the medicine prescribed by the doctor.

**What are the common sicknesses that affect the areas or returnees in this area?**

The common sicknesses are malaria, gastric [problems], hypertension and diabetes. Some people also get the flu and dengue.

**Can the children get the treatment on time?**

There is a child hospital for the children in Aung Sit Khaing Shwe Nyaung Bin [...].

**Do children have access to primary education in your area?**

Yes, there is a primary school here.

**Is the transportation good for the children?**

Yes, the children use bicycles to go to school.

**Is the road good enough for cycling?**

Yes, it is.

**How far is the school from the house?**

It takes 10 to 15 minutes by bicycle from our house to the school.

**Is the school a Myanmar government school or a KNU School?**

The school is a Myanmar government school.

**What are the challenges for the parents sending their children to school?**

It [sending children to school] is not really challenging because the school provides books, pens and pencils. We just have to buy only when these are needed.

**Do you have enough funding for your family livelihood?**

We have to try by ourselves. It is self-funded for our family livelihood. There is no one who would support us.

**How many people are working in your family?**

Only my oldest son is working for our family.

**Is his income enough for the whole family?**

We plant vegetables and raise chickens in our garden. Sometimes, we catch fish in the river to help secure our livelihood.

**It means the income is not enough for the whole family so you try to do these things.**

**What else do you do for your family livelihood?**

I do not have any other jobs. We just plant vegetables for our family in the garden. We do not have large areas of land either so we just do as much as we can with the area that we have in our garden. It is just like the proverb; build the shop at the back of the house. [Use your home to support your livelihood].

**What is the most common occupation in this area that the local villagers are doing?**

Most of the local villagers are working on farms, and some are working on hill farms. However, the farms are not theirs. They rent them from the Tatmadaw and do the farming.

**The Tatmadaw owns the farms.**

Yes, the Tatmadaw confiscated all the farms in this area. They let the local villagers rent them back and ask for rental fees. We used to own the farms but we lost all of our farms when the DKBA entered this area. Bo---, the daughter of Bp---, cooperated with the DKBA and said that these are their farms as we do not have land titles. Bp---, Bq---, Br---, Bs--- and I were the victims of this incident. When they said would you like to buy them back for 10 million or more, we did not have money so we could not buy them back. They did not do anything on the lands for about 40 years so we cleaned the lands and worked on those lands since 1976. However,

we bought 3 acres of farm from Bp--- for about three or four thousand. We worked on those lands for about 30 years until the DKBA was formed in 2005 or 2006. This land dispute happened in 2010.

**Did some of your relatives or neighbours have to leave the village to find a job?**

No, my son did a passport and visa and goes to work in Bangkok.

**Did you receive any vocation training in your village?**

No, we did not receive. They just orally told us without practical training.

**Did it help you?**

They told us to just plant three banana trees in one group of banana trees, cut the rest and give good soil to them then you will get good bananas in your garden.

**Do you get any fruits or vegetables from your garden?**

We planted eggplants, okra and tomatoes.

**Yes, it helps your family to save some money and buy [food] from outside. What will you do if you cannot grow enough to sustain your family?**

If the plantation from the garden is not enough, I go to find some fish in the river [Yosalin River]. If we get one viss [1.6kg] of fish, we can sell them for three or four thousand.

**What is the price of the fish now?**

It is four or five thousand for one viss now. It has many different prices.

**Were some of your lands confiscated when you were displaced?**

Yes, as I told you before some of my lands were sold when I was displaced.

**Who sold it [the land]?**

It was the Bg--- village head.

**Did he tell you?**

No, he did not. I did not know anything.

**How much did they sell your land for?**

They sold my land for 250,000 kyats.

**How large and how many acres is your land?**

It is 60 x 100 feet [18.30 x 30.48 metres].

**Oh it is really big.**

It is near the main road. It might be worth 5 or 6 million now.

**Do you try and claim them back?**

Yes, I try and I contacted a person I know to help me. However, I do not have the land title but there is a former village head; Bu---, the person who sold the land and joint secretary who is a monk now; Bv--- said he could help me if needed.

**To be a witness?**

Yes.

**Was your home damaged while you were displaced?**

We had only this house before we left. My daughter took care of it.

**So it was not damaged.**

Yes.

**Were you provided land to work on after returning to your village?**

No, we were not provided any land.

**Do you have any legal documents; such as birth certificate, ID card and household registration?**

Yes, I had before I went to the refugee camp. We lost ours because the village head said we moved to Thailand. Therefore, we had to redo the household registration again after we fled into the refugee camp, with the village administrator at the ministry of labour, immigration and population.

**Is it the ID card or the household registration?**

It is the household registration. But we already did the ID cards before we fled.

**Is your ID the three-fold ID [laminated national registration card] or the pink ID?**

Our IDs are pink.

**Do you keep those ID cards?**

Yes, we do.

**So we can say that you are citizens. Aren't you now in the repatriation site?**

No.

**You are in your own village.**

Yes, I just came back to my own village.

**Is there anything happening in the village?**

No, there is nothing happening. My daughter also came to stay here in the village with her aunty after leaving from Bw--- village. They moved to another place [in the village] after we came back.

**So you can stay with your family now. You do not need to stay separately from your family. Is that fine for you?**

Yes, even if we do not have the land to live on, but we can borrow the land to live on.

**Do you know about the upcoming national elections in 2020?**

No, I do not listen and follow any news as I am busy taking care of my child in my house. I do not understand and know the projects that they plan to do as well.

**Do you plan to register and vote for the upcoming national election in 2020?**

If they say those who hold or have the ID card have to vote, then I can vote.

**So you plan to vote too. Do you feel like your rights (lack of healthcare, discrimination, lack of education, work opportunities, etc.) were violated while you were in the camp?**

The refugees are not allowed to go out of the camp. They have to get a permission letter from Palat [Thai term for camp commander]. If you get it, you can go and work outside of the camp.

However, they [Palat] do not allow going out. If you go out without permission, you will be arrested and you will be fined or they will cut your rations for two months and you will have to do volunteer work [unpaid labour] for two weeks.

**So your rights were violated.**

Yes, however, if you followed their rules, you would not be punished. You need to get the permission letter to go in and out of the camp. When we did it, there were no problems for us. We were never arrested either.

**What do you think you need the most when you came back to your village [Bf--- village]?**

We can be self-funded ourselves whether we have to eat with only salt or soup. What we need the most is the toilet which is being built and the cooking room at the mosque for everyone. When the Ah Ka Nu [Imam] comes, it is hard for us to cook because there is no place [to do it]. The mosque is also small so we want to expand. We aim to expand it but the problem is that we cannot do that.

**Why can't you expand it?**

We do not get permission or approval to expand it. They even prohibit us from building the cooking room.

**Who are they? Are they KNU or the Myanmar government?**

They are the Myanmar government.

**It is also religious discrimination.**

We cannot do it on our own. The mosque is too small. For example, we have to worship twice [two sessions] on the Eid day in Bx--- village.

**Is it crowded because there are too many people?**

Yes. That's why we want to expand it but we are not allowed to do that. By--- vouched for us even when we built the pond. The authorities told him "Who do you think you are?" Then he replied, "These Muslims also helped us build the monastery, such as carpentry and masonry. Therefore, I take responsibility to build this pond". He did build the pond for us.

**Who is controlling this village? Is that a village administrator or who?**

It is a village administrator.

**So it is the government administrator from Meh Tha Luat village tract.**

Yes.

**Do you think it is fair and just under his control?**

Yes, it is fair and just. There is no problem for our own family. The problem is only we do not get the permission to build the mosque from the upper authority. To be honest, we even had to build the door [from the mosque] secretly and fence the mosque area to prevent the animals from entering in. It was when we elected the new Township administrator. However, the new Township administrator did not tell us anything because he thought the former Township administrator gave the permission, while the former Township administrator thought the new Township administrator gave the permission.

**So you got the opportunity during the transition period.**

Yes.

**Do you think the current situation is sustainable?**

It depends on the country's policy. If there are no changes of the policy, then the situation will just be like this. If there are changes, the situation will be different and there are many laws as well.

**Do you think that you are likely to be displaced again?**

We cannot tell exactly about it as long as we can live in here in the village. If we'd gone back to the refugee camp and come back again under their [UNHCR/government] plan, we might have received land. However, we were thinking whether it would be better for us to go back there and we might have needed to spend money, between 50,000 and 100,000 kyats for the travel costs.

**There are two types of displaced people. Some went to the refugee camps in Thailand and some are IDPs in the country.**

**What do you think the Myanmar government and other actors (KNU, CBOs, NGOs, etc.) should do to help IDPs return to their area of origin and better support returnees?**

The most important for us is the land. The authority from the refugee camp should arrange the land for us if we return. However, if we have to go and stay in brigade 6 or brigade 7, it might be difficult for us. It will be difficult for us to travel as we do not know the situation in these areas well. Therefore, we just came back without informing anyone or any authority in the camp. There is a family which came back with the arrangement of the authority from the camp in Ka Ma Maung. They got 9,000 baht for each family member who returned.

**You want the KNU, CBOs, and NGOs to advocate the Myanmar government to prepare the repatriation site for the returnees.**

Yes. We could not buy the land since we are not from Bz--- [KNDO controlled areas]. Only people from KNDO controlled areas could buy the land. [Ca--- and Bz---]

**What do you think about this distinction?**

We do not know. We cannot do anything as it is the order from the brigade 5 leaders from Cb---. We cannot talk and negotiate with them as well. It is not allowed to sell land to people from far away. They can only sell it to the nearest people. If I could buy the land, I would buy the lands from Bz--- village beside the bridge with help from someone with 3 million and 500,000 kyats. However, I could not buy because they put a sign saying that outsiders are not allowed to buy the land. I heard that the land was sold for 5 million and 500,000 kyats.

**Do you regret coming back to your village?**

No, I do not regret because I would still have to work in the refugee camp, just like here. However, as I told you, I lost something when I came back without informing the authorities. If I had informed them, I might have gotten the lands that they prepare and the money that they give to each of the family members. I just regret that a little bit. Everyone would take it if they get it. I was afraid because I heard that some people faced difficulties when returning back with the arrangement. Those people do not have any place to stay and also could not go back to the camp as well.

**So those people are asked to pay 3 million to be able to get a house to live in. If they cannot give, they won't get the house.**

Yes, it was. It will be 9 million in total. I got to read it in the newspaper when I was in Mae La refugee camp.

**How can the refugees pay 3 million or 9 million?**

Yes. Therefore, I did not inform the authorities [that we were returning]. However, we did not face any problem when we came back. If we have rice and oil in our house, we can find other things to eat.

**Which way did you take when you came back?**

We came back from Cc---. The road is from Mae Tan, Cd--- and Cc--- and to Laing Bwe to Bf---. I had to avoid the Mae Tha Waw road as I heard that they [police] check the Muslim people.

**How many days or weeks did it take on the way?**

It took only one day. We hired one car and it sent us to Mae Tan. Then we crossed the river and took the car [...] We took a boat from Ta Kwe Poe port to Bf---. My daughter was waiting for us in Bf---. We had to pay 480,000 kyats on the way back.

**How many people from your family came back?**

There were four people.

**Are they all from your family?**

Yes.

**Did you get the medical check when you were in the camp?**

Yes, I have hypertension and I had to go for medical check-ups while I was in the camp. The doctor gave me my medical record and he said you can even use it if you go to a third country. I keep it with me.

**Did the health workers visit you?**

Yes, they visited us and told us how to keep the water clean.

**Did you get checked on the way?**

No, we did not get checked. We put our things accordingly. I brought all the documents I got when I was in the camp.

**Did you get to eat well on the way?**

Yes, we could buy the drinking water on the way. We also packed the rice and curry to eat on the way.

**Did anyone help you pay for the travel costs?**

No, no one. My oldest son gave us some and I kept some money I got when I worked. The KNU also helped us carry our things.

**What are the armed groups in the village?**

There is only the Tatmadaw military in the village.

**Which battalion?**

It is Light Infantry Battalion #340.

**Are there any KNU armed groups?**

No.

**Do you get any threatened by anyone or any armed group?**

No, we do not.



**Can you travel freely in the village?**

Yes, we can travel, regardless of whether it is daytime or night time.

**Who is the hundred household administrator?**

Be--- is the ten household administrator and Cf--- is the hundred household administrator. Cg--- is the village administrator. Everything is fine and no one discriminates against us because we came back from Mae La refugee camp. We do not cause any problem with anyone as well.

**Did your children go to school when they were in the camp?**

Yes, [my children] completed primary school [in the camp]. We also took the transfer letter from the school. However, it was in Karen so it was not accepted by the Myanmar government school. [Teacher Kay Thee helped me negotiate for my daughter to be able to attend school.] My daughter had to start Grade 4 again. She had finished Grade 6 in the camp. They didn't accept the letter because it was written in Karen. They thought that it [education in the camp] was village-level education that does not match the level of the Myanmar government education system."

**I have asked you so many questions. Thank you so much for your time and answering all the questions. Will you allow me to use this information?**

Yes, you can use it.

**Source #5**

Source doc #	Source # 5
Log #	19-109-A1-11
Interview date	November 23 <sup>rd</sup> 2019
Location	T'Naw Th'Ree (Tanintharyi) Township, Mergui-Tavoy (Beik-Dawei) District

**Full Text**

**Mergui-Tavoy District Interview | G --- (female), Ch --- village, Eastern Myeik, Ler Muh Lah Township,**

**Status:** Refugee (spontaneous return)  
**Temporary shelter or IDP camp:** Mae La Camp  
**Return date(s):** April 2014

**Ethnicity:** Karen  
**Religion:** Christian  
**Marital status:** Married  
**Occupation:** Plantation worker (farmer)  
**Position:** Villager

**What is the current village where you have resettled?**

It is Ch--- village, Tanintharyi Township.

**Do you have any responsibility in the community?**

I am a school committee member in the village and an accountant in the church.

**What school do you refer to?**

It is the KNU middle school [Karen Education and Culture Department]. The school is up to Standard 8.

**Where did you live before resettling to Ch--- village?**

I lived in Ci--- village.

**You said you have lived in a refugee camp. Could you tell us why you took refuge there?**

We had to flee from the Tatmadaw and armed conflicts. We fled out [from the village] and hid because armed actors were fighting against each other. We continued fleeing from one place to another until we reached the border. Then we crossed the border and entered Thailand. At that time, the Thai soldiers sent us to the refugee location which we called Thaw Pah refugee camp, near Kanchanaburi and Sangkhlaburi. It is called Ban Don Yang Camp in Thai. We lived there for 18 years and all our children have grown into adults while living in the refugee camp.

**What were the challenges you faced when fleeing in the conflict?**

Oh we faced a lot of challenges. There was flooding when we fled, it was really hard to find food in the forest. We only ate plain rice porridge to save our rice from running out quickly. We could not find any other extra food. We also fed our young children with the same rice porridge we ate. They had no other food and they ate whatever we fed them without complaining. We fled to a place and when the Tatmadaw reached us, we fled to another place. There were altogether ten places we displaced to. Our displacement went like a cycle. We had to build a hut in the place we settled, even though it's temporary, because we cannot just lie on the ground with our young children. We built a hut to settle in with dust on the bamboo floor. We heard people whisper about the Tatmadaw approaching. Therefore, we had to pack our belongings in a rush and prepare food for the next journey, and then flee to another place again.

The worst situation was when we had to flee in the night, because we could not see the path. We were told, "if you reach the junction, do not make a noise because the Tatmadaw soldiers are there". It was so scary but we had no other way to avoid them. However, we lighted up fire torches and just crossed the road without knowing whether we would live or die. Finally we reached a Thai-Karen village at the border. We could see people were staying on the ground all over the place whereas some were still coming. It was very hard for us and we also felt pity for the people around us. There were times when we were up all night fleeing in the dark. One villager was seriously injured by a sharp bamboo and was bleeding but we had no time to take care of him. We had to rush. We could not see how serious his injury was and take care of him in the morning when the light came. Some people were sick, injured and even died on the way. For me, I had diarrhoea on the way.

These are the challenges that all displaced people faced, not only us but also other people from Ci---, Cj, Ck--- and Cl--- villages. We encountered other displaced people as we fled from place to place. The Tatmadaw also followed us very quickly. They reached the places where we hid right after we'd fled them. It was a life-threatening moment. They would kill us all if they'd reached us. We ran out of money and food to feed our children. We had no building to stay in. There was never worse poverty than that. We had to climb eight mountains in a day. My daughter became so weak because of that. We climbed up and down the mountains and crossed the streams. Everyone including young children of 5 to 6 years old carried loads as they could. Children were crying as they walked for long periods but they had to continue walking, otherwise we could not have reached the other side.

**How long did fleeing in the forest take?**

Oh, it took up to a year to reach Thailand. We entered Thailand when the summer came and hid at the river's source. However, we still had to hide from the Thai soldiers when we reached there. They monitored the border with helicopters and if they saw clothes being hung, they knew that we were there. We had to stay quietly and control our children to do so too.

**When were you displaced?**

We started leaving our home in 1997 and we finally got to stay in Thaw Pah refugee camp in 1999-2000. We fled constantly for a full year. We built ten huts during our displacement because we fled to 10 places in total.

**How many people died during displacement?**

It was more than five people. We departed separately as we fled and we only met each other when we reached the border. Then we heard that some people were killed by the Tatmadaw. Sometimes we saw dead bodies that were not properly buried on the way. We could not eat proper food and boil water to drink, and this caused us diarrhoea. I cannot recount all those experiences because it was a lot.

**When did you come back to the village?**

We departed from the camp between 15 and 18 April 2014. We arrived in Ck--- village first then came to this place [Ch--- village]. It was during the water festival events.

**Did you come back alone or with others?**

How could I have found my way alone? I had not been back to Myanmar for a long time and did not know the situation anymore. One of my friends accompanied me along the way.

**What were the challenges you faced when you came back?**

There were not many challenges [along the way]; we were only stopped at the checkpoints and questioned. We had to get off from the car/truck and show ourselves at the checkpoints but there was no threat on us. It is different from the past because we were extremely scared to encounter the Tatmadaw like that. However, we still have fear inside. We travelled in the car, motorbike and then by boat till we reached here. We were still lucky that we were fairly healthy; otherwise, it would have been really bad.

**How much did it cost to reach here?**

It cost a lot for us; up to a hundred thousand. For other people, it might be a small amount but for us, this is huge. We have never owned this much money. It already costs a thousand just to buy a snack or a cob of corn. Therefore, we did not dare to buy food. When we first arrived we had to build a house to stay in and work for our daily livelihood. It was challenging to restart our lives here again.

**Did you decide to return by yourself or by force?**

They did not force us but they gave us awareness through video clips, about how to resettle back in Myanmar. They showed us a video clip in a foreign language and they interpreted for us in Karen. They gave this training because they believed that there was no more fighting in Myanmar and expected us to go back to our village. When we saw that video, we immediately knew that we were supposed to go back. Some people chose to resettle in third countries and the remaining people were expected to return to our home country. Now the situation is getting better for us. It was only challenging when we came back on the way and first arrived back. We did not have a house to stay or enough food to eat. When the rain came, we all got wet.

**Did you receive any support from the camp leaders on your way back to the village?**

No, not at all! We had to find money for our way back and completely rely on ourselves. We did not get any support from authorities. Our friends could not support us because they are also refugees. We informed our neighbours before we left just so they'd know when authorities came and asked them.

**Were you threatened on the way back here?**

At first we thought it would be safer to travel on the Thai-side because we had a UN refugee ID card. We thought the Thai authorities would recognize the UN [UNHCR] ID card. Nonetheless, it was not useful at all. We could not come back by car on the Thai-side so could only send our belongings. We had to communicate with the driver to leave our belongings in a place we could go to pick it up. If we did not do it this way, we would be like beggars [have nothing] when we reached Myanmar. We tried to organize our trip like this. We first arrived in Cm--- village then to Tavoy and to Myeik towns. I came back with a friend and my niece. None of my children were with me.

**What is the difference between staying in the refugee camp and here in the village?**

Life was so restricted when we lived in the camp. We could not find ways to earn an income because we had to follow the camp rules. One good thing is that we received education and trainings, for example, we were trained to make snacks and to learn human rights, and children's rights. All the trainings were free of charge. We also got good healthcare services. However, it was restricting when we could not go out of the camp. It felt like we were under house arrest. Here, we feel more relaxed because we can travel around and here the birds sing. It makes us feel more refreshed and healthy. We have clean air and more natural organic foods here, except minor health issues like joint pain.

**You talked about someone who brought your belongings by car. Could you tell me who that was?**

I had to pay many thousands of Thai baht to get it done. I paid one thousand to one driver and three thousand to the other. We had to negotiate the transportation fees with the driver. I asked him to leave my belongings in Sangkhlaburi [Thailand] and then I asked my nephew to pick me up. He did not charge high fees because he understood my situation of being a refugee. He only took petrol fees. He drove me across five townships to reach the destination Ck--- village.

**How long did it take to reach the destination?**

It took two weeks. We still had to rent a motorbike to reach here [Ch---]. We were asked to pay 70,000 kyats but I begged the driver to reduce the cost because I didn't have that amount of money.

**Did you have any healthcare service and food when you got here?**

We received support from the KNU government because they saw our difficulties, that we could not stand on our own yet. We are also blessed that we do not get sick often. We can go to ask medicine from them when we have minor illnesses. They also supported some food for us at first but later we cultivated a rice field. We just started it step by step like this.

**Do you face any security threat here?**

Yeah, we face security threat. Since we have been fleeing from fighting and attacks, hearing the sounds of bullets and guns has traumatised us until now. I still have fear inside and think about it in my bed. Sometimes I cannot sleep well because I am afraid. We just console ourselves by prayers and scriptures. The Tatmadaw and Myanmar government can come to our place easily for any purpose because there is the vehicle road. The Burma army and their company came to our place and threatened us. They want to implement their project here. In that case, we always

have to stay alert and concerned about our security. How could it be that safe in this place? We have to do like the proverb says: 'Eat the fig but keep your ears alert for the sound of arrows.'

**What is the name of the company you mentioned?**

I do not know the name of the company but since they came with the Myanmar government, we know that they have gotten permission. They threatened us when they came.

**How did they threaten you?**

They came to our place to implement their project. If we give up confronting them, they will surely get over us and do what they want to. For example in Cn--- village, some former Tatmadaw soldiers joined the company because they did not want to be soldiers anymore. We knew that the company recruits former Tatmadaw soldiers. As they are former soldiers, the way they speak to us is scary already. We were so afraid when they came to our house.

**What kind of business do they implement?**

A company has palm and rubber plantations, and the other one mines stone to produce cement. They cultivate the lands [with oil palm/rubber] and cut down the trees for their businesses. This can cause livelihood challenges because we are gradually losing [more and more] lands to work on. When this happens, local people move to another place because they want peaceful lives, not quarrels.

**Did they hold any consultation with local KNU and villagers before implementation?**

They did consult but they are unfaithful. The KNU was honest to them and explained about the local situation as it is. However, the Burmese people [company and authorities] only act nicely in front of you, actually they are envious. Once they know Karen peoples' situation, they explore ways to win over us.

**Have you seen any landmines, bullets and UXOs around this area?**

I do not know about this.

**Were you provided nationality ID card and household documents?**

Yes, we have ID cards and household documents.

**What document did you hold when you were in the camp?**

We have the ID card provided by the UNHCR. We had to memorise the number of our ID card, so I still remember it. It is [censored]. My household number [from the camp] is [censored], in section [censored]. I brought it back with me here. Sometimes I wonder: 'Would we be accepted as refugees if we face displacement again?' I thought that if we are not accepted as refugees again, we will show our UNHCR ID card and see if they change their mind. Because, you know... the situation in Myanmar is not stable. We cannot make promises for our future.

**What are the most essential needs when you stay here?**

The most essential need is security. We can still handle other issues like food and daily living. But for security, we feel really scared whenever we are threatened [by the company]. We also need healthcare services because we do not have adequate medicine in the village. Some people have to walk very far in hot temperatures to access healthcare services in other villages. If we had one clinic with adequate resources in the village, we could go easily.

**What is the most important need for you?**

I hope there is no more threat for us and our future generation. We don't know how long we will live but we want to ensure security for our children.

**What do you mean by threat?**

The Tatmadaw were trained and assigned to come to the village as company workers. They talked to us nicely but we know they are envious inside. They know that we are afraid of them and they know how to attack us. If we are afraid and move away, they will dominate us. So we have to be brave and confront them.

**So you mean, security is the most important, right?**

Yes, security is the most important. It is good that the KNU is taking care of local security here but they are also threatened [by the Myanmar government and the company].

**Do you think there might be potential displacement?**

Yes, I am afraid of being displaced again. We always have to be aware of security. We can pay attention to the Myanmar political situation with the radio, so that we know the situation and stay aware of that. When we hear about civilians from other parts of Myanmar facing hardship, we wonder when this situation will reach us.

**Do you receive any awareness training or humanitarian aid from NGOs?**

We received mine risk awareness training, and human rights training. [...] For me, these trainings are not relevant to us because we do not have this experience here. When we questioned them more, they could not answer us. Since they came and gave training as they were assigned, it is our responsibility to attend. However, we cannot apply it to our lives and we forget it after a while because it is irrelevant to our situation.

**Where are they based?**

They are from Tavoy Town. As I remember, a lady came with Thra Co--- and provided training for us.

**Was it KHRG?**

Maybe! They are also NGOs right? There was another NGO that built the kindergarten school and now it is completely done.

**What kind of support would you like to receive from KNU, Myanmar government, NGOs and other humanitarian organizations?**

The KNU have always supported us with food. When we ran out of rice, we informed the local KNU and they offered us a package of rice. They provide some medicine as well but they do not have adequate resources. So we want other NGOs to provide some healthcare support. For Myanmar government and Tatmadaw, we do not want any support because we do not trust them. We have seen the negative impacts, like children got sick right after they had taken medicine provided by the Tatmadaw. A girl was even hospitalized in Tanintharyi Hospital after taking medicine from the Tatmadaw. Therefore, we are very careful when we are asked to take medication from the Tatmadaw. They did not provide any awareness and explain about the medication they are offering. For me I avoid taking medicine because I am afraid. I don't want to see the Tatmadaw come to my house either. We warn each other not to take medicine or food provided by the Tatmadaw. For NGOs, they explain about all the medication they provide for the community. There are different types of medicine such as tablets, balms, etc... We are very thankful for their services. But one problem is we cannot track all medical distribution lists as they expect. It takes a lot of our time to do it as well, so we cannot do this. Sometimes, we feel hesitant to accept healthcare materials from the NGOs because they require us to track the entire distribution list.

**Do you want to share about other issues?**

As I mentioned above, we feel better returning here than living under control in the refugee camp. It was really difficult in the camp, sometimes we felt like we were discriminated against by the host community. We lived there not because we enjoyed it, we just considered for our children [health, education]. Our lives were so restricted because we were considered illegals and we could not circulate freely. Here, we are so happy to be reintegrated with our home country and our relatives.

**Finally, I want to make sure if you will allow me to use your information and photos.**

Sure, I can give you this permission but may I ask you to send me the report that includes my information. When you publish my information, other people will also know about the experience of Karen people from Mergui-Tavoy and some people might face the same situation like us.

The other thing is that we want to live in safety and free from threats. This is what everyone expects from life, not just me. Threats are a big and scary barrier for our lives and livelihoods. I want the company and the Tatmadaw to just do whatever they want to without threatening local people. Sometimes, we see the Tatmadaw patrolling with around 30 motorbikes near the village. This threatens our security. We do not know what their plan is. When I see the Tatmadaw showing up, I prepare my bag and gather my UNHCR ID card and all the other legal documents I have such as my Myanmar national ID card, my household documents and a torch light. It became a habit because I received awareness training when I was in the refugee camp. We were told how to act immediately when we face floods, for example preparing first aid kits for ourselves. We were trained to be ready when we face any emergency issue.

**Thank you so much for sharing.**

Of course, thank you for visiting as well. I have been waiting a long time to talk to you like this.

**Source #6**

Source doc #	Source # 6
Log #	19-20-A5-11
Interview date	March 3 <sup>rd</sup> 2019
Location	Ta Kreh (Paingkyon) Township, Hpa-an District
Full Text	

**Hpa-an District Interview | Saw H--- & Naw An--- (male & female), Mae La Way Ler Moo repatriation site, Paingkyon Township**

**Status:** UNHCR-repatriated refugees

**Temporary shelter or IDP camp:** Beh Klaw (Mae La) Camp

**Return date(s):** February 2019

**How many children do you have?**

We have 6 children.

**Are all of them back here?**

Yes.

**Do they live here with you?**

Some live with us but some have their own families so they stay in different houses.

**Which camp did you come back from?**

Mae La Camp.

**When did you reach this place?**

I cannot remember the date anymore.

**How long have you been staying here?**

It's been four to five days already. Maybe around a week.

**Why did you decide to come back here?**

We would like to come back and stay in our own place, our Karen state. So we came back.

**Why did some refugees decide not to return?**

Some said they dare not coming back, they are still in fear.

**What are they afraid of?**

They said they are afraid that fighting might happen again. Some people asked me, why did you apply to go back? I told them that I will just go back and stay there because a lot of people came back already.

**Was there any fighting since you came back here?**

No, we came back a week ago so nothing has happened so far.

**What did you get as support before you came back here?**

We did not get anything.

**You got nothing at all?**

We got a little financial support.

**How much did each person get paid?**

We got 9,300 Baht for each person.

**Was that for each person or per household?**

Each person.

**Did they send you back?**

Yes.

**Where did they send you to?**

To this place, Mae La Way Ler Moo.

**Where did you cross the border?**

We came back from Myawaddy [crossed from Mae Sot to Myawaddy].

**How far is Myawaddy from this place?**

We had to come back through Cp---, Cq---.

**Who sent you?**

Burmese people.



**Which organizations did you get support from?**

I am not sure. Maybe Thai [government or organisations] might be included because we got Thai Baht. In Myanmar side, I think they cooperated together and sent us back here.

**Did you know who gave the money to you?**

It was one Thara [Mister or Sir]. He distributed it to us.

**Do you know his name?**

No. He did not introduce himself.

**Do you know which organization that Thara works for?**

We do not know.

**Do you have any concerns coming back to stay here?**

I do not know yet because we just reached here a few days ago.

**So far so good?**

Yes.

**What do you do for your livelihood here?**

We are doing hill farming.

**Where do you do it?**

I am doing it near Cr--- [a place name].

**Who gave it [the land] to you?**

They distributed one plot each to every household.

**Who distributed it?**

Pu Cs---

**Who is Pu Cs---**

Pu Ct---

**Which organization is Pu Ct--- from?**

Peace Council [KNU-KNLAPC].

**Did he give it to you for free?**

Yes.

**Do you only do hill farming?**

Yes, we do not do any other things.

**Do you also feed domestic animals?**

No.

**Do you get any other support such as blankets, pillow and mosquitoes nets?**

No.

**Can your children access education after returning here? Do you have any concerns about that?**

Only my youngest daughter is still studying now.

**Where does she study?**

Here in Mae La Way Ler Moo. The rest are doing hill farming.

**Did your child get support for her study?**

We send her on our own. We do not get any support.

**Do girls get the same chance as boys when it comes studying?**

We do not know about that. Our youngest daughter is only in standard 1 so we do not know.

**Do they face discrimination against them?**

Currently, we do not see such things. Our child is still young and she is staying with us so there is no such problem, but if she grows up and goes to stay in the dormitory, we do not know. She might experience such things.

**Are there any special supports for women who are pregnant, newly married women and people with mental disabilities?**

We do not have that now but my daughter-in-law told me that there will be special assistance for those people next year.

**Who will take care of that?**

I do not know but they said there will be support for them.

**So, there is no special care for those who suffer with heart disease or other serious diseases too?**

No. If the sickness becomes serious, people just send them to Mae Sot.

**Did they [sick people] have to pay for it?**

Yes.

**Do you have any concerns for those with serious disease if they are not taken care of properly?**

Yes, we do have concerns for them. When we were in Mae La camp, we did not have to pay for our sickness or medical checks. When we come back, we have to pay by ourselves and ask the medical workers here to check our health.

**So, there are no organizations that will help you for that?**

No. We have to do everything on our own now.

**Do you have any concerns for your safety?**

Currently, we do not have any concerns for our safety yet.

**Which armed actors are operating in the area here?**

We have a Tatmadaw army camp nearby and we also have PC here.

**Do they [Tatmadaw] trouble you?**

No. We are farming right below their army camp. They told us that it is nice for them to stay here, because when they were in Mae T'Ree, they were attacked and they had to run. They said that when they came back to stay here, they were able to live in peace.

**So they do not give you any trouble yet, right?**

No.

**Are there any landmines here?**

Of course, we have to avoid it when we see it. There are still pieces of landmines and it can explode anytime so we avoid them when we see them.

**Have you seen them?**

We saw it when we cleared our fields. It even exploded when we burned our fields.

**Are you scared of that?**

Of course. We are very scared of that. We do not even get close to them. People told us to stay away from the fields when we are burning them.”

**Who do you think planted those landmines?**

I think it remains from the fighting period in the past. People did not plant it, but shells were fired in the past. They fell in the forest, so when we burned our fields, it [a particular UXO] got burned and exploded.

**Didn't anyone clear it for you?**

It is in the forest so no one cleared it, but they warned us to be careful.

**So, you think there are still unexploded landmines?**

Yes. [...]

**Do you have a Myanmar ID card since you returned here?**

We got it but people told us that it was a fake one.

**What about now?**

We do not have any.

**So how will you go to town since you do not have ID?**

They told us that they will come and process that for us.

**Do you know when?**

No, we were given one card each before we came back. They said if the UN asks us to show it, we have to show them this card.

**Can you use that for travelling?**

We do not know.

**Are there any drug incidents or any human rights abuses?**

No. There are no drugs here.

**Do you have any concerns for the safety of women?**

I do not know what to say.

**Are there any rape cases here?**

No.

**Let's say if that happens, who will take care of her?**

I do not think people will take care of her. That kind of case is very sensitive. No one dares touching it.

**Are there any protections for religious minorities, vulnerable persons and children?**

No.

**Are there any organizations that will take care of that?**

I do not think so.

**What about if landmine incidents happen and there are landmine victims, who do you think will take care of them?**

No one. We just have to take care of our own selves.

**Do you think you get enough support as you should get?**

I do not think we get enough support. I actually do not understand much though.

**How do you feel about returning here?**

I feel nice to be back in our own Karen state.

**Why do you feel nice?**

When we were in the camp, we could not go anywhere and we did not dare to go anywhere. So when we stay here, we can go freely.

**As you first came back, what challenges did you face?**

We have not faced any challenges so far for now.

**What benefits did you see when you came back here?**

We are able to work now and have started our livelihood now. That benefits us.

**Were you properly and warmly welcomed by the community here when you first came back?**

Yes, they did.

**How is your relationship with them?**

Good.

**Are there any organizations who train you how to maintain good relationships with others?**

Not really. We just have good relationships with others on our own. We do not need to be trained.

**What was the main cause of IDPs?**

We had to run because of we were afraid of fighting. We dared not staying in Karen state anymore so we fled. Tatmadaw came and shelled mortars frequently so we could not work anymore. So we gathered together and then fled to Thailand.

**Do you think that the situation is getting better now?**

Yes.

**What do you think about the future?**

I have no idea what will happen in the future.

**What is the name of this place?**

Mae La Way Ler Moo.

**What district is it located in?**

Way Ler Moo District?

**There is no Way Ler Moo District.**

Oh really?

**Yes, what about Township?**

Mae La Way Ler Moo Township.

**There is no Mae La Way Ler Moo Township as well.**

Really?

**Of course. Mae La Way Ler Moo is just a place. A Township is like Lu Pleh or Ta Kreh.**

I think it is Lu Pleh.

**No. It is Ta Kreh Township.**

Oh, I think so.

**What do you want to let the people who plan to come back or who are staying there know about it?**

I would like to tell them that we are living well here so if they cannot go anywhere while staying there, they should come back and stay here like us.

**Since there are still UXOs in this area, do you think they dare to come back?**

I do not know about that. For those who dare to come back then come back, but those who do not dare, do not need to come back.

**What is the situation in the camp like?**

I think it is not bad.

**Do you have any other things to say?**

No. We just need more support to stay here.

**Thank you.**

Thank you.

**Source #7**

Source doc #	Source # 7
Log #	19-30-A4-11
Interview date	March 2 <sup>nd</sup> 2019
Location	Noh T’Kaw (Kyainseikkyi )Township, Dooplaya District
Full Text	

**Dooplaya District Interview | Saw J--- (male), Lay Hpa Htaw repatriation site, Noh T’Kaw**

**Township**

**Status:** UNHCR-repatriated refugee  
**Temporary shelter or IDP camp:** Ban Don Yang Camp  
**Return date(s):** February 2019

**Ethnicity:** Karen  
**Marital status:** Married

**How many children do you have?**  
I have four children.

**Are they students?**  
There are two children who are studying.

**Where are they studying now?**  
They are studying in Mae Sot in the bible school.

**Where did you live before? Which village?**  
I lived in Ch--- village. Then I went to live in Ban Don Yang refugee camp.

**Did you live anywhere else before you went to the refugee camp?**  
No.

**Where are you living now?**  
I am living in Lay Hpa Htaw, in the [new] houses [built for returnees].

**When did you come back?**  
We came back on the 21st [of February 2019].

**When did you arrive here? How long have you been living here now?**  
We arrived here on the 23rd [of February 2019].

**Which refugee camp did you live in?**  
I lived in Ban Don Yang [Thaw Pa] refugee camp.

**Did you get any support when living in the refugee camp?**  
We got rice but we did not get any special things.

**Did you get financial support?**  
No, we did not.

**Did you have any land to work on in the refugee camp?**  
No, we did not have.

**How do you call this area? Which towns is it close to?**  
It is called Lay Hpa Htaw and it is close to Three Pagodas [Payathonzu] town.

**Did you get to come back well on the way?**  
We got to come back well on the Thai side because the Thai authorities organized the transportation for us.

**Did they give you any support?**

The Thai government did not, but the UN gave us financial support.

**How much did they give you?**

People who are above 18 years old got 9,300 baht each. There were three people coming back from my family so we got 27,000 baht.

**Did you get anything from the Myanmar government?**

Each family got one sack of rice and other things. We also got 470,000 kyats from the Myanmar government.

**Why did you come back here? Were there any problems?**

The problem was it is not our country, we could not work or find a job easily. It was not easy to plan and work for our future.

**Did the Myanmar government plan for you to come back well here?**

The Myanmar embassy went there [the camp] once for a meeting and organizing the repatriation for the refugees. It included the UN from Myanmar as well.

**Do you receive any support when you came back here?**

We do not get support yet.

**How is the water situation?**

We get water but it is okay.

**Are there any problems you face?**

The problem is the land issue. We do not have land to work on for our livelihood.

**Do you think it is safe here?**

I think it is not fully safe yet.

**How many households came back here?**

There were 13 households that came back here.

**Were there any problems you faced on the way?**

Yes, we faced some planning problems from the Myanmar government.

**What kind of problems?**

It was the transportation problem. We could see that the Myanmar government did not organise the transportation for us well. It seemed like the communication was not good so we could not ride the car on time.

**Were you forced to come back?**

We came back here by ourselves and by our own decision.

**So you were not forced.**

Yes, we were not. We thought it is not easy for us to stay in another country permanently. We

wanted to come back to stay in our country as the situation is getting better. We hope it will be better than now.

**What are the current problems or difficulties you are facing now?**

We do not mean that there is no problem here. But the problem is with the clinic and the school. [...]

**Are there any schools and clinics here?**

No, there are not.

**No clinic and no school.**

Yes.

**Where do you go when you are sick?**

There is a clinic in Lay Hpa Htaung [Zee Pin] village but there are not enough medicines there.

**Do you want to report anything about the school and the clinic?**

I think the Myanmar government or the NGOs should arrange it and help us.

**Do you think everything is good?**

I think it will be good in the future.

**How about now?**

As we are newly returned here, we have some concerns and problems living here.

**Thank you so much for giving me time to interview you.**

**Source #8**

Source doc #	Source # 8
Log #	20-21-A3-11
Interview date	January 23 <sup>rd</sup> 2020
Location	Moo (Mone) Township, Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) District
Full Text	
<p><b>Kler Lwee Htoo District Interview K--- (male), Cu--- village, Kq--- village tract, Moo Township</b></p> <p><b>Status:</b> IDP returnee  <b>Temporary shelter or IDP camp:</b> Cu--- village  <b>Return date(s):</b> Around February 2016</p> <p><b>Ethnicity:</b> Karen  <b>Religion:</b> Christian  <b>Marital status:</b> Married</p>	



**Occupation:** Village committee member

**Position:** Villager

**When did you return to this village?**

It was in 2016 at the start of the year, January or February.

**Why did you choose to return to this village?**

There was a new village that was built here. We returned according to the plan of the authorities. We also chose this place because we used to live here in the past; we have some land. When we lived there [IDP site], it became harder the longer we stayed because we didn't have land to work on. Therefore, we chose to come back here and we are so happy to be back here. We can live in our own village and work on our land.

**When were you displaced in the past?**

I fled from the village around 1974-1975. The Tatmadaw Battalion #85 attacked our village and forced us to leave.

**How many villages were attacked?**

Every village around here was attacked and [villagers were] forced to flee. It was Kq--- village tract, Mi Chaung Kaung village tract and Ohn Chit Khin village tract.

**Where did you displace to?**

I displaced to Cv--- village. In 1974-75, we had to displace again to Cw--- village.

**How did you live while displaced, were there any dwellings organized for you?**

No there was no dwelling organized for us. We just stayed in other people's gardens. The host community members are also Karen, so they welcomed us to stay in their cow shed and rice barn. When we stayed up to a month, they offered us a small garden to live in.

**How long were you displaced?**

It was around 30 years from 1974 to 2015, and we returned in 2016.

**What made you want to return to the village?**

It is because the situation was getting improved. We were displaced and stayed on [other] people's land. We did not have land to work on, a place to live or enough food to eat. We had limited land and property. When we got a chance to return and live in our village, it was like a release, and we could work on our lands freely.

**So you have been here for four years already, right?**

Yes, that's right.

**Were you forced to return?**

No, we were not forced. We chose to return by our own decision.

**How many people returned together with you?**

I think it is in the records. Currently, there are 32 households that returned to Cx--- place already.

**Did you receive any support to build a house or to recommence your life after returning?**

We received support from the Committee for Internally Displaced People [CIDKP] and the Karen

National Union [KNU] government. We proposed our needs to them as needed.

**What challenges did you face when you returned?**

It has been around 30 years since we left the village. When we were displaced, some people came to stay on our land. We had to ask them to leave our place when we came back. They even argued that it was their place. It was a small problem that we faced but we could solve it.

**Do you receive any support for food and materials?**

The CIDKP built a well for us and they also built a kindergarten school in cooperation with KNU and villagers. They also supported us to set up small shops and raise animals. They also provided a rice milling machine. We wanted to raise animals but we do not have enough space.

**May I ask you about the security situation, how many armed groups are there nearby? Is there any fighting or criminal or sexual violence cases?**

There are the KNLA and Tatmadaw. It is the Tatmadaw Battalion #590 based in Yay Oh Zin. The other Tatmadaw Battalion is based in Htee Klu village. The KNLA Company #1 is also based nearby. There is no criminal case or sexual violence case happening.

**So there is no security concern.**

Right!

**Do you have any other fears and concerns?**

Like I mentioned above, we have some concern in our livelihood situation. Sometimes people argue with each other about land. Since the drug use is increasing, we fear that it will lead to foolishness then cause potential criminal cases when arguments happen in the community. This has never happened but we just fear it will happen one day. In that case, we tried to solve the problem earlier so that it does not get worse.

**What is your biggest concern about security?**

What I'm most concerned about is troublemakers who make people misunderstand and argue with each other. As for the KNU/KNLA, we trust and rely on them and vice versa. The troublemakers are usually business individuals and some other people.

**Do you face any human rights abuses living here?**

We have to live under the power or authority of some business individuals and people who have power. We used to live in freedom and own land and river near our lands; always had access to water and land without any obligation. But there were some changes that do not fully allow us to access the water source and forest lands. The changes in politics are also causing such problems.

**Were villagers threatened by any individual?**

We are living in a KNU-controlled area so it's not controlled by the government [Myanmar]. Therefore, individual people with power influence the community and use the river and water as they want.

**Have you ever reported about this to authorities?**

We did, but they suggested us to solve the problem by ourselves and they gave us full authority. If we want to quarrel with the troublemaker, we can do it. But we don't want to do it because they are people from the same community. We will solve the problem in a diplomatic way. If we do it in a violent way, they will surely confront us back in a violent way. They would not hesitate to fight other people because they have muskets.

**Are they a group of people?**

They are not really a group of people. They are just an individual with one or two partners.

**Do they have any connection with armed groups and KNLA?**

No, they are merely foolish.

**How do they abuse human rights?**

At first, they stayed on our lands when we were away. They argued it was their lands, even though they do not have any land grants. They challenged us to enter the land [daring us to try] if we are not afraid.

**What kind of work they do on your land?**

They built houses and raised animals. They cultivated farms that belonged to our community members and they took them as theirs. They brought their families together with them.” Their numbers are increasing more and more now.

**What other challenges do you face?**

The other thing is they are fishing with guns. They said it is their area, so they can do whatever they want.

**Is there any other issue?**

The other issue is land disputes because they do not leave our lands. They will attack us if we force them to leave. This makes us scared of them.

**Do they also cut down trees?**

Yes, they cut down trees on our land and use it as they want.

**Did the KNU say anything about this?**

No, the KNU cannot take action as well. Maybe the KNU doesn't get strong evidence or those people have strong connections. They might know each other because some of them joined the KNLA, so they don't want to make trouble in their relationships.

**Is there any mine risk and UXO in the village?**

No, I have not seen any since our return.

**Is there any organization raising mine risk awareness?**

Yes, the CIDKP and mine clearance group have raised awareness more than once.

**Can you travel freely?**

Yes, we can travel freely except when there are security concerns. Sometimes the village authorities limit the time to travel around to not later than 9 PM because of the security risk.

**Is there any natural disaster happening in the village?**

We have droughts during the summer. We do not have flood or storm. Only drought has impacted our livelihood agriculture. Rice crops in the farm cannot grow well because of high temperature and not enough water.

**Is there any relevant organization helping you to solve the environmental issue?**

Not at all! We are aware of it and try to protect the environment by implementing our knowledge. For instance, we have read and heard that planting more trees can improve environment

sustainability, so we plant more trees.

**[...] [H]ow do you get water?**

"We have a well, constructed by CIDKP. However, the well is not enough for every household in the village. We have more than 120 persons and 32 households."

**Do you receive any financial support since your return?**

No we have never received financial support. We only got a well from CIDKP and some wood from the KNU to build our houses.

**Did you have any fields when you were displaced?**

Yes, I had a farm, a big house, cattle and buffaloes when I was displaced in 1974-75. We had to abandon our farm and house which was all damaged later. For cattle and buffaloes, we could take them with us but we sold them off because we had to flee from place to place. It was difficult to keep our cattle in other people's gardens. The Tatmadaw ordered us to leave the village within three days. Some people dismantled their house and took away their property in the limited time. People who could not dismantle all their houses had to leave them to waste like that. The Tatmadaw declared that we could not come back across the Salween River, and they would shoot us to death if they see anyone who does. They did not allow us to come back to the village for about 30 years.

**Could you get all your lost property back?**

We could not get any of our property back; we have to start everything from the beginning. We do not have a stable livelihood situation, which is challenging to support our family and children's education and health. We rely on casual daily work to earn income and support our children to go to school. This is not sufficient to spend daily wages for our daily needs. Most people have two to three children to support, so it is more challenging. Sometimes, we have to borrow food and money from other people.

**What are the challenges you have been facing in here?**

The most challenging is lack of jobs, inadequate food and other social needs such as education, health and transportation. Education is so low. We do not have a decent road to travel by car, so we have to walk or drive a motorbike to get to another place. When we do not have a motorbike, we have to walk for hours to get to the town.

**Do you have any challenge regarding access to water?**

Yes, we have. The well was all dried out in April, which is the hottest period. When the well dried out, we tried to dig it deeper so that we could get some more water. We usually dig 13 to 15 feet deeper. When it did not work, we just went to the lake by cart to get water, even though it is far away. However, the water from the lake is not clean at all. The water in the river [that feeds into the lake] was contaminated by the gold mining factory, and fish also died." The gold mining factory also blocked the river from flowing well. The water is not clean anymore.

**Do you have any toilet and bath room?**

The CIDKP provided toilet tubes, mattock and nails for every household to construct a toilet.

**Were you provided any hygiene products such as soap and sanitary pads?**

No, we have to buy it from Mone Town if we need.

**How do you throw trash and plastic away to organize your community to be clean?**

We hang a trash bag in different parts of the village, so that people won't throw the trash

randomly. Then we burn it in a suitable place.

**Do you have electricity in the village?**

We bought solar panels in order to generate electricity. Only people who have money can buy it. Some people use batteries, bulbs and candles.

**Do you cook with firewood or electricity?**

We cook with firewood only.

**How do you get cooking materials such as pots and bowls?**

We bought it from the town.

**Since you have to start everything from the beginning, what were the challenges you faced?**

It was quite challenging because the road is not built to travel by motorbike or cart. We had to process the wood in the forest and bring it to the village to build a new house. We only have the wood we were given because we could not afford to buy more. Since we are in a KNU-controlled area, we have to propose [to cut] wood and once they give permission, we can go and take the wood by cart. This is still challenging for people who don't have a cart and ox. There were many challenges when we built a new house; we did not have money to buy construction materials such as nails, wood and roofing.

**How long does the roof last?**

It only lasts for a year. If we want it to last a bit longer, we have to set it very tight and close so that it cannot be damaged quickly.

**Is your house fit for all of your family members?**

No, some of us stay in a hut, and some stay in the house. It is worse when the temperature is high. We have to stay in shady places like cow sheds and sometimes under the house or trees.

**Would your house endure strong winds?**

No, [my house] is not solid enough to endure the strong wind. It is only a temporary building. We really worry about that during the rainy season". We also fear that the forest fire will reach our village in summer.

**Do you have enough blankets, pillows and mats in your house?**

We do not have enough blankets and mats but we just share them. For example, two people share one blanket. This is harder when we have guests at home because we do not have enough household materials like this.

**Do you have a clinic, hospital or health workers in the community?**

No, we do not have any clinic, hospital or health workers. We just go to Cw--- village or to Kyaukkyi when we need to access healthcare. It is not easy to travel because of the poor roads. We have to carry the sick person on our shoulders or on a hammock and walk. It is worse in the rainy season when we travel on foot and it takes two hours to get there. Sometimes the sick person got wet on the way. When they felt worse in the middle of the way, we had to rest him for a while and then continue to go.

**So you can only access to Myanmar government healthcare, no KNU at all?**

Right!

**How is the healthcare service and health workers relationship with patients?**

As usual, we have good healthcare service if we have money.

**What is the most prevalent disease in the community?**

We have some health issues caused by smoking, and other health conditions like malaria, dengue, measles, etc...

**Do children have access to a primary school?**

I am so sad because children cannot go to school in the village. We do not even have a primary school. Children who want to go to school have to move to Cw--- village, away from their family. The parents cannot follow them because they have no house there. Children have to stay in other people's houses. If they are lucky, they are treated nicely. Therefore, we tried to arrange a kindergarten school in the village. We also requested the teacher to prepare these children to be ready for primary school, so that they won't struggle when they move there. They teach these children one hour a day in the evening.

**Where do most children go to school?**

Most people send their children to Cw--- village. Some children enjoy it there but some don't, so they come back to stay in the village with their parents. Some children experience bullying and being treated poorly when they stay in other people's houses. So they came back to the village. It is the best for children to stay in the village but we do not have a teacher.

**Are the kindergarten teachers from Myanmar government or the KNU?**

They are from the Myanmar government.

**Are there any children who travel [daily] from home to school or they stay in the Cw--- village?**

The distance from our village to the school is more than one hour on foot, so we just let them stay in Cw--- village. It's not safe for them to travel back and forth. Sometimes when they are sick, they yearn for their parents' care. So the parents have to go and look after them.

**How long does it takes for them to go to school in the town?**

The houses where they stay are close to the school. They study from primary to middle school level. It is a Myanmar government school.

**What is the main challenge for education?**

We really need a school, teachers and an office for them. We have returned for four years already but we haven't got a school yet. The livelihood situation is also still poor. There is nothing going properly, we rely on casual daily labour.

**How many family members are working to secure your livelihood?**

We have six family members and everyone is working to earn [money]. My children started working right after they left school, they work on construction.

**Do you have enough income?**

Our daily wages are just enough for our daily food and needs such as rice, salt, etc. It's difficult to buy additional materials that we need such as clothes, blankets, shoes and a backpack to use when we travel. We have to balance our expenses carefully out of poverty.

**What do you work on currently?**

I work on a plantation and farm in which I plant paddy, bean and sesame. The results of the

work depend on the number of people working. If we cannot earn enough for our family, we have to find other casual work.

**What is the most common work in the community?**

The most common work is plantations of green pea, peanut and rice.

**Is there any alternative work if the common work is not available?**

We have other casual work according. We usually receive 4,000 kyats for that casual work such as cutting sugar cane, collecting roofing leaves, and finding bamboo shoots and taro plants to sell.

**Is there anyone who goes abroad to pursue a job because of the economic disadvantages in the village?**

Yes, there are our villagers who go to Bangkok, Thailand in order to work there. Some villagers just go to cities in Myanmar to pursue a job. There are still some people who will move out for finding a job soon. Some villagers just live in the community and work on casual work. We have to do this in order to survive.

**Were you provided any vocational training that can benefit your livelihoods?**

No.

**Is everything going well with the current plantation you are working on?**

Yes, it is going well because we balance the seasons and land to grow different plants. We choose the land and season to grow paddy and other plants. Since we rely on our plantation, we face challenges when the climate is complicated [flooding, drought].

**Are you independent in terms of working on the plantation?**

Actually, we need support such as technical skills on livestock raising and plantation. For instance, we need technical training on growing fish and support of paddy seeds. It has been challenging to stand alone.

**How do you solve the problem when you do not have enough food for all family members?**

We face the inadequate food problem every year but we find casual work such as collecting roofing leaves, harvesting thatch, cutting taro plants and making charcoal so that we earn enough for food. Sons and daughters also work as casual labour to support their family.

**Were your lands confiscated when you were still displaced?**

Yes, we have some dispute about the land. Since we were displaced for 39 years, our land became like forest for strangers or outsiders. Farms were covered by grass and plants. Some outsiders came to our village and worked on our land when we were away. We knew it but we could not come back because of the unstable situation. We could only come back when the situation improved after the ceasefire. Then we had to deal with the land disputes and invaders who claim that these are their lands because they were working on it.

**How did villagers try to solve the land dispute with the invaders?**

We try to negotiate with them in an appropriate way. Some of them understand our situation and return the land to the owners, whereas some of them do not give up the land and they would even fight us if we forced them to return the land to its owners.

**You have got some support to rebuild the house but you have many challenges in**

**rebuilding it, right?**

Right, when we need bamboo to rebuild the house, we have to ask permission from the KNU. The poles we used for the house are wood but the floors and walls are made of bamboo. The bamboo that the KNU gave us was very small. It was difficult to build the floor out of it but we had to use it like that.

**In terms of legal documents, do you have any birth certificate, household documents and ID cards from any government?**

No, none of the villagers have got those legal documents.

**So what are the related challenges for not having legal documents?**

It is very difficult when we don't have any documents. We have lost all household documents and ID cards in the conflict. Therefore, we cannot apply for a land ownership document when we return. There were no birth certificates in the past, only now in the post-conflict period.

**What would you expect the government (KNU, Myanmar government) to provide legal documents for you?**

I believe that both governments should arrange for us to have ID cards. Now, we have to pay money to get an ID card. Some people have lost their legal documents when they fled during the Four Cuts strategy period [when the Tatmadaw attacked villages and villagers to undermine resistance].

**When you do not have legal documents, what challenges do you face when you have to deal with government? For example, if you have to go to the immigration office.**

We face challenges when dealing with the government. We had to follow the policy. It takes days to process any legal documents such as birth certificates. We cannot apply for legal documents directly from the immigration office; first we have to ask for a recommendation letter from the police. It also costs us for the service. [Then], if we want to cross the border and go to Bangkok, we have to pay 100,000 kyats to apply for a [passport]. It costs us more when we want a quicker process. If we do not offer a bribe, they take days on end to provide us the legal documents that we applied for. There are also other food and travel costs when we go there every day until the process has finished. It costs around 10,000 kyats per day and when the process is completed, it goes up to 100,000 kyats.

**Do you have any land grant provided by the KNU?**

No, they discussed about measuring the land but they have not done it yet. I think both the Myanmar government and the KNU will measure the land for us soon. Then they will probably provide two land grants, from both governments, at the same time. We are hoping to get land grants as soon as possible because we don't want to deal with the land disputes anymore.

**Are you able to stay with all your family together?**

Yes, we can stay together but some of my children have to stay in Cw--- village to study there. We cannot stay in the village together because there is no school.

**Do you know anything about the 2020 election?**

I just heard about the previous election but not the 2020 one yet.

**Do you think you have the right to vote regardless of having an ID card or not?**

We could vote for the KBP in the past. In the previous election, relevant authorities came to the village and collected our name list from the village administrator for election right away. We did not know for which party our names were used for voting.



**Do you know if people who don't have an ID card can vote or not?**

In the previous time, the Myanmar government officer came to the village and provided ID cards before the election. We haven't seen anything for this 2020 election yet.

**Are you able to get involved in decision making when there is any issue coming up in the village?**

Yes, we have a village committee from seven villages. The village committee members have meetings every three months. We rotate the meeting place from village to village. There will be a meeting in my village on this coming 28<sup>th</sup> February. When we hold a meeting, we always have township leaders, village tract leaders and other village elders with us.

**Are you also involved in local meetings held by the KNU?**

Yes.

**According to your experience, were you ever discriminated against because you were an IDP?**

Yes, some people misunderstand us because we returned to the original village already but we did not dismantle our house in the IDP site yet. We are doing this because our situation is not stable yet. We just came back and started setting a new foundation in the village. Some people see us as greedy people and complain about us. Therefore, we want the KNU to stand by us.

**In the 1970s, when you were displaced near Cw--- village in other people's farms, did you face any human rights abuses in education, health and livelihood?**

It always cost us money when we accessed government services, especially healthcare services in clinic or hospital. When we called the KNU health workers, we also had to pay.

**Did you have any health workers during the conflict period?**

Yes, we had some health workers from the KNU who took care of us with a low profile.

**Were you able to study in KNU government school during the conflict period?**

No, we only had the Myanmar government school. However, many students dropped out because they had to help their parents to secure their livelihoods. We had to stay in other people's lands and we had limited chance to earn incomes while we were displaced.

**What accountability do you hope for in order get justice for the displacement and the past abuse?**

We need education; we have to be educated in order to obtain our rights in cooperation with authorities. We will be backward people if we do not have access to education in the first place. I think both KNU and the Myanmar government should take accountability for this.

**Finally, what are the most essential needs in your community?**

The most essential needs are education at least to primary level, healthcare service and roads for better transportation.

**What government is controlling this area?**

It is the KNU and CIDKP.

**Is there any justice system in the community?**

Yes.

**Do you think the peace process is stable yet?**

I think it is 70% stable now.

**What do you worry about the most for your future?**

We worry about the political situation. If the fighting breaks out again, it will impact our community very badly in every aspect. We will face armed conflict and abuses from armed actors and also lose our livelihood sustainability again.

**How do you expect the government and organizations to help protect the community from such potential challenges again?**

Organisations should help document the villagers' voices, and the JMC [Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee] should monitor the activities of the armed groups and prevent them from stirring conflict and hurting civilians.

**Have you ever regretted returning to the village?**

I regret sometimes when my friends misunderstand my situation because of the trouble makers. Sometimes, it leads to broken relationships with each other.

**What more do you want to share?**

I want to say that our Karen people and the Myanmar government are brothers and sisters. It will be the best if we can build a sustainable peace between us. What we all want is genuine peace.

**Would you allow us to publish your information?**

I think it is good for you to share this information but please don't show my name.

**Source #9**

Source doc #	Source # 9
Log #	20-15-A4-I1
Interview date	December 2019
Location	Htaw Ta Htoo (Htantabin) Township, Taw Oo (Toungoo) District
Full Text	

**Taw Oo District Interview | Saw L --- (male), Cy --- village, Cy--- village tract, Htaw Ta Htoo Township**

**Status:** IDP Returnee

**Temporary shelter or IDP camp:** Ei Tu Hta IDP Camp

**Return date(s):** 2014

**Ethnicity:** Karen

**Religion:** Animist

**Marital status:** Married

**Occupation:** Plantation

**Position:** Villager

**As you returned from an IDP camp, could you tell us what happened to you before you**

**went to the camp?**

It was because our enemy oppressed us and we could not stay here anymore. Therefore, we left and lived in the camp for six years and then came back here.

**Who is your enemy that oppressed you?**

They are Tatmadaw soldiers. It was the time of Na Wa Ta [State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), 1988-97] and Na Ah Pa [State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), 1997-2012].

**How did they oppress you?**

They always created trouble for us. They would kill you when they saw you. We could not stay in our place anymore, so we left to the camp.

**Were you a soldier or just a villager?**

I was just a villager.

**What did you face when you were on the way to go to the camp?**

People sent us all the way there but some road conditions were very scary. We had to go with fear but since people sent us safely, we felt relieved.

**How was the food condition there?**

[T]he food condition was good when we first arrived in the camp. Later, it started getting worse.

**What do you mean the condition was good when you first arrived?**

We [initially] got a lot of support from donors and got enough oil, salt and fish paste but after a year we did not get oil and fish paste. We only got rice but it was not enough for us. It was so hard for us to live there so we came back here.

**Which year was that you did not get enough support?**

I did not remember the year or the date anymore. I came back and have lived here for six years already.

**What about the healthcare situation there?**

It was good. They took care of us well. It was only with the food condition that we faced difficulties. We could not do anything to secure our livelihood so we came back. It was not easy to work because it is not our own place like here.

**You returned here because of your livelihood problems there?**

Yes.

**Did you get any support when you came back?**

No.

**Did you come back on your own?**

Yes.

**How many households did you come back with?**

There were two households when we came back.

**Was it including children?**

Yes, they are my children and my siblings.

**Do you have any land to work on here?**

Yes, I have some land to work on. The problem is the mice are eating and destroying our paddy and plants this year. The past two, three years was okay but this year is the worst. The mice eat all our cardamom plants.

**Do you have school in the village where you are living now?**

Yes.

**How many standards does the school have?**

We have until standard three.

**Is the school self-funded, Myanmar government or KECD School?**

The Karen Education and Cultural Department [KECD] School. It does not belong to Myanmar government.

**How many teachers are there in the school?**

There are three teachers, one female and two males.

**How many students do they have?**

There are over 30 students.

**Do you have a clinic here?**

No. Only people who attend medical training are getting medical support but people who attended the training in the past did not get anything.

**Why they did not get it?**

Since new medicines are discovered every day, I think it is hard to give them because they might not be confident to treat the patient with new medicines. They will also have difficulties in trying to understanding them.

**What about when the villagers get sick?**

If we get sick, we just go to the Brigade office or Township office and ask for medicine.

**What if the villagers get a very serious disease that requires hospitalization?**

We have never experienced that kind of thing yet. No one got a very serious disease so far. If we have those kinds of sicknesses then I think we should go to Khay Hkee hospital.

**What changes have you seen after the ceasefire agreement?**

In my opinion, I think the only change I see is it gets easier to travel. Other than that, I do not see any change because the Tatmadaw soldiers who are based in our area haven't gone back yet.

**Do you think this peace process is sustainable?**

No. I do not think it is sustainable.

**What concerns do you have?**

I think the Tatmadaw still wants to destroy us, but it just is not the right time for them yet. If something goes wrong in the future, the situation will get worse.

**Is your village close to the Tatmadaw army camp?**

It is close to it in Cz--- village but in Da--- village side, it is a little bit far. In Db---, whenever the Tatmadaw fires artillery, it reaches that side.

**Did they fire artillery in the past?**

Of course. In the past, we had to flee to the camp because they fired artillery and we could not stay anymore. It was very scary at that time but it is getting better now compared to the past.

**What do you think about the Tatmadaw who are still not retreating from their army camp in your area?**

We cannot do anything but I hope they retreat as soon as possible because if they do not leave, conflict might happen. If our leaders do their best to manage the relationship between them [KNU and Tatmadaw], it will be good. If they cannot manage it, the situation will turn bad.

**What do you think you would do if the conflict or fighting happens again?**

If that happens again, I will not go anywhere. I will just stay here dead or alive. As I am getting old, I cannot run or flee to other places again. We could even jump while fleeing from the fighting when we were younger, but now I cannot do that anymore. If it happens again, I will just accept whatever they will do to me.

**By the way, are you married?**

Yes.

**How many children do you have?**

I had eight children but now only seven of them are left [alive].

**How old is your youngest one?**

The youngest one is eight years old.

**Are you able to secure your livelihood and for your family?**

It is not like we have too much to eat but we do not have any debt. I could say that we are able to secure it, even though we work and eat one day at the time.

**Do you have any organization that supports your community development?**

In the past, a Japanese organization came once and supported us with rice, a light bulb and a solar panel for each house. I cannot remember the date and the name of the organization.

**Are there any other development projects?**

In terms of education, we get support for students and teachers but other than that I do not remember anything.

**Do you think the quality of the education here is good enough for the students?**

Yes, I think so. They have advanced knowledge nowadays because children these days know how to use phones very well. We cannot do like them. The community is getting more and more civilized by the day.

**What would be your essential needs?**

We have many needs but the problem is that the villagers are not united to ask for support. We need things like water pipes and light but since we are not in harmony, it is hard for us to ask for support.

**What about other important things in your community?**

We have many important issues but I cannot list everything.

**What do you think the people your age would need the most?**

The people in my age would need medicine because we are getting older, so joint pain and blurry sight are our problems.

**Can we use the information you provided us for writing a report and publication?**

Yes.

**Source #10**

Source doc #	Source # 10
Log #	19-96-A1-11
Interview date	2019
Location	Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw (Hpapun) District
Full Text	

**Mu Traw District Interview | Naw R --- (female), Ei Tu Hta repatriation site, N/A village tract, Bu Tho Township**

**Status:** IDP

**Temporary shelter or IDP camp:** Ei Tu Hta IDP Camp

**Return date(s):** Has not returned

**Ethnicity:** Karen

**Religion:** N/A

**Marital status:** Married

**Occupation:** KWO staff & School committee

**Position:** Ei Tu Hta KWO chairperson

**Have you also worked with other organizations except for KWO?**

I only work with KWO but I am also a school committee member.

**What are your perspectives on the current IDP situation?**

I think that it is still a difficult situation for the IDPs because they hardly are in peace even though our leaders are doing the peace process. We still have a lot of concerns that the Tatmadaw and Myanmar government try to negotiate with KNU for peace, but there are a lot of ethnic groups who are still in conflict. As we are Karen people, one of the ethnic groups, we still face the same thing like other ethnic groups. Therefore, I do not think that it will be easy to achieve sustainable peace.

**Were there any refugees from Ei Tu Hta camp who went back to stay in their own villages?**

Yes, when people from Ei Tu Hta camp were asked about their willingness to repatriate, some people thought that if they continue to live in the camp, they will not get their share [of food] anymore. On the other hand, they thought that if they go back to their own places, there will be a security issue for them. But if they live in the camp, they will not get food and they will have no place to work for their livelihood so they chose to go back. Some people went back [but] live beside the village because they cannot live inside the village. They live beside the village and

do farming and plantation for their livelihood. But they still have security concerns.

**Which organization mainly supported this repatriation process?**

Some few CBOs cooperated together to support repatriation trips, such as [covering] car and food costs on the way.

**How many CBOs cooperated together to support these trips?**

They are the Karen Environment and Social [Action] Network [KESAN], KWO, and Karen Office of Relief and Development [KORD].

**What are the main needs for the returnees?**

The main needs would be food, shelter, education and healthcare. If they have these things it is enough for them, but it is not enough at all so they are facing with difficulties.

**What are the main concerns of the returnees?**

Their main concern is for their safety. If they are not oppressed or fleeing from war then they will be happy and they can stay in peace. But for that reason, it is always a concern for them so they are still facing security risks.

**Did you work on refugee issues?**

As I am a member of KWO in this area, I had to cooperate and support but not financially. Our leaders arranged it for them. We just supported them by encouraging them, and gave them awareness on how they need to protect themselves while going back and when they reach there. We also gave them our suggestions and shared our experiences.

**What are your perspectives on the current peace process?**

As we heard, see and experience this peace process, if the 2008 constitution is not amended or changed, it will be very difficult to achieve peace. If the Myanmar government would really like to get genuine peace and justice, they must amend their 2008 constitution.

**Do you have data on the population of the IDPs in Karen State?**

I can say that people from all 7 districts in Karen State are IDPs because we all have concerns for our safety. We are not free from war zones so we can say that we are all IDPs.

**So you do not know the exact number of population?**

No. I do not know.

**Do you know any organization that provides humanitarian aid or service to the IDPs/returnees in your operation area?**

In our operation area, I only know KESAN, KORD and KWO who help them as they can. It is not enough for them but it only reduces some of their difficulties. It will not be sufficient for their long-term livelihoods but it will surely help them when they face a big difficulty for one time.

**What kind of aid or service are they providing?**

They give medicine for healthcare and provided tarpaulin sheets during rainy season and gave rice to them.

**Can you tell us about your perspectives on the role of the Myanmar government and KNU on IDPs/refugees return?**

I think the responsibilities that both Myanmar government and the KNU established to follow are already good. But for the KNU, the Myanmar government always blocks them from what they

want to do so they cannot do anything. If other countries do not give pressure on the Myanmar government, it will be very hard for ethnic groups to exercise their rights. Likewise, the KNU also will face difficulties in their advocacy. We really hope for other countries to pressure the Myanmar government, and of course they need to cooperate.

**What recommendations do you have for the Myanmar government, or KNU?**

Personally, as a civilian, I would like to suggest that the Myanmar government should accept and fulfil what civilians are asking for if they really would like to build democracy and a peaceful country. If they do not listen to civilians, it will create a lot of problems for civilians.

**Do you know the exact place of the IDP/returnees site? Did they go back and stay together or go back to their own villages?**

They cannot go back and stay together because their livelihoods will be difficult. So only one or two families go back and stay in each village. They went back to Brigade 2 and stay beside the village and some went back to Brigade 5 and Brigade 3. Only one to two families stay beside each village. The villages where they went back to are not really villages that were established a long time ago, but only places where people fled to during the conflict period.

**Do you know any IDPs that have never been to a refugee [IDP] camp?**

Before we came to Ei Tu Hta IDP camp, we always fled to places within Karen State, in the jungle. We fled for many generations already since our great grandparents' time. We are not able to work properly and with freedom. We fled when we were children until now, it has been over 30 years but it is not over yet.

**This is all. Can we use this information for our upcoming report?**

Yes. You can use it.

**Do you have any other things to say?**

I would like to add one thing. Our Ei Tu Hta camp is located near a Tatmadaw army camp and we do not have proper jobs for our livelihoods, and we only have little chance to work for our livelihood. But especially this year, the rodents have destroyed our paddy so it causes concerns for Ei Tu Hta refugees [IDPs].

**How many people are in Ei Tu Hta refugee [IDP] camp currently?**

We still have more than 300 households and 2000+ population.

**How many households went back?**

More than 50 households went back.

**Do you still have any other thing to say?**

I would like to thank you for the interview. I would like to say that if possible, all of us should work together to free our people from oppression. We cannot do it alone. We need to unite together and work together; we will surely reach victory.

**Source #11**

Source doc #

Source # 11



Log #	20-22-A3-11
Interview date	January 15 <sup>th</sup> 2020
Location	Moo (Mone) Township, Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) District
Full Text	

**Kler Lwee Htoo District Interview | Saw M--- (male), Dc--- village, Dc--- village tract, Moo Township**

**Status:** IDP returnee  
**Temporary shelter or IDP camp:** Dc--- village  
**Return date(s):** Around 2013

**Ethnicity:** Karen  
**Religion:** Christian  
**Marital status:** Married  
**Occupation:** Farming  
**Position:** Villager

**How many children do you have?**  
I have six children but one passed away and three got married already.

**I would like to ask about the displacement from the past. When were you displaced?**  
I was first displaced when I was a child. I do not know when exactly. We returned here between 1997 and 1998. The first time [they were displaced] was in 1993. We had to displace and return in 1994 again. In 2011, the situation calmed down so the transportation got a little bit better. Therefore, we could come back and work in our own place.

**How many times did this village have to move?**  
This village had to move three times. I did not remember when was the first time we had to displace because I was just a child. I could walk and ran by the second time we had to be displaced.

**Why did you have to displace? How do you think about it and what was the reason?**  
I will tell you honestly. The reason was because two buffalos were fighting each other and we became hostages between them.

**Was it because of the fighting?**  
Yes.

**Were there people who fled into the forest and to the refugee camp?**  
Yes, there were [people who fled to the refugee camp] because there was not enough food to eat. There were the DKBA armed group and Pyaut Kya [rebel group] in 2007, so the local people were afraid to stay in the village. I had concerns and was afraid to stay in the village as well. We tried to stay in the village because we love our lands, our village and our place here. Therefore, I said that I will just stay here no matter what and I will die here too. If my children would like to go to another place, they can go. I won't go anywhere. I have endured the obstacles and difficulties in this place but now we have a chance to work on the lands of our ancestors. We [the people who left and are living here] help and advise each other. We can face the difficulties in everyday life by the grace of God. CIDKP also helped us by providing rice to us. It helped us to cover our livelihood for working two to three months to get the amount of rice

from their support. We cannot say that it helped us fully for our livelihood but we can say that it was a blessing that we got some support that covered some of our daily needs.

**Did you flee to other places or villages far away from your village?**

I just fled and displaced around these areas. If we are displaced, we just go to Dd--- area. We just displace to the usual areas that we have in the past. Last year we returned and built the houses. We lived there together.

**Why did you return here?**

The reason is because our leaders and our village head told us that we have to return and live here. We love our village and areas here. We just want to stay in our own village because the place where we go to stay is not our village and our area. We know our village and our areas passed down by our ancestors. I registered to build my house but I could not build the whole house at the same time. We just built it piece by piece and helped each other. It is not a good house but it is fine if we can live in it.

**Is it your original village?**

Yes.

**How long or how many years have you returned here?**

We returned here since 2013 and we built a hut to live in.

**Was it in 2012?**

We could travel in 2012 but we could not build a hut. We started building a hut in 2013.

**It is only 3 or 4 years then.**

It is just 3 years since we built a house. We built a hut to be able to live when we are working.

**What is the pressure or who forced you to return?**

The 43 households that are in the village now returned back by their own decision and there was no one who forced us. CIDKP told us that we can now go back to our village but they will not guarantee to take full security for the local people. However, they said we can go back if we want. Therefore, we organized ourselves and returned because the place where we were staying is not our village and our place. If something happened, we all would die. I thought, if we come back then we can live freely.

**Is there any armed group bothering the local people?**

No, there is not.

**How many households returned?**

There are 43 households that returned.

**Are there any more households that will return?**

Yes, I think so. But I am not sure whether they haven't registered. There might be more households that will return. However, there are only 43 households recently.

**What are the obstacles or problems for the local people who cannot return yet?**

I think there might be problems for them. There might be food shortages, and not enough wood and bamboo. There might be some needs for them. We [who returned now] can work for our livelihood as we at least have some plots of land. We can plant some vegetables, catch fish and raise cattle and buffalos in our areas. However, if anything happens and if we have to displace,

then we will have to because we have no power as we are just civilians. We cannot stand against them. I think if our leaders plan the best for us, then it will be great for us.

**Is there anyone who helped you when you returned by transportation?**

The local people themselves were helping each other.

**Were there any organizations or government organizations that helped the local people return?**

No, we did not ask help from them either. We were happy that at least we could return to our village. Even though they did not say that they would guarantee [safety] for us, they told us we could return. We are happy that we could return.

**Were there any obstacles during the period of returning to the village?**

There were no obstacles because the place where we were displaced and our village are close to each other.

**Is there anyone who returned but later went back to the displacement site?**

There is no one among 43 households.

**Is there any support that you got for your return?**

We got support from CIDKP.

**Is CIDKP the only organization that helps returnees?**

Yes.

**What do they support?**

They give rice, and there was support two times. We got two mosquito nets, one bottle of oil, and two packs of beans. I was not there and there was only my wife.

**Are those given only by CIDKP?**

CIDKP gave only rice. We are blessed because we got rice. We would have to work for at least two months to get that amount of rice. It covered for our livelihood a lot so we thank our leaders who helped us.

**Is there anyone who helps providing you money and the materials that you need for your family and to build your house?**

There is no one. CIDKP is the only organisation that provided us with rice.

**[...] Is there the safety from the KNU [KNLA soldiers] or the Tatmadaw soldiers?**

We have safety at the village level; the village tract head, Karen National Defence Organization [KNDO], and if needed we [villagers] organize together and discuss what we need in the community. This is from the KNU. There is also a village tract administrator from the Myanmar government and they have their own ruling system as well. We also have meetings with them if needed. We are flexible depending on the situation and we help each other. Everything is going well but there are some problems that pop up sometimes when we do not notice it.

**Has any fighting happened since you returned to this area?**

No, there is no fighting happening yet in this area.

**If we have to compare the past and the present situation, what are the differences?**

It was really difficult in the past and the situation was very serious. However, the situation now is

getting a lot better. Everything is going well after the ceasefire in 2012. In my opinion, everything is getting better. There were a lot of conflicts before 2011 in the past. There was a terrible situation in 2007. We had to be ready anytime and we had to be alert when the Tatmadaw would enter the village. If we heard the dogs barking, the men in the village fled into the forest or to other places. There was a terrible problem in the past but the situation now is a lot better. We thank our leaders for thinking of the local villagers and arranging everything for us. That was the truthful experience that I am telling you now.

**Are there villagers who fled into the refugee camp because of the fighting from the villages around these areas?**

Yes, there are a lot. Some of them have gone to America and there are a lot of Dc--- villagers who have gone to third countries. But I do not know exactly to tell you their names.

**Are there any local villagers who visit the village [from the refugee camps]?**

Yes.

**Do you hear they have any plan to return and resettle in the village?**

No.

**What is the biggest concern that you have for the security in the country? Do you still have any concerns?**

I think we need security for the village. We need to reform the security system. A Burmese proverb says, "Thant Baranan". It means you can go anywhere. For example, there is an armed group on the main road. Even if you are going to provide security, you cannot do it. You are going to work in another place, there are KNU soldiers and there is a work place in the next area. So that is not easy for you to go because they are not in the same village as you. Some villages are in the east side and some are in the west side. There are a lot of people who leave to work. There were local villagers' places but they moved around every year. They worked there two to three years and then they sold those places. So there are a lot of problems that followed behind. Therefore, there is nothing in these areas now. That is one of the situations I've noticed. [The interviewee means that villagers who move around for work cannot be safe because there are different armed groups in different villages. In addition, many people have changed locations or gone away to find work, so they settle in different places.]

**Is it related to the land issue?**

Yes, it is related to land, rivers and jobs issues and every issue. They invest themselves in everything. I will tell you just one of the examples that happened in Dc--- village. They come and pick Haw Tu Ploh [a kind of local vegetables in Myanmar] and they sell them and they get 10000 kyats to 20000 kyats. Some of them come by foot or by motorbikes and they even come by boat when it's flooded [in the rainy season]. The local people are not doing that. When they come, the local [Karen] people are not even awake yet. They used to do it a long time ago and they know everything and every way of doing it. They are now living and working in the places where we used to live and work in the past. Then they know every situation in those places now. This is a big problem if you cannot stop it. They took over the main rivers in the local [Karen] people's areas. Therefore, the local people cannot do anything. [He is referring to Bamar progressively moving in and taking over traditionally Karen areas.]

**Who are they? Are they Bamar people?**

Yes, they are Bamar people. They know each other closely. If the local Karen people go there, they will ask for 10 million [to buy land] but if the Bamar people go there, they will just ask about 2 million. We cannot pay that much so we cannot do anything. If we try to do anything, they ask

us a large amount of money. [...] When we find out about it, it will only cost 700, 000 kyats. They sell the land from Dc--- village with very expensive prices; 1,000,000 kyats. It is very expensive for the local people so they cannot buy it. However, the [KNU] Township administrator told the local Karen people to get their river back. How will we be able to do that? They're already dominant in that area and they already Kyay Tin Set [give more than the usual price]. They started doing the project there for three years. You cannot get it back even if you pay 10 million. This is one of the problems in Dc--- Village River about the security issue that we cannot do anything.

**Are there any human rights violations and any abuses?**

We only have to face with the Bamar people from the lower part of the village. When you buy the riversides from them and their village head said, I take the responsibility for that. However, his villagers move to that area slowly [one by one] and fish at night. It became a problem for us. When the buffalos destroy their fishnet, the owner of the buffalos or the one who takes care of the buffalos has to give the price of their fishnet. Actually, the place is owned by the local Karen people. As you know the Karen people, they do not usually want to have conflict with others, so they have to pay for it. Some have to pay 20000 kyats or 30000 kyats. Someone who takes care of the buffalos told me yesterday that he had to pay 30000 kyats.

**That is one of the problems.**

Yes, it is. We hope our leaders [KNU] will help us solve this problem as well.

**Are there any incidents of landmines or UXOs?**

No, there are not. I don't know in other areas. Those might be [beside] the main road but there are none here. In the past during the conflict time, there were one or two of our villagers who got injured by the landmines. It happened when they were taking care of the cows and buffalos. We had heard of the landmines but we did not know the exact place. When the cows and buffalos were going to other places, the owners or the one who took care of them had to follow them. Therefore, this kind of incident happened to one or two villagers.

**The local people travel through the farmland in summer and they use the other way in rainy season. There are Tatmadaw check points in Kyoh Pin Seik and army camps on the way, do they stop or check the local people?**

No, they don't. They don't do it now, but they used to do it in the past since before 2014.

**Are there any weather problems such as flood, storm, heat waves, or air pollution in the area?**

Some of the houses were damaged in the rainy season last year. But we did not consider it as a big problem because we think we will help each other to rebuild the houses.

**So there are some houses damaged.**

Yes. There were only one or two houses damaged and we rebuilt them already. We helped each other and they were not damaged so much.

**Can you live well [with good quality houses] in the area where you returned?**

No.

**Did you just build it by yourself?**

Yes, we built it by ourselves.

**Did your house get damaged?**

No, we built the houses that we are living now.

**Did you build it by yourself or other people built it for you?**

No, we built it ourselves. No one gave us.

**Have you built the house completely?**

No, not yet. [...]

**Do you use a well?**

We dug the well by ourselves. There were five or six wells in the village. People who are displaced and do not have wells use those wells.

**Was it from CIDKP?**

I do not know. You better ask the village head. He might know it.

**Do you have to purify the water?**

No, we do not need to but some might have to purify it. I am not sure whether we get water from different sources.

**Are there any organizations that help or provide anything for the houses/families?**

No, we do not get any help.

**Do you have access to electricity?**

No.

**Do you use a battery?**

We can just use the light bulb [from the battery]. We have no access to electricity yet.

**Do you use the firewood for cooking?**

We use firewood to cook since the time of our parents, grandparents and great grandparents .

**Is there any clinic or hospital?**

No.

**Where do the villagers go if they get sick?**

We go to Moo [Mone] Township or Lay Lan Koo.

**How long does it take to get to Moo from here?**

It might take around one hour and thirty minutes on foot. It might be faster if you go with motorbikes or cars.

**What do you think of the quality of the treatment in Moo or Lay Lan Koo hospitals?**

If I have to tell you, I have never been to the hospital since I was young and neither has my family. I'm telling you the truth. I only drink paracetamol. I usually drink herbals [traditional remedies]. I never go to the clinic or the hospital, so I do not know. I have just been to hospital when sending my nephew. But I don't know their treatment system.

**Do you have a school in this village?**

There is no school in this village. There is only a village tract school [in a nearby village].

**Where do the returnee children go to school?**

They go to study on the other side of the village. The school is supported by the Catholic and Baptist leaders working together to support the children to study, and they just study in the house.

**Is it only for the small children?**

Yes.

**How many hours does it take the children to get to school in rainy season?**

It takes a while.

**Does it take one hour?**

It takes almost two hours because the road is too muddy. The problems here are no school and the road is bad for travelling.

**Can you earn enough income to cover the needs of your family?**

It is not enough because we do not have many incomes. There are few job opportunities here. If we take care of buffaloes, we only have to do that work [use the land for that purpose, which prevents them from planting crops]. When the baby buffaloes are young, we cannot sell them yet. Therefore, we have to get a loan from [rich] people, and we have to pay it back with interest. So we do not have enough income but we just have to secure our livelihoods this way.

**So the income is not enough for your family. However, you have to arrange and make sure for your family.**

Yes. It is not the best because we just recently returned and had to start everything from the beginning.

**Do you have your children who can help you work?**

Yes.

**Do you also have children who go to school?**

Yes. He just finished grade 7 and left the school. Now he is helping me looking after the buffalos.

**Do you have enough rice for your family?**

We do not have enough but we borrowed money from other people and buy rice.

**What is your main work?**

We are working on farms. But we are just started clearing our fields to be able to plant paddy.

**Do you plant beans?**

We do not plant beans this year because we have buffalos and each family has one or two buffalos and we take care of them on farms. We divided the field areas and I planted the paddy

plants on the fields that I got. However, they were destroyed by the heavy rain last year. I planted two to three baskets of paddy on eight acres of fields but those were destroyed because of the unclean water.

**What does “unclean water” mean?**

Unclean water means that the water became unclean because of the gold mining. Even if there was a flood, and if water is clean, there would be no problem. But this time the water was unclean so it damaged the paddy crops.

**Did some of your relatives or neighbours have to leave the village to find a job in Thailand or other countries?**

Yes.

**Why?**

It is because of debts. For example, we take a loan of 10,000 kyats from someone and the interest might be five or ten kyats. We can only give the interest but not the loan because we did not have work. We do not have money to work as well. Therefore, we have to take another loan and we get more debts. If I have to tell you, this [people leaving to work in Thailand] might also be related to the [armed] conflicts in the past, and there is no fighting now. But we still have concerns and worries. If something happens, we worry that Tatmadaw soldiers will cut our throats or kill us. Everyone in Dc--- village has those concerns.

**Because of the debts and fewer work opportunities, so youths are going abroad and working there?**

Yes. It is also because of their friends persuading them. For example, if they go to work abroad, they might get Baht [in Thailand] and they might earn 250 baht a day. Youths who can save money save a lot, but those who like to hang out [with friends] put their lives at risk [implying drugs or alcohol].

**It is risky for them.**

Yes.

**Are the displaced people able to work on the land after they return?**

Yes, there are some. But the displaced people do not have land because they sold their farmlands for 1,500 or 2,000 kyats per acre when they were displaced. There are only [communal] lands left in the village. There are some people whose children live on their lands and some just live in Dd--- areas. They do not return to the village so we cannot do anything.

**Is there any special support for the villagers?**

No, there is only CIDKP who provided us rice.

**Do you have legal documents, such as ID card, birth certificate, household registration documents, land title, etc.?**

There are some people who have those but some don't have.



**How do people who do not have the documents get by? Don't they apply?**

I will tell you. In the past, it was easy to get those documents. But now you have to apply to get those documents in the main [Township] office. If they would like to do for you, it will be easy for you. But when they do not want to do, they would ask you many appointments to meet them again and again. There are some people who can get them easily when they give lion heads or elephant heads [it means give money/bribe].

**Do the villagers have to pay to get those documents?**

Yes, of course they have to give when they go to the immigration office.

**How much do you have to pay to get the ID card?**

I had to pay almost 20,000 kyats when I applied to get the ID card for my child. Those who apply illegally have to pay almost 100,000 kyats.

**Those who have household registration and birth certificate have to pay 20,000 kyats.**

Yes. We just got the birth certificates for our children a few years ago. There were no birth certificates in the past in our village tract.

**Are these documents provided by the Myanmar government?**

Yes.

**Are there any supports from the Myanmar government?**

Yes, there are some as I mentioned; oil and mosquito nets.

**Were you separated from your family when you were displaced?**

Yes. When our family had to displace to Dd---, men had to find jobs for their family livelihood. We were afraid to come back to this area. We went to work and stay with the KNU for months. If you ask the [KNU] District administrator about that, you might know more. I am not going to tell you detailed information.

**Do you know about the upcoming national elections in 2020?**

They announced it but we do not understand and know everything about it.

**Do you plant to register for the upcoming national election in 2020? Do you think that you will be able to register and vote?**

We will vote only for our ethnic leaders. Who do we have to vote for? We have experienced a lot of bad things from the Tatmadaw/Myanmar government. It is because of the grace of God and God opens ways for us. They have their ministers but now there is only Naw Bwel Say from our ethnic group who is famous in the Hluttaw [parliament]. I heard that from the radio program.

**Which party do you plan to vote for?**

I don't know which party to vote [for]. Can you please tell me about it? I don't understand it all.

**There is a Karen party and many other parties as well.**

Our hope is for Klo Kwel [Karen traditional drum and buffalo horn]. Should we or shouldn't we honour our Klo Kwel?

**What party is Klo Kwel?**

Klo Kwel is used and passed down from our ancestors, generation by generation. They honour it and they use it.

**What is your most pressing need in the village?**

We need better roads, water and schools. Education is the most important because the children here in this village are not educated. There are very few children who graduate from higher education level and work in the village. There is only one who is about to graduate and if he works in the village, we might have someone who will take the leadership role in the community. But I am not sure whether he will work in the community or not. There are some others who graduated but they are not working in the community.

**How many authorities are there in this area?**

There are two authorities; village tract administrator [from KNU] and village tract administrator [from the Myanmar government].

**Do you have access to a justice system in the village/ this area?**

There will be no justice if they do not change the 2008 constitution. I am not sure whether there might be justice if they change it.

**Do you think the current situation is sustainable?**

I cannot say if it's sustainable or not.

**Are you worried about the future?**

If they [KNU and Myanmar government] follow and listen to each other, it might be fine. But I am not sure.

**So you still have concerns for your future.**

Yes.

**What do you think the Myanmar government and the KNU should do to help you? Do you think they should help the IDPs return to their area?**

If we say yes to KNU, the KNU might say they do not get salary. If we say yes to Myanmar government, they might say we get salary but you have to be displaced because of the KNU. We are just hostages between them. If they fight each other, we are the ones who have to face and suffer the danger.

**Do you regret coming back to your village?**

I was eager to come back so I don't feel regret.

**I've asked you a lot. Do you still have any suggestions?**

I thank God for preparing the chance to our leaders to get ways for us to be able to come back to our village.

**Source #12**

Source doc #	Source # 12
Log #	20-6-A1-I1
Interview date	January 15 <sup>th</sup> 2020
Location	Moo (Mone) Township, Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) District
Full Text	<p><b>Kler Lwee Htoo District Interview   Saw N--- (male), Koh Nee village, Moo Township</b></p> <p><b>Status:</b> IDP returnee  <b>Temporary shelter or IDP camp:</b> Koh Nee IDP returning site  <b>Return date(s):</b> April 2018</p> <p><b>Ethnicity:</b> Karen  <b>Religion:</b> Christian  <b>Marital status:</b> Married  <b>Occupation:</b> N/A  <b>Position:</b> Village committee</p> <p><b>Where do you live?</b>                      I live in Koh Nee village, Moo [Mone] Township, Nyaunglebin District.</p> <p><b>What is your occupation and responsibility [given in the village]?</b>                      I take responsibility to arrange for IDP [Internally Displaced Person] accommodation.</p> <p><b>Is it part of the village committee?</b>                      Yes, it is.</p> <p><b>Do you have family?</b>                      Yes, I do.</p> <p><b>How many children do you have?</b>                      I have six children.</p> <p><b>How many daughters and sons?</b>                      Only daughters.</p> <p><b>I would like to ask about the displacement from the past. Were you living in Koh Nee village in the beginning?</b>                      Yes, I do live in Koh Nee village. We moved here in 1974 for the first time.</p> <p><b>How many times did this village have to move?</b></p>

This village had to move three times.

**The first time was in 1974. When was the second time?**

The second time was in 1999.

**When was the third time?**

The third time was in 2004.

**Where did you go?**

The first time, Burma [Myanmar government] did not arrange accommodation for us. Koh Nee villagers went to live in the villages where they have acquaintances and villages where their relatives live. Some villagers went to stay in Wa Lf--- village, Lg--- village, Lh--- village, Li--- village and Lj--- village.

**Are those villages close [to Koh Nee village]?**

Yes, soldiers arranged those places [villages] for us.

**Why did you move?**

When Tatmadaw soldiers approached, there was fighting that happened around the villages. Then, these Tatmadaw soldiers came into the villages and forced us to displace. They forced villagers to dismantle all of their houses within five days. When villagers failed to dismantle their houses, they came to destroy them.

**At that time, which battalion and commander forced the displacement of villagers? Do you remember?**

I do not remember as it was a long time ago. The first time when Tatmadaw soldiers approached, people who lead the village said the Tatmadaw soldiers were Bo Min Thein's troops. After the village moved, a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant [Platoon commander] came. The first time, Bo Min Thein's troops came here.

**Is Bo Min Thein the Operations Commander or Column commander?**

He must be an Operations Commander or Column commander.

**You were talking about three rounds of displacement. How many days were you staying in the other villages in the first period of displacement?**

We were displaced in other villages for seven up to eight years [1974]. After that, we came to live here [Koh Nee village]. We came back to live here because we did not have accommodation. We had to live next to our aunt and uncle's houses. The village head went to negotiate with the soldiers. Then the Tatmadaw soldiers withdrew from the area [Koh Nee village] where they had been based. After living there for two or three years, we had to displace again. It was in 1999.

**Did this village have to move three times?**

Yes. When we were displaced for the first time, there were many things lost and destroyed. When we were forced to displace to other villages, there were no places to keep cattle and buffaloes. We had to keep them far from the villages. After we were displaced for three days, we were not allowed to go back to the village [Koh Nee village]. That was why villagers were afraid to go back to look for their buffaloes and cattle. They were wandering without any herders. Then these cattle and buffaloes became like wild animals. Like in the Four Cuts Strategy, some soldiers hunted these wandering cattle and they were dispersed. That is the problem. Some paddy fields were covered with trees, bushes and grass. These fields are not all cleared yet

even now.

**What was the big difficulty facing you while you were displaced?**

At that time, KNU restricted us to do Su Pone [food storage]. They allowed us to withdraw foods only for three days. Each person received three milk tins of rice [195 grams] per day. When villagers came back from getting the rice, they were waiting at their checkpoint taking all of the rice. It was really difficult for the villagers to come back to the village to work as we were displaced persons. At that time, it was really difficult for villagers to find jobs. Villagers were in hunger. Some families who have children had to eat rice soup as the food was not enough for them to eat the first time we were displaced.

**After displacement for several years, you could return to live in your village, right? Why could you not come back to live in the village?**

We came back to live here after the NCA was signed between KNU and the Myanmar government. The [Moo] township leader invited us to visit him. He explained to us the NCA code of conduct [saying] it also stipulated that every displaced villager has to return. At first, displaced villagers did not trust [that they can go back to live in their village] because they were afraid [to go back]. As for us, we were also displaced persons who had to stay in other villagers' farms. They were not our places. After the NCA, we had the chance to come back to live in our village. Villagers thought villages would be peaceful.

**How many years have villagers returned to the former village and stayed?**

It will be two years in April. After we had been displaced for so many years, roads and schools were destroyed. That is why when we returned to live in the village it was really difficult for us, especially for the children to be able to access education because there were no roads for commuting. Another thing is that if other displaced villagers return to live in the village, they will face travel problems when health situations arise. There are no roads for transportation. In rainy season, that is really difficult for us. That is a big challenge for us. When someone suffers from emergency illness at night, we will have to carry them to the hospital. Before we had to displace, there were roads that we could travel. Roads were destroyed after the displacement.

**Were you forced to return to live in your village?**

The last time we returned to live in our village was without any force. Among villagers, we discussed returning to live in our village established by our ancestors. Therefore, we wanted to return to live in our village. Villagers were enthusiastic to come back to the village if their long-term crops were still good. We then went to see the situation in the village first. We decided to return. We decided to return to the village. If we are told to displace again, we will have to do so. It is because we have been displaced and living so many years in other people's farms. The land owners would just like to work in their farms.

**How many households returned to the village?**

There are 43 households that returned to the village.

**Are there villagers who have not returned yet?**

You mean [who will return] in the next year?

**I mean those people who have not returned yet.**

There are two or three households that will return. We are not sure yet. Now, they have work that they have not finished yet. They will come back to stay in the village.

**Are all displaced villagers returning?**

I think some displaced villagers but not all of them will be returning. I heard just two or three households more will be returning.

**What is the perspective of those who do not return?**

They just would like to live in other people's farms.

**What restrained them from returning to the village?**

When I asked them, they told me that if they return to the village, they will have no places to go when they are forced to displace again. That is the perspective they have. This worry restrains them from returning to the village.

**Are they worrying for their security?**

Yes, they are.

**When you returned, were there any arrangements prepared by leaders to help bring your stuff?**

No. We were enthusiastic to return by ourselves. After returning for almost a year, the KNU had a minor animal breeding project for us.

**What difficulties did you face during your return?**

There were no difficulties we faced. We could come back smoothly. When we returned to the village the only challenge facing us were roads [transportation] and education for children.

**After you returned, were there any households that went back to the displaced areas where they had been?**

No. those who returned to the village did not go back to the place they had been. They've lived in the village since the return. They built new houses in the village.

**Regarding the return, were there any organisations that supported you in order to develop living standards in the village?**

We have the Committee for Internally Displaced Karen People [CIDKP] supporting us here. Some organisations came to conduct training and give awareness.

**Currently, do you think you have sufficient security after you returned to live in the village?**

We cannot say that we have sufficient security by looking at the political activities in the country. Political conditions are always in uncertainty. Living in the village, we are living calmly. However, if we were told to displace, then we will have to do so. As long as we are not told to displace, we will live in our village. We believe the future will bring better conditions.

**For the security, you were saying that it is not sufficient, right?**

Yes. I was saying it because leaders from both [Myanmar government and the KNU] sides have not done anything that guarantees our lives. Villagers will trust them only if they have done anything to guarantee the villagers' lives [or living conditions]. If they have clear guarantees for us, we can believe there is sufficient security. Now, they don't have any guarantees for the villagers. We cannot trust in them yet.

**What is your feeling before and after the displacement regarding security?**

It was really difficult for us during our displacement. Now we can say that it is getting a lot better.

**Were there some households from this village and nearby villages displaced to the**

**refugee camps?**

Yes. There were some households. Some resettled to foreign countries. Two-thirds of villagers from our village are living in refugee camps and in foreign countries. Just one-third of villagers are living in the village now.

**Are they returning to the village?**

They do not return to the village for living but just for visiting once a year, because the condition in the village is not stable yet.

**Are some villagers still living in the refugee camps?**

Villagers who are living in the refugee camps will come back if the situation gets better. However, villagers who resettled to foreign countries have become foreign citizens. They come back just for visiting their relatives in the village.

**Have you heard whether some of them will return to live in the village?**

As I asked them from their visit, there were no plans to return yet. I heard there are one or two households from refugee camps talking about their plan to return to the village.

**What is the most significant thing you want for your security resettling back in your village?**

If we see that schools and hospitals are built in the village, we can trust that it is one sign. We can say that is a guarantee from the Myanmar government.

**What is your biggest worry regarding security resettling back in your village?**

With this unstable political condition involving two governments, we're afraid we will have to displace again. This is the only big thing we worry about.

**Since you returned to your village, did you confront human rights violations like threats, rape, or physical abuse?**

Since our return, we did not confront human rights violations.

**Since the time of your return, did you hear about landmines and unexploded ordnance still hidden in your village?**

There are none in our village.

**Did you hear explosions when you returned to stay in the village?**

No, I did not. [...]

**What about natural disasters like flooding, heat and pollution?**

Since the gold mining project started, the water got polluted. And this resulted in the extinction of the fish. If muddy water floods the farm, it can destroy the paddy. However, this is not happening in our area. Some rivers are affected by the gold mining process. Lakes fill up with muddy sludge when the water is flowing.

**Is that gold mining project in K'Law Myaw River?**

Yes, it is. K'Law Myaw River is flowing into the Shwe Kyin River. They are the same river system.

**Do local authorities take accountability for the damages resulting from the gold mining project?**

Last year, they came to the village for registration. Every farmers raised it. However, we did not

see them taking any accountability for that yet.

**There was no special help provided by any organisations when you returned to live in your village except minor provision by the CIDKP. What did they provide?**

They aided us to do husbandry and agriculture.

**Did they provide water [for using]?**

Yes, they did. They provided us eight water containers once and six water containers once. In combination, it is more than ten water containers.

**Was this provision sufficient for the whole village?**

It was placed as one water container for each three houses. In our village, there are wells that we can use.

**Do you get clean water?**

Yes, but we need to purify the water. Our former wells are still good.

**Did villagers regain all of their land after they returned to the village? Were any of their lands confiscated by other people?**

They regained lands surrounding the village. It seems that they did not regain lands far from the village because other ethnic groups came to live in those places. In 2012, KNU came for the measurement of the traditional lands. Before land measurement, other ethnicities did not come to live there. Since they [KNU] measured the lands, other ethnicities have come to live. Concerning this case, people have reported many times in the past. Leaders told us they will solve the problem. However, it has not been solved yet.

**Are you guys provided sanitary facilities?**

No. We've only received things once. Each person got two milk tins of rice [195 grams] in each household. KNU also came and provided us with medicines and mosquito nets.

**Are there special waste disposal places in the village?**

No.

**Are there toilets built in the village?**

No toilets are being built even though we returned to live in the village.

**What is the plan CIDKP has to build toilets?**

Last year, we were provided with four squat toilet bowls.

**Was this provision enough [for the whole village to use]?**

[They] were not enough, as it is only for four houses.

**Do you also get access to electricity?**

No, we do not.

**How do you cook?**

We cook meals with firewood. When we lived in Lk--- for six or seven years, Nippon Foundation provided solar panels. However, they are no longer working after we were using them for several years.

**Are there clinics in the village?**



No.

**What if people are sick in the village, where do they go?**

They go to Mone [Moo] and Ler Doh [Kyaukkyi] townships.

**What difficulties are facing you guys regarding this situation?**

Yes, we face difficulty where there is no clinic in the village. There is no school for the children as well. But we have two churches in the village.

**Is all of this sufficient for the returnees?**

No. it is not.

**What grade does the school have?**

We don't have a school in the village now. Therefore, children from our village have to go to school in Lf--- Village.

**How many grades does the school have in Lf--- village?**

The school is a high school and it has up to grade twelve. Currently, we only have grade one in our village. Last year, the class was extended to grade two. Children had to study in the house as there was no school building. The school head allowed for extending the grades to four. It did not happen because of there is no school [building] in the village.

**How far away is the school the children from the village have to attend?**

The school is two miles distant from our village.

**How do the children get to the school in the rainy season?**

They have to go to school on the muddy road in the rainy season.

**What about the livelihood condition in the village. Is the income enough for families?**

We only have hill farms to be worked on. We have to do it yearly.

**Do you have enough income?**

No, we do not have enough income.

**Are there any other jobs for your income?**

We only work on our hill farms in the village. The paddy fell down [was not good] this year.

**What kind of pest is that [eating the rice]?**

These pests came at night time eating the paddy.

**What sorts of rice pests?**

They are rice weevils. There's nothing that happened like this before. This is happening especially this year.

**What is the main work in the village?**

The main work in the village is hill farming.

**Are young people who do not have jobs in the village going to work in other places?**

These young people are going to work in Thailand.

**Are there a lot of young people who go to work there?**

Yes, only two or three young people returned to the village. [Here] We have only the option to work on our hill land. When our paddy was eaten by the bugs, the rice was not enough. That's why they have to go and work somewhere else.

**Do villagers in the village have Identification Cards?**

Yes, we do have identification cards.

**Do you guys have household registration?**

Yes, we do have that.

**Is that identification and household registration card given in the Myanmar immigration office?**

Yes, they are given in the Myanmar immigration office.

**Do you receive any special aid given by the Myanmar government?**

They don't provide us special aid. In the beginning of our return, we were provided four milk tins of rice and two bottles of oil just once.

**Have you ever been separated from your family during the time you were displaced?**

Some people have been separated from their family.

**Did they have to separate from their family to escape with their lives?**

Yes. When I was serving [military service] in the Four Cuts Strategy period, I had to separate from my family for four years. If not, when the Tatmadaw soldiers see us, they would beat us. Some people had to separate from their families until they died.

**What is the biggest challenge for you now?**

The biggest challenge is like I was saying. We want children to have access to education. We also want a health department. We can survive our livelihood conditions. What we want is education, health department and roads for transportation. They are the main things we want and they are the biggest challenges for us.

**Would the road condition in the summer be better?**

Yes, the road condition in the summer is better. The road condition in the rainy season is really difficult for us to travel.

**Do you know about the election in 2020?**

We don't know because we live here. However, NLD, SPDC and Nyein Si parties came into the village. We do not know what will happen in the future.

**Which parties would you select to be appointed for government?**

I have no clear decision yet. I want the best government. However, I cannot decide which parties.

**Is there discrimination based on ethnicities in the village?**

No.

**How do you want KNU, NGOs and Myanmar government to solve the problems facing you here in the village?**

It will be better if KNU and Myanmar government cooperate together. We cannot trust them to work on it alone. Villagers will trust if two or three groups of them are working together.

**Is there anything else to add and suggest regarding Myanmar government and foreign governments?**

I have nothing else to say but to inform them to consensually follow the NCA code of conduct. In the NCA code of conduct, we believe villages should be repatriated. That is what we really need.

**Can we use the information you have provided us?**

Yes, you can use it.

**Source #13**

Source doc #	Source # 13
Log #	19-31-A5-I1
Interview date	March 2nd 2019
Location	Noh T’Kaw (Kyainseikyi) Township, Dooplaya District
Full Text	

**Dooplaya District Interview | Saw P--- (male), Lay Hpa Htaw repatriation site, Noh T’Kaw Township**

**Status:** UNHCR-repatriated refugee  
**Temporary shelter or IDP camp:** Ban Don Yang Camp  
**Return date(s):** February 2019

**Ethnicity:** Karen  
**Religion:** Christian  
**Marital status:** Married  
**Occupation:** N/A  
**Position:** N/A

**How many family members do you have?**  
 I have six members in my family.

**How do you call this area?**  
 It is called Lay Hpa Htaw repatriation site.

**Do you know the village tract name, or Township?**  
 No, I don't know.

**Where did you live before you came back here?**  
 I lived in Ban Don Yang refugee camp.

**When did you come back here?**  
 We came back on 21st of February 2019.

**So you left from Ban Don Yang.**  
 Yes, we arrived here on 23rd of February 2019.

**Were you forced to come back here or did you come back by yourself?**

We came back by ourselves. No one forced us to.

**How long did you stay in the camp?**

We stayed there over 10 years.

**Did you come back with your own plan or under the organization's plan?**

We came back with the Voluntary Repatriation Centre [VRC] of UNHCR plan.

**Can you please tell us how did you come back here? How did you apply and how did they arrange for you?**

The VRCs were formed and announced that people who want to come back to Myanmar can apply for it by their own decision. Later they interviewed us and processed it step by step. [A representative from] the Myanmar Embassy also met with us. We had to wait over 10 months and almost a year for the process to be confirmed. In brief, we were called in February and they told us that we had to leave on 21st February together with refugees from Noh Poe [another camp]. Therefore, we left from Ban Don Yang Camp on February 21st 2019 and came back to Mae Sot City, Thailand with the arrangement of UN and Thai authorities. We slept in Mae Sot one night and we went back to Myawaddy Town, Myanmar on the next morning. We left from Myawaddy in the evening and had to sleep on the way back [on February 22nd] and arrived to Seikkyi the next morning. People from Three Pagodas picked us up and we came back here; we arrived at 2 or 3 PM in the afternoon.

**What were the problems you faced on the way from Ban Don Yang to here?**

There were no problems on the Thai side because everything was organized well such as food and transportation. However, there were some problems on Myanmar side because everything was different from Thai side. We were put on the big truck in Myawaddy Town and left at night. I thought it might take only three or four hours from Myawaddy to Seikkyi town. They left Myawaddy at night, around 9:30 to 10:00 at night. Then they stopped a lot on the way and it was 3 AM in the morning when we arrived to Seikkyi Town. The problem was there was an elderly person with us on the car and patients such as Kp---'s wife, she is diabetic. So there were problems for those people because they could not get cold. However, we could not do anything because we came back with their [government] plan. When I arrived to Seikkyi and I saw one responsible person, I asked him, is everything ready? And he replied to me, everything is ready and the car will come and pick you up at 8 AM. We waited at 8 AM but there was no car and no people came to pick us up. So we could not get to eat breakfast and we were hungry. There was one person working at the civic centre who came and helped us because we called the responsible person from the UN in Hpa-an Town. Then we ate and came here to Lay Hpa Htaw.

**Why did they stop a lot on the way?**

I did not know why but they stopped a lot. We had to wake them up but they did not even want to get up. The driver slept and we had to wake him up so roughly. Then he did not talk to us anymore.

**Were you checked or given any trouble?**

No, we were not.

**As you were coming back under the plan of UNHCR, can you please tell me how they supported you and how many months they will continue supporting you?**

The UNHCR from the camp supported adults over 18 years old with 9300 baht and children

under 18 years old got 7500 baht. There are some other things they provided such as clothes and bags. The Myanmar government gave 1 sack of rice for each family and some money. I think that's all.

**Did they tell you how long they will continue supporting you after you return here?**

As I told you they already supported us because they gave 9,300 baht to each person, this is for six months including food, transportation costs and to start their lives with that amount of money. There were two or three points that they mentioned and they gave 9,300 baht to adult over 18, and 7,500 baht to children under 18. [Note: at current exchange rates this is less than US\$300 per person to re-establish their lives and survive for six months. The adult amount converts to approximately \$1.60/day, well below the International Poverty Line of \$1.90/day set by the World Bank in 2015.]

**Are there any problems and any security risks that you faced after you returned here?**

We cannot say whether there is a problem or not. There is no enemy [Tatmadaw] that will make trouble for us but we might face a challenge for our livelihood due to newly arriving here and being new to this area. We do not have our own lands to work on for our livelihood and we do not have much money to invest either. Therefore, we might face challenges in the future.

**Did you investigate or have you been here before you returned?**

Yes, I have been here.

**Have you seen any areas of land for you to work on for your livelihood in the future?**

No, I have not seen.

**Can you access water?**

Yes.

**As you are new to this area, do you have concerns for your future?**

Yes, I have.

**How about the education situation here?**

All of my children are not going to school anymore.

**Yes. How about if we have to think overall for people here?**

Yes, if we have a school, it will be better for everyone. Some people have young children who have to go to school. But it is far if they have to go to Zee Pin and Lay Wah Plo schools. It is not easy for transportation as well as we don't have motorbikes and other things.

**How about the healthcare system?**

Yes, it is the same. Kp---'s wife and other people who have chronic diseases such as diabetes and hypertension, it is hard for them to access the healthcare system. We are pretty much getting older so sometimes we also get sick. It is not easy for us to get to the clinic or hospital as quick as we should. Therefore, it will be good if there is a clinic here even if it is not a hospital.

**There is no school and no clinic. You are also having concerns for your livelihood and education system for the children here. Due to those problems, what do you want to suggest or ask the leaders from the Myanmar government to do for you in the future?**

In my perspective, this area will be developed in the future. It could develop in a short time quickly or it could take a longer time to develop as well. I think there should be a clinic before there is a hospital. There should at least be some health workers in the area if there is no clinic

yet. Because it takes more time to build a building, but health issues can occur anytime. Therefore, they should build a clinic before the hospital and there should already be health workers until the clinic is done.

**There are no health workers yet to take care of people here when they are sick. So you have to go to faraway places to access healthcare. I would like to ask you about when you were in the refugee camp. As you mentioned, you lived in the refugee camp over ten years. Did your family have access through UN to go to a third country?**

No, we cannot go.

**Why did you choose to come back here?**

The first point is because it is our country, Karen people should live in Karen State. The second point is because our leaders prepare for the Karen people to develop. When we came back our children came back too. Therefore, they can be helpful for this area and the state.

**Do you think the Myanmar government takes care of you and people around here as they said?**

I don't see anything yet. But when we came back on the way, they just fulfilled their obligation [without sufficient support]. It's just like Yay Baw Si [they do the bare minimum].

**I have asked you a lot but there might be some things that I have not asked you. Do you want to add more which I have not asked you?**

I think not.

**Will you give us permission to use this information?**

Yes.

**Can we take your photo?**

Yes, you can.

**Thank you so much.**

**Source #14**

Source doc #	Source # 14
Log #	20-24-A1-I1
Interview date	February 16th 2020
Location	Ta Kreh (Paingkyon) Township, Hpa-an District
Full Text	
<p><b>Hpa-an District Interview   Naw Q--- (female), Mae La Ta Law Thaw village, Thay Maw Koo village tract, Ta Kreh Township</b></p> <p><b>Status:</b> UNHCR-repatriated refugee  <b>Temporary shelter or IDP camp:</b> Mae La Camp  <b>Return date(s):</b> February 2019</p> <p><b>Ethnicity:</b> Karen  <b>Religion:</b> Buddhist</p>	

**Marital status:** Married

**Occupation:** Farmer

**Position:** Local Women's Committee member

**What work do you do for your livelihood?**

I am working on hill fields such as corn and paddy.

**Do you have any responsibility in the community?**

I am a local village women's committee member. Last time, we had to attend health awareness training on the Thailand side.

**Who organised it?**

I do not know. It was organised by Thais and we were informed to attend it so we attended it.

**Where is your village of origin?**

It is Ld--- Village. It is close to Le--- Village, Paingkyon [Ta Kreh] Township.

**Why did you go to the camp?**

My husband is blind so I followed him wherever he led me to go. When we moved to the mountain village, we were told to come to the camp because my husband is blind, so we followed the others and went to the camp.

**Have you ever fled from the danger of the fighting?**

Of course I have fled.

**Could you please explain it in more detail for me?**

It was the Four Cuts Strategy period so the Myanmar military killed anyone they saw, even when we were in the houses. In the past, we just got information that the Myanmar military was approaching and then we realised that they were already beside our house. They were too quick. They shot men or anyone who were running when they saw them so some villagers got hit by their bullets.

**At that time, were you single or married?**

I was just around 13 years old. We always had to be in danger, insecurity and worry for our security so we could not sleep well even at night. Therefore, we always had to sleep on the ground in underground shelters in order to protect ourselves from the bullets during the fighting between the two [KNLA and Myanmar government military]. Therefore, we could not live peacefully.

**How long have you been in the camp?**

I had been living there for two and half years.

**When did you go?**

I went there in 2005.

**When did you return?**

I returned in 2008. [Another woman present at the interview said, at first, she just temporarily returned and still received food in the camp. She had travelled back and forth to the camp for twelve years and then eventually applied for repatriation.] Yes, I did like that.

**Do you have a UN Identification Card?**

Yes, I do.

**So you returned here in 2008 for farming and then you had to go back for regular camp checks like the others, correct?**

Yes.

**Why did you return?**

At first it was complicated for me to settle in other places. I would have resettled to a third country, however, it was not open anymore [the resettlement process had closed] and I could not travel back and forth anymore because it cost me money, so I decided to return. At that time, I did not receive rations in the camp anymore.

**When did you officially return?**

I returned on February 20<sup>th</sup> 2019.

**Are you thinking of returning to your village of origin?**

My children want to return, but I do not have money to buy land so I think I will not return anymore.

**Could you please tell me about the trip on your return here?**

We were sent from Beh Klaw [Mae La Camp] to Myawaddy Town and then people from Myawaddy Town sent us here. We received money support of 9,300 baht for adults and 7,500 baht for children.

**How about your children?**

One of my children got 9,300 baht and then the other two got 7,500 baht each. My husband and I got 9,300 baht each. We also received a big bag and I thought there would be a lot of things inside there, however, it was just a pack of rice for each, hahahaha! We also got buckets, soap and I think no other food. We were sent here by six-wheeled trucks.

**How about your return from Myawaddy side?**

We received 60,000 kyats and 100,000 kyats per family.

**Who provided it for you?**

Myanmar government provided 60,000 kyats per family and the other was given by donors of the Myanmar government, I think they are Karen. I do not exactly know them because I don't understand Burmese so we just went to the places we were asked to go. I did not understand anything.

**How many families returned with you?**

There were many families who returned. I can remember four families who returned to here.

**Did the repatriation committee provide you information about the transportation?**

Yes, they did and they said they would try their best to arrange everything for us and looked after us well. They talked to us in Karen, but I do not know their organisation's name.

**Was the information you were given the same as what actually happened on the return?**

Yes, because before we returned, we were told that we could return to wherever we would like to return. For example, we could return to our village of origin, Nay Pyi Daw City, or here, Mae La Ta Law Thaw. And then I asked them, what will we do if we have to flee like in the past? They answered me, "People can help you and they can do [something] for you."



**Did you face any difficulties on your way here?**

We just received a plate of fried rice, egg and a cup of tea for breakfast. It is not the meal that we usually have for breakfast so we were hungry at noon. However, the people who sent us did not stop for us to have lunch so we could not even buy food and snacks for the children. They passed all the rice shops. Fortunately, when they stopped for petrol at Htee Wa Klay, we were [able] to buy food. When we went to eat, they told us that they would leave so we could not eat, we had to bring the food with us, including the shopkeepers' spoons to the trucks, [... and] continue eating in the back of the trucks.

**Could you have rice for lunch?**

No, we bought noodle soups for lunch. As you know, noodle soup is hot so we could not finish it quickly in a hurry. Therefore, we had to bring the food and the shopkeepers' spoons to continue eating in the back of the trucks.

**So accessing food on the way was the problem?**

Yes, it was. When we arrived at Meh T'Way Klo rice shop we said to them, "Aren't you going to allow us to have rice? It is the only shop on our way left." And then, we [jumped from the trucks] to get rice by ourselves. There were a lot of people eating, so we were confused in paying for the rice. We had to pay around 15,000 kyats for the truck and food on the way from the money we received of 20,000 kyats for transportation. I do not know any leaders or what organisation organised transportation for us. I received money from the soldiers from the Myanmar government military and then from the Karen staff.

**Did all of your children return with you?**

Two of my daughters got married; one of them lives in her own family and another one returned with me because her husband already passed away. She has got children, but only one of them could officially return with us and received money support. My other daughter also has two children (one girl and one boy) and only her son could officially return with us and got money support. My other grandchildren returned with us, but didn't receive money [because they are not in the family registration in the camp].

**Did they all return together with you?**

Yes, they did. However, when we were ready to return, one of my granddaughters has got asthma and her situation was getting worse so Tharamu [staff] took her to hospital. Her mother had to stay with her in hospital and her son returned with me because he could not stay [with them] in the hospital. However, she got money for herself on Thailand side, but not on Myanmar side.

**Where is your daughter?**

She is outside of the camp [doing day labour].

**Will she return?**

We've tried to contact her and are waiting, however, without communication [she is outside of the camp] so she has not responded. I heard people say we were asked for by Thara [responsible leaders] in the camp, but we were not in the camp.

**Did your other daughter return with you?**

Yes, this girl's mother [the widow] did. I will tell you about her, she was a suicide by hanging a month ago.

**Why?**

I do not know. She just always said people did not love her. She told me, "You do not love me much." I told her, "How could I not love you?" That night, a girl went to sleep in her house. And then, the next evening, she hanged herself. She just talked about how we [parents] did not love her much. I could not think of why so she might curse us after she passed away.

**Did she feel anything sad?**

Yes, she might. Therefore, her two children now stay with me.

**So how many people do you live with in the house?**

All of my family live in the same house, including my daughter who is married. So there are a lot of people in the house.

**Counting, you have three single children, four grandchildren and one married daughter so there are 10 people including you and your husband, correct?**

Yes, there are 10.

**How about your son-in law?**

No, he is not with us.

**Did you have medical checks before you returned?**

Yes, we did.

**Did any health workers follow you on your way here?**

No, they did not. They just provided medical checks for us at Myawaddy Town once and they also registered our names for legal documents. They told us that we could go to their hospital, but we did not know where to go and how to access it.

**Did you receive enough food?**

We received one pack of rice.

**Did you receive enough food on your way?**

I told you about the food on the way, they stopped for us only when we could not handle the hunger anymore. It was the only time we stopped to have food.

**Did you feel secure on your way?**

Yes, I did because people sent us here. When we were in the Myawaddy office, we were not allowed to go outside to buy food or anything. We just received one plate of fried rice, egg and a cup of tea so we were hungry in the afternoon.

**Did you feel that your rights were violated in the camp?**

Yes, I did. It was about insufficient food. One day, when I was informed to return to the camp for a camp check, I arrived one day late and waited for the zone leader until 9 am in the morning, but he did not wake up yet. When he woke up he did not even come out to see me, he just told me that I was not eligible anymore. I asked for it many times and then I returned to my house. I was informed that he could do that because we were away. I assumed that he might need money [a bribe], but he did not tell me and I had never bribed anyone before. Therefore, I felt like I might not have access to food for living in the camp so I carried my kitchen materials and then came back to my temporary home outside of the camp [Mae La Ta law Thaw] where there were not many people living.

Furthermore, a group of people visited us and told us that peace was coming [it seems like the interviewee is referring to members of the KNU/KNLA-PC] so they would provide food for two years for us. I told them: "I get rations in the camp so I am afraid to get it from you [PC]." They came to us every day and then told us, it was okay to receive it and there wouldn't be any problem so we registered. They also told my husband to be a village leader too. I told them, we [he] had been a village head and then he had to be a village head again.

At that time, I had to work at a paddy farm outside of the camp because I was chronically sick and I could not eat the rice we received from the camp. It was like it hurt my stomach after having it so I could not suffer it.

Later on, one of the [camp] zone leaders in another zone saw my family in difficulties so he told us to reapply for rations in the camp. I told him that my children were still young and I did not have money to travel so I would stay like this. He kept me informed about the camp checks so we could return for new camp registration [cards] and then we could apply for repatriation. Without this card, we could not apply for repatriation.

**Have you heard about unexploded ordnance [UXOs] exploding?**

No, I have not heard about it.

**Did you receive Mine Risk Education Training before your return?**

Yes, we did it just before we returned.

**What organisation provided the training?**

They might be the UN.

**Can you enjoy freedom of movement?**

We do not travel to other places which are far from here so I do not know. Last time, I returned to my village of origin and I travelled without any disturbance by any authorities.

**Do you have to be afraid of natural disasters?**

Before, there was a major flood. It was full of water here [around her house] without receiving any support. But it was not flooded last year. However, this year the rainy season ended too early so our paddy could not produce grains properly and the paddy grains shrivelled so we could not harvest much.

**What armed organisation patrols in your area?**

There are two armed organisations.

**Who are they?**

They are Karen National Union [KNU] who taxes us, and KNU/KNLA-PC. PC does not take tax.

**Did you receive enough support for your family?**

No, we did not. We could not recover our livelihoods with that amount of money.

**Did you receive any other support after you returned?**

No, we have not received anything else. Once, my youngest children said they received snacks at the school. It was the only time we know.

**Are there any women participating in leadership roles?**

There is only the PC Women's organisation in village.

**Do you receive any support for it?**

No, we do not. PC Women's organisation and the KNU [Karen Women's Organisation] are the same.

**Who provides the water supply for you?**

I do not know exactly. [Another woman present at the interview said it was donated by a personal donor.]

**Do you access water by pipe?**

It does not reach my house because I am far from here.

**What is your water source?**

I dug a well for my family.

**How do you get clean water for drinking?**

I just drink it like that because we do not want to boil it.

**Do you receive any hygiene or sanitation? For example, soap, etc..**

No, I have not received anything. I did not even receive a toilet bowl.

**Have you received clothes? For example, mats, blankets and mosquito net....**

No, we have not received them. I just got about three mosquito nets per household at the camp and then we received one more at Myawaddy Town on our way returning here.

**Do the returnees live close to each other?**

I am the only family that lives far from the village.

**Do you feel secure to sleep alone?**

No, I do not. If there is no information about the risk, I am okay to sleep alone. Like before, we heard about heads cut off by strangers so I do not feel secure to stay and sleep alone at night.

**How do you manage your trash?**

We just collect them and burn them in a fire.

**Have you received a solar panel?**

There are available ones, but we have to pay 300 baht [13,598 kyats] and I do not have 300 baht yet, so I cannot get one. I am now sad for my daughter's suicide and I do not have money anymore so I told them [local leaders]: 'If you give me one, I will get one. If you do not want to give me one, I will let it go because I am in sorrow and I don't have money anymore. So I will just live in the dark like this.'

**How do you cook?**

I cook with firewood.

**Is it easy to get it?**

Currently, yes, it is easy to get it. In Mae La Ta Law Thaw village, they have to get firewood far from the village.

**Do you have a strong and comfortable house building?**

Hmmm, currently, my house is damaged. It is not strong enough anymore so we cannot live

comfortably anymore. When Thara [a local leader] came to my house, materials fell from the house because my house has been built with bamboo and I cannot make the effort to build a better house.

**Do you have concern for your house to be destroyed when there is a storm?**

Yes, I worry for my house.

**Do you have enough blankets, mats and mosquito nets?**

We do not have any mats.

**How about blankets?**

We have one blanket each.

**Where do you access healthcare services?**

We just go to Thailand.

**Which part is it?**

It is in Mae La Hta village, Thai village.

**Do you have to pay for medical care?**

Yes, we have to.

**How much does it cost?**

I do not go to hospital. However, my granddaughter who has got asthma went to Mae Ramat hospital twice when she lived with her grandmother [on her father's side]; the first time, it cost about 6,000 baht and then the next time it cost 10,000 baht. Now she is living with me and last night she did not feel well because she could not breathe well.

**Is it easy to go to hospital?**

Yes, it is easy if we have money.

**Is the quality of healthcare good?**

Yes, it is.

**Can the children go to school?**

Yes, they can. There are only four of my grandchildren who are too young to go to school.

**Do you receive land?**

No, I did not. I have my land that I bought and where I had cleared the vegetation when I sneaked out early from the camp.

**How do you work for your livelihoods?**

I work on a hill corn and paddy plantation. This year, I lost so I fell into debt for corn seeds for 14,000 baht, and I got only 30 sacks of paddy grain.

**Do you have a land title?**

Yes, I have.

**What type of land title do you have?**

It is a KNU land title.

**Do you have enough annual paddy?**

No, it is not.

**Do the other returnees get land?**

No, they do not. They all have to buy it. When I was a village head, we could clear vegetation for our own land. Before I lived in the village, but now I live outside of the village because there was a conflict within my family so I did not love to stay there anymore.

**Could you explain to me a little bit about it?**

Did you hear about the monk murder case?

**No, I did not.**

It was when the PC came to see the land for refugees' repatriation and I did not call him, my cousin, to relocate here. So he was unhappy with me when we received rice. When we carried rice, he also helped us carry it too, but some rice he took outside of the village. The rest of the remaining rice was placed in my house after distribution. When I visited my mother, the rice disappeared and when I returned, I was questioned about it so I reported that it was him [that man] so he was not satisfied with me. He also put poison in my drinking water bucket. He asked me to sell my house to him, but I did not sell it to him. Later on, due to the situation getting worse and worse, he killed the monk so he was exiled from the village to La Kweh area. He still had been angry with me and my husband, so he even planned to kill us. Fortunately, it did not happen, it might be because blind people are supposed to have less value. He also told me that he would like to kill the whole of my family, but he could not do it.

I cleared the vegetation for my farm while my brother was in the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army [DKBA] and now he is a Border Guard Force [BGF] soldier. Later on, PC was founded so some farms have to be used for return sites.

**Did you receive legal documents?**

We did not know the process well so only my husband got it [national ID card]. The next time [we went], I was still unable to complete the process because it was so complicated, so I did not get it [national ID card].

**Do you have a household registration?**

Yes, I do.

**Do you know about the upcoming election?**

No, I do not.

**Do you think you will vote?**

I do not know.

[...]

**What is the main requirement for the returnees?**

We need money the most, and I also want a motorcycle for transportation.

**Do you think the current situation is stable?**

I do not know whether the current situation will be peace like this forever or not. However, we can still live in this current situation. If there is conflict restarting again, we were told that we can flee to Thailand and people can accept us again.

**What support should the Myanmar government and local governments such as KNU or PC give for returnees?**

I do not see any support from them. If I ask them for support, will they really give it to us? Will they help us?

**I cannot answer whether they will support you or not, what I mean is, what should they provide for you?**

I think they should support us with what we need, such as schools up to high school and a hospital.

**Do you regret your return?**

No, I do not. I just think that I can live if other people can live.

**These are all the questions I have. Do you have anything more to add?**

I would like to talk about my situation because I face a lot of family difficulties, and poverty. My daughter committed suicide so her two children depend on me now, and I have three other younger children, and all of them go to school. However, I do not have a job to secure my livelihoods so I need help for it.

**Thanks.**

Thanks.

**Source #15**

Source doc #	Source #15
Log #	20-1-A3-I1
Interview date	December 29th 2019
Location	Noh T'Kaw (Kyainseikgyi) Township, Dooplaya District

**Full Text**

**Dooplaya District Interview | Daw S--- (female), Htee Th'Bluh Hkee repatriation site, Noh T'Kaw Township**

**Status:** UNHCR-repatriated refugee

**Temporary shelter or IDP camp:** Noh Poe Camp

**Return date(s):** February 2019

**Ethnicity:** Karen

**Religion:** Buddhist

**Marital status:** Married

**Occupation:** No job

**Position:** Villager

**How many family members do you have?**

I have three members in my house now and other two of my children are working in Thailand.

**Is it your own village or to a different village?**

Four of us came back together. It is a new place, Htee Th'Bluh Hkee village. It is the place

prepared for the refugees to repatriate there.

**How many years did you stay in the refugee camp?**

For 9 years.

**Do you remember when did you go to the refugee camp?**

I don't know. I am an uneducated person so I don't remember. You have to ask Naw Ea---but she is not at home now.

**Which refugee camp did you go to stay in?**

I stayed in Noh Poe refugee camp.

**Why did you come back [to the resettlement site]? Were you forced to repatriate or were you fed up living in the camp?**

I just wanted to come back, there was no one forcing me to come back. My husband is also dead and my children were not in the camp with me so I came back. I reported to the UN that I would return to Myanmar.

**When did you come back? Was it this year or last year?**

I came back last year in the end of the month after New Year.

**Was it the end of January in 2019?**

I don't remember. **Did you come back by your own plan or with the plan of UN to the repatriation site?**

I registered to return to Htee Th'Bluh Hkee village. [The camp leader] told the authorities here and helped me to come back here.

**So you chose to return here.**

Yes.

**What are the problems to repatriate to your own village?**

I am not going back to my own village anymore as I don't have any of my belongings there.

**Did you come back under the plan of the camp?**

Yes.

**How long have you repatriated in Htee Th'Bluh Hkee village; how many days or how many years?**

It is not a year yet.

**What are the differences between living in the [Noh Poe] camp and Htee Th'Bluh Hkee village? Do you prefer living here in the village?**

Nowhere is preferable. There are no differences if you do not have your own land to work on for your livelihood.

**Did anyone promise to support and take care of you if you repatriate in Htee Th'Bluh Hkee village?**

Before we returned, we heard they might prepare the land for people who repatriate to work on for their livelihood. But the situation is not stable yet as there is no unity among the Karen people yet.



**Did you receive any information about Htee Th'Bluh Hkee village [repatriation site] before you repatriated?**

I did not receive any information and no one provided me the information about it either.

**Did you receive any information about the process of repatriation, that you would have to come back to Myawaddy Town and then from place to place?**

The UN just let us know the date that we had to repatriate.

**Can you please share with us the story of repatriation to here, starting from Noh Poe Refugee Camp step by step and how you came back?**

We came back to Myawaddy and processed a household registration of each family there. Then we were sent back to Seikgyi [Kyainseikgyi] and [...] and slept there for one night. The village head from Kwee Kler village picked us up the next morning and we came back to Kwee Kler [or Kwee Lay village], the whole night riding a car to take an Identification Card [ID card].

**Did you already take an ID card?**

Yes, I did.

**How many days did it take you to arrive here in the village? Did it take one day?**

We did not sleep anywhere on the way. We came back directly here to Kwee Lay Wine village.

**Did you come back directly from Myawaddy to here?**

We just slept one night in Seikgyi [Kyainseikgyi] Town.

**It means it took one day to get here.**

We had to get the household registration in Myawaddy and it took us the whole day to process it [the household registration]. They [...] prepared food for us and the car picked up us at night. Therefore, we had to sleep one night [in Seikgyi].

**Do you think the authorities [UN, Thai authorities and Myanmar government] were well prepared for the trip to the repatriation site?**

Yes, they were well prepared. The Thai authorities satisfactorily sent us on the way until we reached the immigration office. Then they went back because their duty was done.

**Does it mean you did not have to face any problems on the way?**

No, they sent us well until we reached the right place. And the authorities from Myanmar government site picked us up at the office. They also sent us until Myawaddy and went back.

**Which organization helped you and picked up you? Was it the Myanmar government organization or KNU?**

It was the Myanmar government organization. There were also many people from UN.

**Did you come back alone or with your family?**

Four of us came back together. There were five of us in the past but the head of the house [her husband] is dead. Therefore, we just came back four people. There are my youngest child and two of my grandchildren and me.

**Did you get a medical check-up before you came back?**

Yes, the medic [doctor] checked my health. They checked everything.

**Did the medic [doctor] or health workers come along with you on the way when you**

**came back?**

Yes, they came with us and took care of us until we reached the targeted area. There were some people who were sick but our family was fine. We were not sick. [...]

**Did you get an opportunity to bring all your belongings from the refugee camp when you came back?**

Yes, they gave an opportunity to bring things we can carry, but not [things like a] motorbike. We do not know how to drive one anyway. However, we got to bring pots, pans, blankets and mosquito nets and others which we could carry. We can get them later if we could not bring them all at that time.

**Did you have enough food on the way?**

Yes, we had. We got to eat when we arrived at Myawaddy and started processing the household registration. If they call you, you go and take all the things belonging to you. After everything was done, we got on a car and came back.

**Did you get any financial support?**

The UN gave adults above 17 years old 9300 baht each and those under 17 years old got 7500 baht each.

**Which organization gave you the financial support? Was it UN or the Thai authorities?**

It was the UN, not Thai authorities.

**How about the Myanmar government authorities?**

The Myanmar government authorities gave us 150,000 kyats each.

**Did you have any security risk on the way? Were you afraid?**

No, we were not afraid. They did the document [ID card] for us and prepared food for us for one month. They gave us oil, salt, one pot, one plate, soap, one sack of rice and everything that would be enough for one month.

**Did they provide them to you?**

Yes.

**Who were they?**

They were Myanmar government authorities.

**Was it one sack of rice?**

Yes, there was one sack of rice, 2 liters of oil and one pack [carton] of ramen noodles.

**Was it when you came back here?**

Yes, they gave it when we came back and after we took photos for ID card and household registration.

**Did the Tatmadaw soldiers threaten you or intimidate you?**

No, they did not threaten or intimidate us. There were a lot of people, about three to four hundred people from different camps. All the refugees from different camps met together. [...]

**Do you feel safer here than when you were in the camp?**

I feel the same. We did not have much different. We have to work for our livelihood. Even when we got the rations from the camp, we still had to find work outside. It just depends on us

whether we will find work or not. I stopped teaching and my children are not near me. My husband is also dead. Therefore, I thought if I stay outside of the camp, it might be better. There was no one forcing me to return.

**What are the problems you have after you came back to stay in Htee Th'Bluh Hkee?**

I have no problems. No one tells me anything. I just stay at my house.

**Your house is very good.**

Yes, it is good. When we arrived, the village head sent you to your house.

**Who is the village head?**

We just call him Saw Eb---. [...] He is a village head since we returned here.

**Do you have to afraid of the landmines or UXO here?**

We have not gone to the bushy places since we returned here. Therefore, we do not know [if the area is contaminated]. We do not know when they will explode. We just stay in the village and avoid the forest.

**Have you seen or heard of people who are affected by the landmines?**

No, I have not heard.

**Are you stopped or questioned at the check points when you travel?**

No.

**Is there flood in the rainy season?**

It is flooding in the rainy season. [...] There is a river. You cannot travel in rainy season but there is no problem in summer. There is no bridge but there is no problem, since the river is not large.

**So you can travel in summer.**

Yes, no problem. The cars or motorbikes can travel as well.

**Is there any drought or problem in summer?**

When we returned in the beginning, there was no water in summer [coming through water pipes]. Therefore, we had to fetch the water. But now we do not need to fetch the water anymore because we get access to water through pipes at houses. The water pipes are already fixed. When we first returned, we just fetched the water but now it is in the village.

**Did you get any financial support after you returned and you are living in Htee Th'Bluh Hkee village?**

No, there is none.

**Doesn't the Myanmar government support anything anymore?**

Before we returned, we heard they [authorities] would provide us food for three months. After we returned here [in Htee Th'Bluh Hkee] and not even a month yet, but our names [in the camp] are deleted already.

**Is it in camp?**

Yes. No one supports us with food and [no one] takes care of us. They just gave us food and money in the first month when we came back. They said they would provide us food for three months but they did not follow what they said.

**So you do not get anything anymore.**

No, we do not get anything anymore. That's all. When we arrived at Kyaikdon, the Myanmar government told us that they would take care of us for three months. They would come and check the situation whether we are doing well. They just came once after we returned one or two months. They let their workers come and check the situation. But at that time, I went back to Noh Poe Camp.

**What did they come and ask?**

They just came and asked [the situation] but there was a teacher so they only asked the teacher.

**Were there women who have to be the head of the house/family when they returned here because their husband died?**

I don't know.

**Are you the one who has to be the head of the house as well?**

Yes because my husband died.

**Is there any extra support because you had to be the head of the house?**

No.

**Do you receive clean water?**

Yes, we set up the water pipes and use the water which comes through the pipes reach to our houses. When we first arrived here, we had to fetch the water. We got the water through pipes as well. But now we do not need to fetch the water anymore because the water pipes are connected through more pipes which reach the houses.

**So there is no one who supports food for each year.**

Yes, there is no one.

**Do you get the water from the well or the river or how do you access the water?**

They [people from the village] use the pipes to access the water and join them to each house to get the water.

**Is that clean?**

Yes.

**Is it drinkable?**

Yes, it is drinkable because the river is quite large.

**Are there any toilets built or used in the village?**

We have toilets. There is one toilet in each house. They built enough for every house: toilet, kitchen and bathroom.

**Do you get any soap for the sanitation and cleaning?**

We got when we first came back here. We got soap powder, shower soap and tooth paste.

**Do you get sanitation for women who use pads?**

We got but we are too old. I did not take them because I only have sons.

**So they gave.**

Yes.

**Which organization gave them?**

It was Myanmar government organization. The youths (girls/young women) took them and people who need it took them as well. But I am old enough so I did not take them. I just took tooth paste, soap and others useable things for me. They packed them (tooth paste, soap, soap powder, pads and others) already altogether with the baskets, buckets, mosquito nets and blankets.

**How far is the toilet from the house or how close is it?**

They built the toilet in the house. The toilet and the bathroom are on the same side and the kitchen is in the opposite side. There is a living room in front.

**Is there any soap to clean hands?**

Yes, there is soap in the toilet and bathroom.

**Are there trash bins in the village or the houses?**

I don't know.

**So there is no trash bin yet recently.**

Yes, we would know if there is.

**Do you get access to electricity from the generator or do you get solar panel?**

No, we do not get any.

**How do you start the fire?**

We just use the plastic.

**Do you use firewood for cooking?**

Yes, we also use charcoal.

**Do you get charcoal or buy them?**

No, we have to buy them. There are lots of [small pieces of] logs so we can make them into charcoal. But there is no one who can make them for me and I cannot do them by myself either.

**Does your house fit everyone or is it crowded?**

It [the house] can accommodate everyone. There are two large rooms and one large living room, so it is fine for us.

**Is your house strong enough, because some people said their houses are not strong [not good quality]?**

I think it [the house] is well built but I am not sure if there is strong wind. [...] It could be damaged. Everything is built with iron [metal/nails]. [...]

**Aren't there any distributions here?**

No. We heard they [Myanmar government] will distribute the solar panels but there is no one

coming to distribute yet. They said they will come once a month but I am not sure, they might be busy. They came once already.

**Was it only once?**

Yes, they came once when we came back.

**Is there a clinic here?**

No, there is no clinic here yet.

**Where do people are sent when they are sick?**

[Sick people] are sent to the refugee camp or to the Myanmar government hospital because there is no clinic and no nurses here yet.

**Do people get sick here?**

Yes.

**What are the common diseases; malaria or dengue?**

This year most people get dengue in Noh Poe Camp but I haven't seen many people in Myanmar get it.

**Do the children go to school?**

Yes, there is a small school for the children.

**How many grades in this primary school?**

There is only nursery and Grade one. The teacher came back from Noh Poe refugee camp.

**Isn't it Myanmar government school? Is it a KED school?**

Yes. There is no Myanmar government school yet. There is not even a government school in Meh T'Raw Hta village and Kwee Kler village. There is no government school in Htee Th'Bluh Hkee village so I let my daughter go to school in Meh T'Raw Hta village.

**Are there any problems for the children to go to school?**

The children are going to school in Meh T'Raw Hta village. They have the government teachers there.

**Do the students get certificates?**

I think so.

**So the students get certificates.**

The school there is up to Grade 4 in Meh T'Raw Hta village school. The children have to go to Kwee Kler village school after they finish Grade 4 there in Meh T'Raw Hta School.

**Do they [Myanmar government school] accept the students to continue after they finish primary school?**

I don't know. There is no one yet this year. I am not sure whether they will accept next year.

**Is there any income for the family?**

There is no other income.

**What do you work for your livelihood? What are people do for their livelihood?**

People who came back with me do nothing [have no jobs] so far. They just travel back and forth

between the camp and here. There are some people who came back to get houses, and they are still registered in the camp [to get rations].

**Do the people get land?**

No.

**You said they will allot the lands/plots, right?**

I heard they will allot when we first returned. Saw Eb--- and his brother discussed it with the government. But they said they will allot only if there are at least 50 houses in the village repatriated [from the refugee camp]. I think there are not 50 houses yet so they do not allot the land yet.

**Are they [people who said will allot the lands] KNU or the Myanmar government?**

They are from KNU.

**How many acres of lands will they allot to each villager?**

They said they are going to allot land where you can plant one basket of paddy. We just heard people are talking about it but it is not sure yet. We are not sure because we do not get it yet. Only when we actually get it can we confidently say it that we'll get land.

**Do you when you will get it?**

I do not know.

**What is the other work that people are doing?**

Some people who have lived here for quite a long time work on hill farms and some are also working [flat] farms. They plant sesames, chillies and yams. [...]

**Do people who came back from Thailand [refugee camp] work for day labor?**

Some people who came back with me work on hill farms. The official [or village head] might have some land and his son planted two baskets of paddy. They tried so hard but they cannot harvest this year since the rain destroyed all the paddy plants.

**So they did not get any.**

Yes, they did not get any to eat. He has a disabled son so they just came back and stay here [in the village]. They sometimes go back to the camp but his son just stays here.

**Do you get any special supports? Did you already get the ID card, household registration and birth certificate of your children?**

Yes, we have got everything. When we came back there were no children, only young and old people. Some children were born in the refugee camp. Daw Ec--- just gave birth in the refugee camp but she brought everything [documents] here.

**Does the Myanmar government process it for you?**

Yes, we did these documents [ID card and household registration] in Myanmar. I keep everything I got. I usually attended every meeting held when I was in the refugee camp even if I am uneducated.

**Did you have to flee separately when you fled from Myanmar?**

I fled together with my family. We had to flee from the Tatmadaw and New Mon State Party [NMSP]. We had to hide our food somewhere and if the situation was better, we came back to our village.

**So you were with your family until you came back here.**

Yes, my children came to study in the refugee camp because of the fighting. We did not go directly to the camp so we had to flee repeatedly if any fighting occurred. We mostly had to flee from the fighting between KNU [KNLA] and NMSP [MNLA]. The Tatmadaw [Light Infantry Division #44] entered our village; we did not have to flee. They just fought with their enemies; they did not do anything to people in the village. If there was no shelling to your village, you did not need to flee even if there was fighting around. But you had to flee if there was shelling to your village between KNLA and NMSP. We had to flee into the forest.

**Do you feel safe and get more opportunities where you are now?**

Yes. We do not have money because we do not have jobs to get income. We just have to try for our livelihoods; there will not always be someone to help you. We have to take care of our children. If we can participate in the donations [to monks/temple], we can donate but if we cannot then there is no problem. There will be no one who will discriminate. It just depends on you.

**Have you heard of the 2020 election?**

No, I have not.

**There will be a new election in 2020. I won't ask you more as you have not heard of it. Do you think it will be permanent or consistent to live in Myanmar now?**

I think I will consistently live here as I already repatriated. Whether I die or I live, I will be here. I don't dare to go back [to the camp].

**Do you have any concerns that you will have to flee again?**

I am not sure, if there is no conflict [between NMSP and KNLA]. If we cannot stay here anymore, then we will have to flee again. We cannot do anything. They [the camp] said they will have to accept us if there is fighting and if we cannot stay in the village anymore.

**Did they promise that?**

Yes, they did.

**Will they pick you up if there is fighting?**

Yes, we will stay here as long as we can stay here. We will have to go back if there is fighting happened as it happened in the past.

**Who told you that? Was it UN?**

Yes, it was UN. I do not know his name.

**Do you know his name?**

I don't know his name. I just heard people call him Saya Ed---. He has curly hair, moustache and big body and white skin. He usually comes to the UN office [in the camp]. He works everywhere I think. I saw him at UN office and IOM; when people are going to third countries. I also saw him coming to the Myanmar government office. There is another woman [Thai] who works with him. I just came back here on my own decision. There was no one forcing me to repatriate. [...]

**Do you think KNU or Myanmar government or the other organizations should support the returnees who repatriated?**

I think they should support some. There is no one who comes to provide support. We came



back here almost a year ago.

**Do you think the KNU or Myanmar government or the other organizations should organize awareness trainings, encourage and support for the returnees?**

I think they [KNU and Myanmar government] should come, but no one does. They should come to encourage, suggest and support. We do not know whether they provide and give support to the local leaders. We are not educated and we do not have much knowledge about it. Even if there are supports from higher authorities and they come, we might not know it if we are not called to organized meetings.

**Is there anything you would like to add more?**

I don't have. I decided I would go back because I heard my house would be given to someone else if I do not go back. I am the one and the first one who applied to get a house at Htee Th'Bluh Hkee village. I am not going to give it to anyone. If there is no house for other people, I can offer them to stay there temporarily when I am not there. The local people told me to talk and discuss with the local leaders.

**So you stay with your children sometimes and you go back to your house sometimes.**

Yes, I do not have many children. There is only one. She [Daw Ec---] does not come back yet. Her children are also students and I cannot go back to stay there yet. It is difficult for me to stay in the different places in the same time. Therefore, I travel always; stay in one place for a week and go back to stay at the other place a week. There is a problem to travel in rainy season as there is flooding. But there is no problem in summer. When I heard Daw Ec--- told me there was flooding, my heart beat too fast and I am afraid of the flood. I will ask people to build a house for her. It will be much better if we have a house. It is more difficult to find wood or bamboo to build a house nowadays. Her father also has an aim to build a house for his daughter.

**Will you give your permission to use this information?**

Yes.

**Thank you so much.**

**Source #16**

Source doc #	Source #16
Log #	20-24-A2-I1
Interview date	February 16 <sup>th</sup> 2020
Location	Ta Kreh (Paingkyon) Township, Hpa-an District
Full Text	
<b>Hpa-an District Interview   Naw U--- (female), Mae La Ta Law Thaw repatriation site, Thay Maw Koo village tract, Ta Kreh Township</b>	
<b>Status:</b> UNHCR-repatriated refugee	
<b>Temporary shelter or IDP camp:</b> Beh Klaw [Mae La camp]	
<b>Return date(s):</b> February 2019	
<b>Ethnicity:</b> Karen	
<b>Religion:</b> Buddhist	
<b>Marital status:</b> N/A	

**Occupation:** Day labour

**Position:** A villager

**How many family members do you have?**

I have four members [including me]; three children and me.

**Where did you live before you went to the camp?**

I lived in Ee--- Village.

**Where is it?**

It is on the other side of Kho Lo [Salween] River, I do not know the district. [Another woman said it is close to Kho Wah, K'Ma Moe Town].

**When did you go to Beh Klaw [Mae La camp]?**

I have been living there around eight years.

**Had you ever fled Tatmadaw before?**

Yes, I did. My family had to move when I was around thirteen years old.

**Why did you have to flee?**

It was because the Tatmadaw forcibly relocated us so my mother brought us there [Mae La camp]. All of the villagers from my village were forced to move and we could not go to school.

**Why did you decide to return?**

It is because of insufficient food and unstable livelihoods, and I saw people [my friends] applied for the repatriation so I also applied. There was not enough food for us anymore as well.

**Could you access work in the camp?**

No, we could not. We just had to have the food that we received.

**Do you plan to return to your village of origin?**

No, I don't think so because all of my siblings and parents live here.

**How long have you been back here?**

We returned last year. [Another woman in the interview said, they applied for repatriation in 2018 and then they returned in February 2019.]

**Were you informed about the return site before you returned?**

They asked us "where do you want to return?" and we told them we want to return here so they sent us here. They sent us where we would like to return.

**Before you returned, did the committee of the repatriation project inform you about the transportation process?**

No, they did not. We also heard [gossip] about P'Yaw [Myanmar government or Tatmadaw] calling us to return to them and if we did not have land, they would send us to Payathonzu [Khoh Ther Pler] so we told the committee that we would return here because we have land here, [Mae La] Way Ler Moo.

**Could you please tell us about your transportation from Beh Klaw to here please?**

We were sent from Beh Klaw to Myawaddy Town and then slept one night. We returned to here the next day. It was two days.

**Did you receive food on your way?**

Yes, we did.

**Was the food enough for you all?**

Yes, however, we just received some amount of food like a pack of rice and around ten packs of noodles. We also received a pack of rice with dry fish and drinking water from Beh Klaw to Myawaddy [Another woman in the interview said they received delicious chicken curry in Mae Sot]. We had to buy our own food when we arrived to Myanmar side. We had to buy food for our children whenever they were hungry on the way and we arrived here in the evening [The food supplies they'd received were uncooked, not for the trip but for later].

**So, foods were not prepared for you in Myanmar side, right?**

Yes, we had to buy food and pay transportation costs with the money we received from donation. It cost 10,000 kyats for each of us including all the children.

**What organisation prepared transportation for you?**

We did not know. We just had to pay the transportation fee by ourselves. However, the first repatriated group did not have to pay the transportation fee like us.

**Did all of your family members return with you?**

Yes, they are here.

**How many households returned with you?**

There were around 25 households.

**Where did the other families return?**

Some of them returned to Mae La Way Ler Moo, Mae La La Kweh and then here Ywa Thay [Ta Law Thaw].

**Did you do a medical check before your return?**

Yes, we did.

**Did health workers follow you on the way to here?**

No, they did not.

**Were you allowed to bring your household and kitchen materials?**

Yes, we were.

**Did you feel secure on your way to here?**

Yes, we did.

**Did you receive Mine Risk Education Training?**

Yes, we did.

**Do you have freedom of movement?**

Yes, we do.

**Have you received any support after you returned?**

No, we have not received anything yet.

**As you mentioned, you received money support in Thailand and Myanmar side so did you receive any other money support from other people?**

No, we did not.

**Are there any women in the management level [occupying leadership positions in the community]?**

No.

**Do you also receive water by water pipe?**

Yes, I do.

**How do you prepare water for drinking?**

For drinking water, we get it from the well and just drink it like that. It is from the well and we can drink it because it is [fresh]. Water that we receive by pipe is for washing and cleaning only.

**Do you receive hygiene materials? For example soap, napkin etc..**

No, we did not. We just received it once on the way.

**Did you feel secure to sleep alone?**

No, I do not because my house is a little far from the other houses.

**Why?**

I am afraid of ghosts because it is close to the cemetery. I do not have to be afraid of people.

**Do you have access to electricity?**

Yes, we do. We receive it by solar panel. I do not know who provided it for us.

**How do you cook?**

We cook by charcoal.

**Is it easy to get it?**

We just have to buy it from people who sell it.

**How much per sack?**

It is 50 baht per sack. Sometimes, we do not have money so we just have to cook by firewood.

**Do you have enough housing space and a strong house building?**

Yes, it is.

**Do you have enough blankets and mats?**

Yes, we have it for our family members, but not for guests.

**Is it easy to access to healthcare services?**

As she [another villager] mentioned, it is easy when the authorities allow us, but not easy when they do not. And then we just have to buy medicine from the shop in the village.

**Do your children go to school?**

Yes, two of them go to school. My oldest son does not go to school anymore. My second child is in Grade 4 and my youngest daughter is in Grade 2.

**Do you have enough family income? For instance, money, food ....**

No, I do not.

**How do you overcome these problems?**

I just have to work as a daily labourer for our daily food. We cannot save anything.

**Do you have access to land?**

No, I did not.

**How do you receive land for your house?**

I bought it.

**How much and where did you buy it?**

It was 3,000 baht from my grandfather.

**How many acres of it?**

I do not know. It is just [enough] for one house and we can plant some vegetables in the garden.

**Do you have fertile soil?**

Yes, it is.

**Do you have any other job opportunities?**

No, it is only daily labour on the season's crops. However, I do not feel comfortable for working on harvesting beans and paddy so I could not work on those crops.

**Did you receive any legal document? ID and family household...**

Yes, I did.

**Do you know about the 2020 election?**

No, I do not.

**If you are informed about the election, do you think you will vote?**

I do not know. If other villagers do it, then I will also participate in it and I will not do it if the other people do not.

**Can you participate in the decision making level?**

No.

**Do you feel like you are discriminated against?**

No.

**Did you feel like your rights were violated in the camp?**

[Another woman in the interview said, yes, because we were prohibited to go out of the camp; we were ordered to go out and get vegetables like bamboo shoot.] Every morning, the announcement said, 'Don't go outside of the camp, you are prohibited to go outside of the camp!!! The [Thai authorities] take action constantly so if you are arrested, camp leaders will not take responsibility for you!!!'

**How about healthcare services?**

It was ok. Before [NCA], healthcare services and medical supplies were better than now. Currently there is no separate delivery hospital [SMRU] in the camp. The current healthcare services and supplies are not good like before anymore.

**How about in your area?**

It is not good as in Beh Klaw camp. When I was in Beh Klaw, I was sick more than when I am back here. Maybe, it is because we could not access to travel [freedom of movement]; we just stayed at home and cooked what we received from the camp. We could not go out to get vegetables so I was not happy to live there.

**How about accessing healthcare services here?**

It is dependent on the Thai authorities, because we access healthcare services in Thailand so if they allow us to go, we can go. If not, we could not.

**Can you go to Way Ler Moo?**

Yes, we can. However, we have to pay for the transportation fee.

**How much?**

It costs 200 baht for two ways.

**What are the most important for the returnees?**

I need a hospital in my area so that we will not have to go to Mae Taw, Beh Klaw or Mae Sot. I need job opportunities in order to rebuild my life, such as to own a small plot for my family income, like that, and then I can also look after my livestock. I could not work other work because my children are young. [Another woman in the interview said, the interviewee has only one hand and she wants goats to breed for her livelihoods.]

**Do you plan to move to other places?**

No, I will stay here forever.

**What should the leaders [Myanmar government, local government] provide for the returnees?**

They should provide rice for us. If they could provide enough rice for half a year, it would be very helpful for us.

**Do you regret your return?**

No.

**Do you have anything to add?**

Please, report it for us [to UN or any governments] to support our livelihoods or even half of the requirements for us so that we will have sufficient food for my family. Currently, we are new returnees so we have to struggle more than local residents for our daily food, however, we cannot have good [nutrient enough] food like the others.

**Thank you.**

Thank you

**Source #17**

Source doc #	Source #17
Log #	19-20-A6-11
Interview date	March 3rd 2019

Location	Ta Kreh (Paingkyon) Township, Hpa-an District
Full Text	<p><b>Hpa-an District Interview   Saw Eh--- (male), Mae La Way Ler Moo repatriation site, Ta Kreh Township</b></p> <p><b>Ethnicity:</b> Karen <b>Position:</b> KNU/KNLA-PC Officer</p> <p><b>How do you see the situation of the returnees?</b> I can see that no one can stand on their own [feet] and secure their livelihood yet. They just came back with the little help they got from organisations before they returned here. They cannot work on their own yet. The support [they received] is not enough for them. Therefore, Pu Wah Hkoh has to arrange and give them food once a month.</p> <p><b>Who are the people who sent them back here?</b> It was the arrangement of Thai and UN.</p> <p><b>Do they look after the returnees after they sent them here?</b> They said that they will take care of them at least 6 months to a year but we do not see any people who support them since they reached here.</p> <p><b>Did they come to visit too?</b> No. They never came.</p> <p><b>Do you know what did the returnees got as their first supports?</b> Adults got 9300 Baht for each person and children got 7500 Baht for each child.</p> <p><b>Did they come after that?</b> No.</p> <p><b>What challenges do the returnees face since the supporters do not come to visit and give further supports? How do they manage to live?</b> They just approached our leaders [PC] so our leaders help them once a month.</p> <p><b>Who are the leaders who support them?</b> Bo Yay Nu.</p> <p><b>Which organization does Bo Yay Nu belong to?</b> PC [Peace Council]. He is one of the top Generals in PC.</p> <p><b>Who managed the place for the returnees to live?</b> Their places are all under authority of Bo Yay Nu.</p> <p><b>Did he give all of his places to them?</b> Yes. He also managed the plantation places and building for the returnees.</p> <p><b>Isn't it the management of UN?</b> No. We did not see the UN show up. Our leaders had to take up responsibilities since they reached here.</p>

**Do you know where do the leaders here get the funds or expenses to support the returnees here?**

The [KNU/KNLA-PC] leaders try their best to provide support, such as giving one sack of rice or less than that, as much as they can.

**As Bo Yay Nu provides help, did he also get funds from the donors or organizations, something like that?**

No. He did not get it from anyone.

**Do the returnees also face with other challenges?**

They mostly face with food challenges.

**Did the organizations that sent the returnees back contact the local authorities here?**

Yes, they did.

**What did they say?**

They asked us whether we can accept the returnees or not. We [said that we will] accept and welcome them if they would like to come back here but we will not force them to come back. [KNU/KNLA-PC General] Bo Yay Nu met with the UN [UNHCR] and had a conversation about that. The UN said that they will take care of the returnees until they can stand on their own.

**Did they fulfil their words?**

No. [...]

**Can we use the information you provided for publication?**

Yes, you can.

**What else do you want to say?**

I just would like to say to the donors or who support the refugee returnees, they should take care of them until the end or until they can stand on their own.

**That's all?**

Yes, that's it.

**Thank you.**

Thank you.

**Source #18**

Source doc #	Source #18
Log #	19-20-A7-I1
Interview date	March 3 <sup>rd</sup> 2019
Location	Ta Kreh (Paingkyon) Township, Hpa-an District
Full Text	
<b>Hpa-an District Interview   Saw Ef--- (male), Mae La Way Ler Moo repatriation site, Ta Kreh Township</b>	



**Ethnicity:** Karen

**Position:** KNU/KNLA-PC Officer

**What is your name?**

My name in military and in this area is Saw Ef---. I am responsible for the overall situation in this area, Mae La Way Ler Moo and in the border.

**Where is Mae La Way Ler Moo located?**

In the past we called it Mae La Htee Ger Nee and it is located in Lu Pleh Township, Hpa-an District.

**What is your position?**

My responsibility is to look after the safety in the border here and also as Company Commander.

**Which military are you responsible for?**

Peace Council [PC], KNU/KNLA- PC that was formed in 2007.

**What do you think of the situation of the returnees here in Mae La Way Ler Moo?**

As we are Karen, we understand each other well but we do not understand about the donors that supported these refugee returnees. They [donors] said that they will help the returnees' repatriation, financial support and food to be able to stand on their own for their livelihood. We agreed to that but later it did not turn out to be that way.

**Where did they get the supports from?**

They got the supports from UNHCR, HI, TBC and other organizations that I do not remember but I know the UNHCR is the main organization that supported them.

**Who arranged the places for them to live?**

Pu Bo Yay Nu arranged the places for the refugee returnees and it reaches to Htee Wa Klay and to Gone Ma Ni. It is very wide.

**What is the position of Pu Bo Yay Nu?**

He is third [in authority] to the PC Commander-in-Chief.

**Does any organization or any wealthy individuals help Pu Bo Yay Nu's program like this?**

The problem is Pu Bo Yay Nu does not get any support from any organization so his burden is heavier, because he thought that the problems like this would not occur since organizations already supported the returnees. That's the reason why Pu Yay Nu accepted [them] willingly. But after the refugees returned here, they stayed quite okay at first because they got supports but later when the supports they got were finally gone, it became a challenge for their future. We gave them land or places to stay so they can stay, but to continue living with their livelihood in the future, there is not enough food and financial support for them. We did not see the donors who supported them contact them and they did not contact us or ask us anything as well. Therefore, they will have to rely on Pu Yay Nu and Pu Yay Nu will have to take care of their food and other things so it becomes a burden for him.

**So UN never came back or supported the refugees after they returned to Mae La Way Ler Moo, like that?**

Yes, we never saw that or they did not contact us to update us. I do not know about what they are up to. They might have a plan but currently they do not contact us or tell us anything about

the supports.

**What about the working places?**

For that one, it is like after they sent the refugees back here, they gave full responsibilities to us to take care of the working places for the returnees. Therefore, we got more responsibilities because we also have our responsibilities in military and now with the civilians, so we are facing challenges right now. We do not have enough to support them fully. Now we do not see anyone who comes and supports them. It is just the local leaders and authorities who have to take care of them. The places for them to stay are okay for us to manage, but for their livelihood in the future, it is quite challenging for us too.

**Did the donors or supporters build the school for the children who returned from refugee camps?**

No. We actually had a school here before the refugees returned. We built it a long time ago for our army families and children to continue their studies here. We looked for funding and built it. It has nothing to do with the donors of the refugees returned.

**So it does not belong to UN?**

No.

**What about the healthcare services and hospitals? Did they also provide that?**

Actually, we do not understand the UN [UNHCR]. After we agreed to welcome and accept the repatriated refugee households in the first group which was around 30 households, they never provided any services or support. It is like they gave us full responsibility to take care of the returnees. We thought that the organisations would support us and work together with us but it turned out like this so we cannot do anything.

**So they do not support you and your organization with anything?**

No. Nothing at all.

**Which way did the returnees come back from?**

At first, we arranged for them to come back from Mae La which is closer to make their expenses lesser, but as they reported step by step, they said that Mae La is not recognized as legal if they return from there [there is no government-recognized border crossing point]. So, they returned from Myawaddy side [they had to travel south to cross the border at Myawaddy, then back north]. They said everyone should return from Myawaddy side and it should be a legal and official way.

**Does everyone who returned have their ID card?**

They had their photos taken but I do not know whether all of them were provided with ID cards or not. I do not think all of them have ID cards.

**Do they also provide the special center that takes care of people with disabilities, children and women?**

No. There is no such thing. To be honest, we do not get any support right now. It is like we are living together with understanding like we live in a village. Each person has to struggle with their own livelihood problems.

**So it became a burden for the local authorities, like that?**

Yes. Since they came back, we already have responsibilities to take care of them. And now, their future. It is a very big responsibility for us. We have to think of their food every month. The

situation turns out like this.

**Did the fighting happen after they returned?**

No. There is no fighting that will be related to us because we have nothing to do with them [Tatmadaw]. I do not know about the BGF, DKBA and KNLA. But we do not have any fighting since we are in peace. We act and stand on our own.

**Are there any drugs here?**

Pu Yay Nu strongly banned drugs here. In the past, we had the rules about drugs but it was quite strong because people were killed if they were found using or dealing with drugs. Later, according to international norms, killing is violence and it is strong so now we do not practice that anymore. We just arrest the people who are using or dealing with drugs and send them to authorities to get investigated.

**What do you want to say about the challenges the authorities here are facing?**

I just would like to say that we have several responsibilities here. We have to take care of our soldiers, students and all the soldiers' families. [I]f they have plans to send more returnees here, they should contact us and give enough support for those people. If we can stand [together] and also support the returnees together, it will be enough for us. We would like them to meet with us and discuss the plan. The important thing is to make sure the service providers will offer their support.

**Can we use the information you provided for our reports and for publication?**

Yes, you can use it because we also would like other people to look for the ways to help us because we are all Karen. We cannot look at our people suffering like that. We do not know about how the service providers help the returnees and we have no idea how effectively they supported them. We have to think about whether they are our people or not. For us, the returnees are our people, so if anyone would like to support our people, we would agree with them. If they give us responsibilities to take care of the returnees, they should provide us with school, food and essential needs. They do not need to worry about the rest; we can take care of it.

**Do you want to say anything more?**

I just would like to say that if anyone heard about this and if they would like to help the returnees, they can contact us and join hands together with us to support them together. We do not want to see our people being oppressed again and again. If we do not protect, take care and help them, their value will be lost. I would like to urge other people to support our Karen people here when they are being helpless.

**Thank you.**

Thank you.

**Source #19**

Source doc #	Source #19
Log #	20-1-A6-11
Interview date	November 25 <sup>th</sup> 2019
Location	Kaw T'Ree (Kawkareik) Township, Dooplaya District
Full Text	

**Dooplaya District Interview | Naw V--- (female), Kaw Lah repatriation site, Hsue K'Lee village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township**

**Status:** Refugee (spontaneous return)

**Return date(s):** 6 years ago

**Ethnicity:** Karen

**Religion:** Buddhist

**Marital status:** Married

**Occupation:** Day labor

**Position:** Villager

**How many children do you have?**

I have six children.

**As you are a displaced person, when did you flee to the border [between Thailand and Myanmar]?**

I do not remember the exact date that I fled to the border but it's been 10 years already since I fled from my village.

**Why did you flee?**

I fled because of the fighting.

**Where did you flee?**

I lived in Thay Baw Bo village [Myanmar]. Then, I fled to Mulichai village [Thailand]. I stayed in Mulichai village for a few months. Then, I fled to Umphang District [Thailand]. I stayed in Umphang for four years. After four years, I came back to live in Kaw Lah village [Myanmar].

**Why did you return to Kaw La village?**

I was not happy living in Umphang because it is not our country. I had to rent a house in Umphang. The rental fee was expensive for me because I just worked as daily worker. So, it [the daily wage] was not enough for me.

**How much did you have to pay for rental fee per month?**

The house is just a small house made with bamboo. It is not easy to stay in that house because it is already damaged. I had to pay 500 baht per month. It cost about 1000 baht per month because I also had to pay water and electricity bills.

**How long have you been here in Kaw Lah village?**

I have been here for six years.

**Is Kaw Lah your original village? Is it a new place for you?**

Yes. It is a new place for me.

**Did you have any difficulty to live in Thailand? Were you forced to return to Burma?**

Nobody forced me to return. I am just not happy living in Thailand. I just want to stay in my country.

**So, you just planned to come back on your own?**

Yes.

**Did any leader or local authorities ask you to come back to stay here?**

They [local authorities] told us that we can come back to stay here if we want to come back. They just tried to help displaced people in Thailand in order to be able to return. Therefore, I decided to go back.

**How many displaced people came back here with you?**

There are ten households of displaced people who came back to stay here.

**Were you sent back to Burma? Or did you just come back on your own?**

We just came back on our own. We hired a car to go back to Burma.

**Did you find any difficulty when you were coming back?**

We had to pay money as we hired a car for transportation.

**Did any returnee [from this village] go back to Thailand because they are not happy to live here?**

No. Nobody goes back. We just stay here. We do not go anywhere.

**Do you receive any support when you live here?**

Yes. We received support in the past. We received solar panels. They [unknown] also provided us animals so we can raise animals [for livelihood]. They gave financial help to people who have animals but they bought animals for people who do not have animals to raise.

**How many armed actors are there here?**

There are three different armed groups here. They are Tatmadaw, DKBA and KNU.

**Is there any security concern for villagers when they [armed actors] live nearby?**

I currently do not see any conflict. We can live peacefully.

**Do you feel safe living here?**

Yes. I feel safe for the time being.

**Do you feel safer than before?**

Yes. I feel safer than before.

**Since you came back to live here, have you ever been threatened by someone?**

No.

**Is there any landmine or UXO in this area?**

There were landmines in the past but now we do not see it anymore.

**Are there any people who are responsible for cleaning landmines in this area? Do they mark the area where the landmines were planted?**

We do not have landmines [right now] but they clean them if they see landmines.

**Who cleans the landmines?**

They are soldiers.

**Can you travel freely in this area? Does someone stop you to travel around? For example, you cannot go out during night time.**

No. We can travel freely.

**Were you asked [where you are going] when you travelled at checkpoints?**

No.

**Do you receive financial help in order for you to do a small business for livelihood?**

No.

**Do you have any land to work on here?**

Yes. I have some land for working.

**Did you have to buy that land? Were you given the land?**

No. We just go to clear the land and work on it. Actually, Pu [mentioned one of the local authorities] gives us the land to work on.

**Do you have access to drinking water and water for household usage?**

Yes.

**Where do you get water?**

We get water from the mountain stream.

**Is the water clean?**

Yes. We can even drink the water.

**Do you receive soap and other personal hygiene products?**

No. We do not receive those kinds of things.

**Do you have any particular place to keep the rubbish and wastes?**

No. We do not have a systematic way to maintain the waste but we just throw all the wastes and keep them in one place.

**So, you do not have any person who is responsible for maintaining the waste system?**

Yes. We do not have.

**Do you have access to electricity for cooking?**

We just use solar panels but we use firewood for cooking.

**Is it difficult to find firewood?**

No. There is a lot of firewood here. It is easy to find it.

**Did you get a house when you came back here? Or did you have to build it by yourself?**

We just had to build the house by ourselves.

**Is it enough for everyone in your family? Is it too narrow to live?**

No. We built a quite big house that everyone can stay but we made the house with bamboo.

**Is it strong enough to live in?**

Yes. It is strong enough to stay.

**Do you receive blankets and mats? Is it enough [for your family]?**

Yes.

**Is there a clinic in this village?**

Yes.

**Who built the clinic?**

It is KNU.

**How far is it from your house to clinic?**

It takes several minutes to go there by foot.

**What is the common health issue in your village?**

The common health issues are malaria and influenza.

**Can children here go to school? Do you have a primary school?**

Yes. We have.

**Do the children receive basic education fully?**

Yes.

**What about middle school? Do you have it?**

No. We do not have.

**Do you think you will have middle school in the future?**

Yes. I think so.

**Is it far to go to school?**

No. It is not far. It just takes 15 minutes to go to school by foot.

**Is it KNU school or community school?**

It is a KNU school.

**How many of your family members do jobs to earn money?**

No. Nobody [in my family] has a job to earn money.

**So, how do you solve the financial problem? To fulfil your family's needs, do you have to borrow money from other people?**

No. We do not have to borrow money. Our siblings from abroad send us money, so we can survive with the money they send.

**What do you work on to support your livelihood?**

We just work as day labourers, but we cannot always work. [It depends on the availability of the work].

**What kind of work are you doing?**

We work as rice harvesters and corn pickers.

**Does anyone or some of your friends have to go to work, out of the village?**

Yes. They go to work, out of the village but some people have to sleep at their workplace. Some people do not stay overnight in their workplace because they just go to work in the morning and they come back to the village in the evening.

**Do you receive any vocational training so you can use the skills to earn money? For**

**example, car mechanics and carpentry.**

No. We do not receive those kinds of trainings.

**What about sewing and barber trainings? Did you learn how to sew and how to barber in order to earn income?**

No. We do not learn anything like that. We just learn how to pick corn and how to cut rice.

**Do you have any official documents such ID card, birth certificate and household registration document since you returned to Burma?**

No. I do not have any.

**So, do you receive any support from Myanmar government?**

No. I have never met with Myanmar government authorities.

**Do you think they [Myanmar government] should make an ID card for you?**

I think they should do that. They just came to make documents for Tha Waw Thaw villagers but they never come here.

**Did you have to stay away from your family when you displaced?**

No. We just stayed together. We just came back together.

**Do you know anything about the upcoming 2020 election in Myanmar?**

I do not know anything about it.

**Do you think you can vote if you do not have an ID card?**

I do not think I can vote if I do not have any document.

**Does anyone help you if you have any difficulty living in this village or if you have any issue?**

Yes. Pu tries to help us if we have problems here.

**You mean Pu [one of the local authorities] is from KNU?**

Yes.

**So, do you think that KNU authorities help you with their heart? Or he just helps you because you give him money?**

No. He just helps us with his whole heart. We do not need to pay money.

**What do you need the most when you live here?**

I wish I can have better transportation.

**Who are the local authorities in this village? Who controls the village?**

They are KNU authorities.

**Do you think they will help you if you have any problem in the village?**

Yes. I think so.

**What do you think of the current situation, especially in 2019 and 2020?**

I do not think the current situation is stable.

**So, do you have any concern for your future?**



Yes.

**Are you worried that you will have to displace yourself again?**

Yes.

**What do you think the KNU and Myanmar government should do in order to address your concern?**

I think it is better if they both work together hand in hand.

**Do you regret that you came back to live here?**

No.

**Do you have anything to say?**

When I live here, I often have to attend meetings in many different places. Sometimes I have to go to Pnah Hta village to attend meeting. Sometimes I have to go to Oh Poe Hta village to attend the meeting. Sometimes, I have to go to Sue K'lee village to attend the meeting. Therefore, we just have to arrange our own transportation. We have to walk to attend the meetings because we do not have any vehicle. Also, we do not have any place to make a meeting here. I think it is good if they can help us.

**You mean you need help in terms of transportation?**

Yes.

**Is there any other thing you would like to report?**

We have ten members of the Karen Women's Organization in this village. There are seven members of KWO in the section where Maw Eg--- lives. There are three members of KWO in the section where I live. But we do not have any office to discuss issues together. We just have to meet each other from house to house in order to have a discussion meeting. If other KWO members [from other villages] come to meet with us in our village, we do not have any office or place to make a meeting. So, we just have to make a meeting in our house.

**You mean you need better management in terms of arranging meetings [such as office or meeting room]?**

Yes.

**Will you allow us to use the information that you provide?**

Yes.

**Thank you so much.**

You are welcome.

**Source #20**

Source doc #	Source #20
Log #	19-106-A1-I1
Interview date	November 24 <sup>th</sup> 2019
Location	Daw Hpa Hkoh (Thandaunggyi) Township, Taw Oo (Toungoo) District
Full Text	

**Taw Oo District Interview | Naw X--- (female), Eh--- village, Ei--- village tract, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township**

**Status:** Refugee (spontaneous return)

**Temporary shelter or IDP camp:** Mae Ra Moe camp

**Return date(s):** 3 years ago

**Ethnicity:** Karen

**Religion:** Christian

**Marital status:** Married

**Occupation:** Plantation

**Position:** Villager

**How many children do you have?**

I have three children.

**How old is the oldest one?**

The oldest one is 13 years old.

**What about the youngest one?**

The youngest one is 3 years old.

**Have you been displaced before?**

Yes.

**Before you were displaced, where did you live?**

I lived in Ej--- village.

**Do you still remember the date you left from Ej--- village?**

I left there since 2006.

**Then, where did you go?**

We fled to Mae Ra Moe Refugee camp.

**Is the village you are currently living in your original village or another village?**

This village is not my original village.

**How long have you been living here after returning from Mae Ra Moe Camp?**

It has been three years already.

**Did you come back on your own or feel pressured to return to your village?**

I came back on my own.

**Have you faced any difficulties when you were in the refugee camp?**

I have faced many difficulties because our family did not live together [distance]. I was staying on my own and my husband also stayed very far from us. That was very challenging for us.

**Are there any other difficulties you faced while staying there?**

The other difficulties would be my children were very small at that time and I had to look after them. My oldest daughter has a physical disability and I had to take care of her. Since I had to

look after my children, I could not work like other people do.

**Did you get any support or care from the organizations when you lived there?**

Yes. The rice and other foods were provided for us as rations. My oldest daughter got enough care and support since she has a physical disability, and we also got the nutritious foods and medicine when we got pregnant and gave birth to our children.

**Are there any other people who came back on their own like you did?**

Yes.

**Do you know how many of them?**

I cannot remember because we are not from the same brigade [area]. Some went back to their own brigades.

**Do you know how many people came back to brigade 2 [Taw Oo District]?**

No.

**Did someone arrange transportation for you or did you return on your own?**

We arranged everything from the start to the end on our own.

**Did you face any challenge when travelling back to your village?**

I had many challenges while travelling since I had to take care of my oldest daughter on the way. As she is different from others and we had to come back in a car with a lot of people, it was very difficult.

**How did she become physical disabled?**

It was because of war. When we had to flee, she did not get enough medicine like vaccines or other things.

**What about the difficulties of the travel cost?**

We had to spend a lot of travel cost on the way since we had to travel with truck and boat and carried a lot of stuff.

**Did you get any support from any organizations after returning back here in terms of the location and food?**

No. We just work on our own. [...]

**Did they come back on their own or with the support of the organizations?**

Some of them came back on their own and some came back with the support of the organizations in camp.

**Do they still get on-going support after they returned?**

Yes.

**Where did they get the support from?**

From KNU.

**Was that the KNU from central or local?**

From central.

**Could you tell us more about the security situation in your area?**

To be honest, we do not feel safe here. We still have concerns because we are living near the Tatmadaw army camps.

**What are your main security concerns?**

We see the Tatmadaw soldiers travelling and transporting rations in order to strengthen their army camps, so it concerns us a lot.

**Are they transporting the rations only?**

They are transporting their rations, soldiers and military materials such as weapons, artillery, to frontline army camps. Some of the weapons they carry, we have never seen them before.

**Did the fighting ever happen after you returned here?**

No.

**So what happened to your village before you fled to the camp?**

The Tatmadaw entered our village, planted landmines and destroyed our houses. We are still worried for our safety, even after we returned here. We dare not go to some places because we worry that we will step on landmines.

**Did the Tatmadaw base their army camps within your village?**

They did not base their army camps in our village. They just came to the village and stayed for a couple of days at a time and left to other villages.

**Do you feel safer returning to this village?**

No. I do not feel safe as I always see Tatmadaw soldiers are travelling around.

**Were you the victim of intimidation, violence or other human rights abuses or are you discriminated against since you came back?**

Yes.

**How?**

It has been three years that I returned here but I still do not have my household number. I applied for my household registration document since I came back here but I just got it recently.

**Why do you think you did not get your household registration document easily?**

They see us as the people from the rebel group KNU, so they do not want to take responsibility.

**Have any of your family members worked in KNU?**

Yes. My husband is working in KNU.

**When did you apply for a household registration document?**

I applied it in 2016.

**Did you apply to Myanmar government or KNU?**

Myanmar government. They did not dare to do it for us because they are afraid that something will happen to them in the future. For three years, I kept chasing after it to try to get it, and going according to the law [following standard procedures]. Finally, I went to the township leader from the KNU side and he accompanied me so I got it. When I applied for it myself, they directed me here and there and it was so complicated.

**Where did you apply?**

I applied for it in Hset Thone Mai [13 miles], Thandaung Myot Thit Town.

**Who were the people that dared not do the household document for you?**

They were from the local level. It was actually a lady who was supposed to process it for me.

**Why do you think she did not dare to do that for you?**

I think she is afraid or scared to do it for me. I had all the required documents to process it but she [the administrative clerk] did not want to do it because she was afraid of something I guess.

**What do you think was the reason behind that?**

I think she is afraid of the Tatmadaw because she might continue to work in the future so she was worrying if something happens between KNU and Tatmadaw in the future, she would be in trouble, like she will be deposed or something.

**Did you also pay for your household registration document?**

I just paid it as a favour. They did not ask me but as they processed it for me, I paid it to thank them. It was not that much either.

**As you mentioned earlier about landmines or UXO, did you hear about or witness any landmine or UXO related incident?**

I witnessed it when people took out the landmines in 2006. There were more than 10 or 16 landmines that they removed.

**Who planted those landmines?**

Tatmadaw planted it and KNLA removed them. There were not enough equipment to remove the landmines but they tried very hard with the ability they have.

**Were there any landmines or UXO victims?**

Yeah. Some villagers got injured by those landmines and UXOs.

**Did they get treatment when they were injured?**

When they got injured, they were sent to the KNU clinic in Battalion #5, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, Taw Oo District.

**Do you think you are able to travel freely in the area now? Are there any checkpoints, restrictions, etc.?**

The current situation is a lot better than the past. In the past, our travel was very restricted and we had to face a lot of checkpoints. It was really difficult.

**When was it?**

It started in 2005. We were displaced since 2004 because we did not dare to live in our village anymore.

**Are there problems like floods, heat waves or pollution in your area?**

There are no floods but we have heat waves here. Our plants such as cardamom, betel leaves, etc get dried and die because of excessive heat.

**Did authorities take measures to address these risks?**

No.

**Have you experienced the heat waves like this before?**

No.

**What do you think is the reason why it is overheated like this?**

I think it is related to the logging people conducted. The Tatmadaw came to base their army camps and they are doing logging to build their camps so I think it gets overheated because of that too. It will also include the dam construction and other development projects.

**Okay. What happened to your possessions when you left (livestock and other belongings)? Did you leave them like that?**

Yes. I just left them like that. Some of the materials got damaged and some remain the same.

**What about the livestock?**

They are all gone. My house is also gone.

**Currently, do you have a well to get water?**

I just take it from others since I came back here not so long ago. We do not have our own so I get it from my friends.

**How do you get the water?**

We get it from the rivers too.

**Do you have toilets?**

We don't have our own toilet. We just go to the toilet that people built for public use.

**Do you also have soap and other hygiene items, including sanitary napkins for women?**

No. We do not have that kind of thing or support.

**How do you dispose of your trash?**

We have the rubbish bin in the village. They place it in the middle of the village and they do not have enough rubbish bins. They only have one or two of them for the entire village.

**How big is a rubbish bin?**

It will be a little bit bigger than the rice sack that we use to hold one or two big tins of rice.

**Do you have access to electricity?**

Yes, we are using the electricity that the Myanmar government provides.

**How much do you have to pay per month?**

We do not have the same amount every month. When I first came back, it was only 2000 or 3000 kyats per month. But now, we have to pay around 6500 kyats per month. We do not even use everything with the electric. We just cook rice and run the water sometimes. We do not use a fridge or something that will cost much so it does not cost that much. We even cook more with firewood, not with electric.

**Did you have to rebuild or repair your shelter when you came back? What difficulties did you face in doing so?**

To be able to build this house, I had to prepare myself for several years. I started preparing myself before I came back here. My husband prepared everything here when I was still in the camp. That is the reason we can live like this.

**Is your current shelter big enough to accommodate your family?**

Yes.

**Is it strong enough to protect you from bad weather?**

Yes, I think so. But I still have the concern about what will happen to us in the future. We do not wish to be displaced again. We hope to stay like this with a sustainable situation.

**Do you have enough blankets, mats and mosquito nets for your family?**

Yes, I tried to buy everything back.

**Did you get any support to get everything back?**

No.

**Do you have access to healthcare services in your area?**

Yes.

**Is it far for you to go to a clinic?**

No. It is close to us.

**Can you also afford healthcare services?**

They do not ask us to pay for that, but they put the donation box there. We put the money there as a donation.

**Is the clinic located in your village?**

Yes.

**Is it a Myanmar government, KNU or self-funded clinic?**

Myanmar government.

**What are the most common sicknesses affecting the returnees?**

There are no serious sicknesses affecting us here. We only get diarrhoea sometimes.

**Do children have access to primary education in your area?**

Yes, they have access to middle school here.

**Do you think that the quality of the education provided here is good?**

I do not know. I think they only let the qualified students pass. If the students are not doing well, then they do not let them pass. So, it depends on the students themselves.

**Do you think they still focus only on memorizing lessons? Is there anything they do to improve the quality of education?**

They are not doing only memorizing anymore. They are teaching the students about behaviour, arts, physical exercises and other stuff as well. I cannot list them all.

**How far is the school?**

It is 15 to 20 minutes by foot.

**Is that Myanmar government, KECD school or self-funded school?**

Myanmar government school.

**What are the main challenges in accessing education?**

The main challenge is the language problem. When we lived in the camp, the children were mostly taught English and Karen subjects, but when they came back here, they were taught

mostly in Burmese. So they cannot understand well and cannot be on the same page as the other local students here. This is very challenging for them.

**Are they accepted as the grade they are supposed to study? For example, when they came back from camp, they were studying standard 5, so are they able to attend standard 5 here too?**

I think they wait and see whether the students can do it or not. If the students can do it and have the ability to do it, they accept them and allow them to study. Students who cannot understand Burmese well and are not qualified to attend the grade they are supposed to attend are not accepted. They have to enrol in a lower grade.

**Is there anything like if the students do not have any certificate or school transfer letter, they are not supposed to attend the school?**

Yes, there needs to be a school transfer letter to attend the school.

**How many of your family members are working to secure your livelihood? Are you working for your family?**

I have five family members. Yes, I have to work to secure my family livelihood by helping others in seasonal harvesting.

**Can you earn enough income to cover the needs of your family?**

We just work every day to cover our day to day livelihood.

**What is the most common occupation in the area?**

The most common occupations here are growing cardamom, dog fruits and betel nut plantations.

**Are you able to work on your lands or to access job opportunities in your area?**

No. I do not have my own land.

**What about in your own village?**

Yes, in my own old village, I have some plots of land.

**Did you have to leave the village to find a job?**

Yes.

**Did you receive vocational training in the camp?**

Yes, we were provided 4500 baht to feed a pig and buy necessary stuff for the pig or its shelter. We were asked to feed that pig for six months first. After six months, we had to sell it out. And we had to calculate the amount that we bought for the pig and the interest we got from selling a pig. For that interest, we had to save it monthly. And once a year, they shared out the amount for each of us for our future livelihood.

**What about other training other than that?**

No. We did not get other training other than that.

**Did that help you when you returned here?**

Yes, I have some livestock like chicken, pigs, and I keep them for my children's school fees.

**Are the plantations you left behind still productive?**

No, it is not productive like the past because we left them for a long time. Some betel nut



plantations were destroyed by birds. Plants like cardamom are also decreased. A lot of them got damaged and it is worse than the past.

**Were there people who maintained your plantations to be productive when you were away?**

No.

**So was it enough to cover the needs of your family?**

Not really. Not enough.

**Were some of your lands confiscated while you were displaced?**

No.

**As your house got damaged, did you receive any support to repair your house?**

No. We repaired it on our own.

**Do you have land to work on after returning here?**

Yes.

**Do you have legal documents, such as ID card, birth certificate, household registration documents, land title, etc.?**

We had it but we have to update or change it after returning so it was difficult for us. I already updated them all.

**What about land title?**

No, I do not have it. I only have the land document that KNU provided for us.

**Do you have access to affordable government services that would allow you to obtain or replace these documents?**

No.

**When you returned here, were you able to reunite with your family members?**

I lost one of my family members.

**Why?**

Because of disease.

**What about your husband? Are you able to stay with him together?**

Sometimes yes. When he goes out for his duty sometimes, we cannot stay together.

**Do you know about the upcoming national elections in 2020?**

No, I do not know about that.

**Are you informed about how to vote?**

No.

**Are you registered for the upcoming national election in 2020?**

I do not know.

**Have you ever voted in elections before?**

No.

**Do you have an ID card?**

Yes. I do.

**Do you plan to register for the election in 2020?**

Even if we plan to vote, will they let us vote? I am not sure whether they will invite us or tell us to vote. I do not know and understand the process so I cannot vote.

**Do you have the opportunity to participate in local decision-making procedures (community meetings, meetings with local authorities, etc.) or does discrimination play a role in this?**

I do not remember participating in these meetings. But I do participate in school meetings such as cooking for the participants. It happens once in two or three months. Other than that, I do not participate in anything.

**How do you feel about it?**

I feel that I am not qualified enough to participate because only educated people attend the meetings nowadays. Since we are not educated, I think we cannot participate.

**Do you feel like your rights (of healthcare, education, work opportunities, etc.) were provided enough while you were in the camp? Could you tell us more about it?**

I think we were provided with food when we were pregnant. We also got mosquito nets sometimes.

**Did you feel injustice when you lived there?**

No. When we lived in camp, we were given equal opportunities. For example, when the camp authorities would do something, they announced it and they would ask us whether we were willing to do it or not.

**Do you think that you will be able to access justice to solve your problems?**

I would like to solve it that way but I do not think people will be able to access justice to solve the problems in Myanmar because there is no justice.

**What about in the camp?**

In the camp, we were treated equally but here in Myanmar, the more you have money, the more you are [able] to win [get justice]. So there is no way for us to win as we are poor.

**Do you see injustice mostly in KNU or Myanmar government?**

Myanmar government.

**Do you know what your most pressing needs in the village are?**

The most pressing needs in the village are proper toilets, a rubbish bin in each house and enough water. We do not get enough water since we have so many people. And I think we should stay under rules and law.

**Which authorities control this area?**

This area is mixed control area by both Myanmar government and KNU.

**Do you have access to a justice system or any other grievance mechanism?**

No, I do not think so. I think that it will be difficult since it is a mixed-control area. They cannot easily come to agreements between themselves so it is difficult.

**Do you think the current situation is sustainable?**

No, I do not think so.

**Are you worried about your future? Do you think that you are likely to be displaced again?**

Yes, I always have concern about that.

**So you mean you still do not feel safe yet?**

No, I do not feel safe yet until now.

**What do you think the Myanmar government and other actors (KNU, CBOs, NGOs, etc.) should do to help IDPs return to their area of origin and better support returnees?**

I do not know but we did not get any support from them when we came back.

**Do you regret coming back to your village?**

Yes [we have regrets], because we did not have a proper place to live in when we first came back, and our children also faced difficulties in school since they are not familiar with the Myanmar government schools.

**What about other reasons you regret coming back?**

Sometimes we cannot afford to access healthcare because, in the camp, it would not cost anything to go to the clinic or hospital. But here, it costs a lot of money when we are sick or go to the clinic. There are differences in terms of education, healthcare and access to justice between here and the camp.

**Is there anything you would like to add or share?**

I just would like to say that the peace process that our leaders are doing now should be sustainable. We hope that it will be a real peace. We do not want fighting and to be displaced again. It was very difficult for us when we had to flee from fighting and be displaced. So we really hope for sustainable peace.

**Thank you so much. Can we use the information you give us to write a report and for publication?**

Yes, we want people around the world to know about how we went through the difficulties and fled from fighting.

**Thank you so much.**

Thank you

**Source #21**

Source doc #	Source #21
Log #	20-19-A4-11
Interview date	February 11 <sup>th</sup> 2019
Location	Bilin Township, Doo Tha Htoo (Thaton) District
Full Text	
<b>Doo Tha Htoo District Interview   Saw Y---(male), Ek---village, El---village tract, Bilin</b>	

**Township**

**Status:** Refugee (spontaneous return)  
**Return date(s):** 2 years ago

**Ethnicity:** Karen  
**Religion:** Christian  
**Marital status:** Married  
**Occupation:** Farming  
**Position:** Villager

**How many children do you have?**

I have four children.

**When were you displaced?**

I do not remember. We just came back to here two years ago. When we lived there, we had to give a man in each family to go to the army [KNLA]. So I decided to come back here because I have only one son. Some parents go on behalf of their sons in Brigade 5.

**Is this place your birth place?**

Yes.

**How long have you been back here?**

Two years.

**Were you pressured to come back here?**

No. There was no pressure for us since there are recruitments [they were invited to return], we just moved here.

**Did you inform the authorities there?**

I talked to one of the authorities and told him that I would like to return. Then he told me to put my name on the list of people who will go back so I put my name there and came back here.

**Were there any other families who came back with you?**

No. There were no other families who came back with me but some came back after our return.

**Was there any arrangement for your return trip to here?**

No. We managed to clear all the taxes there. We were told to finish everything like payment or something before we leave to somewhere. We came back after that.

**Have you got any support since you came back here?**

No. We do not get any support so far but the students get supported by their teachers.

**Is this place safe for you to stay?**

I think so.

**So you mean you feel safe here?**

I am not sure about that yet.

**Which place is better for you? Here or when you were in Lay Poe Hta?**

Here is better for us.

**Were you threatened before you return here?**

It seems to be like that because we were asked to send our son to the army for three years.

**Are there any UXOs in this area?**

I am sure there are some UXO, even though we do not see them.

**Are there any incidents caused by UXOs?**

No. I have not heard about that so far.

**Are you able to travel and work freely when you live here?**

Yes. I can travel freely for now. I am not sure about the future.

**Are there any flood issues and livelihood difficulties?**

No. I have not seen it.

**Do you get any financial support from any organisations?**

No. There is no such support since I came back.

**Are you able to access food and clean water properly?**

No. The food and water are not enough for us. We cannot access clean water.

**Where do you get the water?**

We just get [water] from the muddy stream. The water is not so clean and the current is not too strong either.

**Do you also have a shower place and toilet?**

We do not have a shower place but we do have a toilet. The toilet was not properly built. Some parts of wood have been eaten by the termites already.

**What about the soap or health-related products? Do you get the support for that?**

No. There is no such support.

**How do you manage to throw the rubbish?**

We just throw it beside the road. In the past there was a teacher who told us to keep our rubbish properly but since he was gone, we could not manage it well.

**Do you get electricity and water here?**

We were given this electric [solar panel] which is not working properly.

**How do you cook?**

We just cook with firewood. We built a separate place for a kitchen.

**Did you build your house by yourself after returning here?**

I did not build it but I had to make it wider here and there.

**Did you face challenges doing that?**

I just did what I can but I do not know if the people [who built houses] see it, we might get scolded because we live in a house that people built for us.

**Do you have enough space for your family members?**

[Our house] is a bit compressed but we can manage to fit in the best we can. As you can see, our stuff is everywhere.

**Do you have any plan to build a better and bigger house?**

If possible, I would like to build a bigger house. But if I widen it, it will hit other houses or stuff since the space [between the houses] is a bit narrow.

**Do you have enough mats, blankets and mosquito nets?**

We got mosquito nets but we do not have enough mats and blankets.

**Do you have a clinic here?**

No. If we need medicine, we have to order it from Kaw Poe Hkoh Village.

**Is it far from here?**

If we go by motorbike, it takes a while to get there.

**How about going on foot?**

I think it will take around one hour.

**Is the clinic run by KNU or it is self-funded?**

I am not sure. I think it is run by KNU. We are told to ask for medicine whenever we need it.

**Do you think the healthcare services are good?**

[I]t would be better if we had a clinic here. If there is an emergency, we have to go very far so it is difficult for us.

**What are the common diseases here?**

There are many different kinds of diseases here. I cannot tell which one is common.

**Are the children here able to get primary education?**

Some children can access it but some cannot.

**Is the school far from here?**

It takes a while to go there.

**Is the school run by Myanmar government or KECD?**

It is KECD.

**Are there any challenges for children to get the education?**

So far so good. I do not know about what will happen in the future.

**How many of your family members are working to secure your livelihood?**

Three of us are working. I work with two of my children.

**Are you able to secure the livelihood of your family?**

No. It is not enough for us.

**What are you doing to secure your livelihood?**

We are doing hill farming. We can only do that. We cannot do other things.

**Are there any of your relatives or neighbors who are working abroad?**

No. They are just working for part-time jobs like carrying wood for others or things like that.

**Do you get vocational training while living here?**

Yes, like mid-wife training.

**Do you have a land title?**

No. I do not have land.

**Do you have any official documents such as ID card, birth certificate and household registration document?**

I do not have an ID card but I have a household registration document. No one in our family has an ID card.

**Have you ever been separated from your family?**

No.

**Do you know about the 2020 election in Myanmar?**

Yes, I heard it from others.

**So for this, are you given the opportunity to vote?**

We do not have that kind of opportunity here. People used to do voting or election things when we stayed there in Brigade #5. I do not hear about it since I came back here.

**What are the essential needs of the people here?**

I think food and finances are essential.

**Which authority controls this area? KNU or Myanmar government?**

I think it is KNU controlled area.

**Do you think that the current situation is sustainable enough?**

I do not think that the current situation is sustainable yet. We still have concerns about the potential conflict that might happen again between the Tatmadaw and the KNLA.

**How do you think the NGOs or other organizations should help you?**

I think if they can help us with enough food, it would be great because the food is very important for us and we are lacking it.

**Have you ever regretted returning here?**

No, but if the situation is unstable then we cannot do anything. For now, I think that I made the right decision to come back here.

**Do you have anything to say to me or ask me?**

I do not think I have but we would like other people to know that we are lacking food so we need more food.

**Thank you so much for your time.**

Thank you.

**Source #22**

Source doc #

Source #22

Log #	20-1-A1-I1
Interview date	November 25 <sup>th</sup> 2019
Location	Kaw T'Ree (Kawkareik) Township, Dooplaya District
Full Text	

**Dooplaya District Interview | Em---(male), Kaw Lah repatriation site, Hsue K'Lee village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township**

**Status:** Refugee (spontaneous return)  
**Temporary shelter or IDP camp:** Noh Poe camp  
**Return date(s):** Since 2013

**Ethnicity:** Karen  
**Religion:** Buddhist  
**Position:** Villager

**How many family members do you have?**  
I have six people in my family.

**Where did you live before you fled?**  
I lived in En--- village, Hlaing Bwe Township.

**When did you flee?**  
I started fleeing when I was 21 years old.

**Where did you flee to?**  
I fled to Mine area.

**Where is Mine area?**  
It is located in Thailand.

**Why did you flee?**  
I fled from my village because of the Four Cuts strategy [the “Four Cuts strategy” was a longstanding government/Tatmadaw program to undermine EAOs by destroying Karen civilian livelihoods and communities].

**So, you just lived along the border [between Thailand and Myanmar] since you left your village?**  
Yes. I lived along the border. I moved from place to place along the border. I used to live in Thay Baw Bo and Hpa Loo villages [Kaw T'Ree Township]. I also moved to stay in Kwee Tah Auh and Kwee Tah Khaw villages. Then, I moved to Mine area for work.

**Now you come back to live in Kaw Lah village. Is Kaw Lah your original village? Is it a new village for you?**  
In the past, I used to live in Na--- village. Actually, I started to flee in 1997. So I moved to stay in Noh Poe refugee camp for one year. After one year, I moved to stay in Mine area. Since 2013, I came back to live in Kaw Lah village as Pu [Grandfather; an elder] came back to live here.

**Why did you come back to live in Kaw La village? Did you have any difficulty living in Thailand?**



I do not own any land in Thailand. Also, Thailand is not our country. I went to live in Mine area. Then, I moved to stay in Tha Waw Thaw village. How can I say? Since Pu Eo--- came back to this village in 2013, I just came back too because this is our country. So, we can work here.

**So you came back to stay in Burma because you do not have land to work on in Thailand. Is it right?**

Yes.

**How long have you been here?**

I came back to live in Kaw La village since 2013. This year is 2019. So, I have been here for seven years.

**Did you come back with your own plan? Or were you asked to come back?**

No. Nobody asked me to return. Actually, I do not have any job in Thailand. Therefore, I came back to this village because this is our country so it is better for me to work.

**Did local authorities try to help you in order for you to return to this village?**

You mean local authorities in Kaw La village?

**Yes. Did they try to help you in order to be able to stay in this village?**

I thought we can work if we come back to stay here. Also, Pu Eo--- came to live in this village. If there is something we need to work together in the area, we should work together.

**So, Kaw La village is the area for refugees to stay?**

Yes. As far as I know, this village is designated for a repatriation place as well as local development. Refugees and other people who fled to Thailand can come back to live in this village if they want to return to Burma.

**Are there people from Thailand or people among the internally displaced who have returned to this village?**

Yes. There are some people from Thailand who came back to stay in this village. I know some of them. They are Ep---, Eq--- and Er---. They used to live in Mine area.

**You mean there are many groups of people who returned to the village?**

Yes. There are many people who returned to the village such as Es--- and Et---. There are around 10 people from the refugee camp who returned to the village.

**Wait. You mean 10 groups of people?**

Yes. There are 10 groups of people who returned to the village.

**When you returned to Burma, did you have to bring your belongings by yourself? Or did anyone help you bring back your belongings?**

No. There is no one who helped me bring back my property and no one sent me to the village. I just returned to the village on my own. Also, it is near to come back to the village. Actually, I just brought a few things on separate trips so I managed it on my own.

**Are there people who returned to the village who later went back [to the refugee camp]?**

No. They just stayed here since they returned to the village. They do not go back.

**Did you receive any support when you returned to the village?**

Yes. In 2015, each villager [returnee] received 2,160 [Thai baht] for raising chicken and birds.

We also received solar panels.

**What about food?**

I have never seen that we received food.

**What about financial help?**

As I told you earlier, we received money one time in 2015.

**How much did you get?**

Each one got 2,160.

**Is it Baht or Myanmar Kyat?**

It is Baht. We received the money from the Myanmar government.

**Do you know who they are?**

I only know Eu---. We had to take money from him.

**Which department gave you money? Do you know?**

No. I do not know about it but Eu--- called us to go and take money. We had to go to Myawaddy to take the money that we received. I do not know which department. I just went to Myawaddy with Pu.

**Did they provide you chicken, pigs and goats for animal husbandry?**

As I told you, each villager received 2160 baht to buy chicken and pigs. They asked us to raise those kinds of animals.

**I thought they gave you money to buy food, but it was not?**

No. They did not provide money to buy food. They gave us money to raise animals. If they provided pigs and chickens for us, they would not give us money. They just asked us to buy pigs and chickens and we had to raise them [for our livelihood].

**Can you tell me about the security situation in this village?**

If I look at the village situation since I came back to the village, Pu tried to host many different events such Karen Martyrs Day. I think there is no security concern as he dared to host that kind of special event, because I didn't see the Tatmadaw coming to force us to leave the village. [Previously, the Tatmadaw prohibited Karen commemorations and would have attacked a Martyrs Day event as a 'rebel' activity.]

**How many armed actors are there in or near the village?**

There are Tatmadaw, DKBA and KNU. Also, there is a group of soldiers led by Eu--- in the village.

**Are they KNU soldiers?**

Yes.

**Are there BGF soldiers here?**

No.

**Is there any fighting occurring in this area between Tatmadaw and KNU soldiers?**

I do not see fighting happening with Tatmadaw and DKBA soldiers. Everything is fine here.

**What do you think about the current situation? Is it better than 1997 since you fled from your village?**

As I experienced the situation in 1997, I think the current situation is better.

**So, you mean the security situation is getting better. Is it right?**

Yes. To me, the situation is getting better since I returned to Burma.

**Source #23**

Source doc #	Source #23
Log #	20-15-A7-11
Interview date	January 14 <sup>th</sup> 2020
Location	Htaw Ta Htoo (Htantabin) Township, Taw Oo (Toungoo) District
Full Text	

**Taw Oo District interview | Naw Z--- (female), Ev--- Village, Htaw Ta Htoo Township**

**Status:** Refugee (spontaneous return)

**Temporary shelter or IDP camp:** Ei Tu Hta IDP camp

**Return date(s):** June 2016

**Ethnicity:** Karen

**Religion:** Christian

**Marital status:** Married

**Occupation:** Farming

**Position:** Principal

**How many children do you have?**

I have four children.

**How old is your oldest and youngest child?**

My oldest child is 17 years old and the youngest child is six years old.

**Where did you live before?**

In the past, I lived here as well [this is my village of origin].

**Did conflicts used to happen in your village?**

Yes, we had been displaced from place to place in hiding sites in the forest until we reached Ei Tu Hta Internally Displaced Persons [IDPs] Camp.

**Where did you flee when you were first displaced?**

We ran to the forest, K'Neh Htee forest.

**How places were you displaced before you arrived to the IDP camp?**

Before I went to the IDPs, we [villagers] had to flee and then returned [to the village] several times per year. Sometimes, we had to hide for weeks in one place and sometimes we used to hide for months in some places. We had to sleep on the ground [without shelter].

**When were you displaced?**

It was in 2006.

**What was the state of the conflict?**

It was when the Myanmar government military approached Brigade #2 [Taw Oo District] and targeted to completely capture the whole District. As consequences, local villagers could not stay in our villages so we had to go to IDP camps by the arrangement of our leaders [KNU].

**How many years did you stay there?**

I lived there for 10 years.

**Why did you return?**

Since we had lived there [IDPs camp] for a long time and the situation [in our village] has also improved a little bit compared to the past, we decided to return.

**How many years have you returned?**

I returned here in June 2016 so it has been over three years.

**Is your current village a new village?**

It has been here since our forefathers' period.

**Did anything pressure you to return or were you voluntarily returned?**

I decided to return and then I could return with the arrangement of our leaders [KNU].

**At that time, did you have any other options to choose for your future?**

No, we did not have. Our leaders informed us that we could return if we would like to so I decided to return.

**Did other households come back with you?**

There were four other families that came back together with me.

**Did some people return to other villages?**

Yes, they did.

**Did you get any transportation arranged for your return?**

We just brought our clothes for our way to here.

**Did you receive any support supplies?**

Yes, we did. Our leaders [KNU/KORD/KWO] helped us [arranged transportation for] half way along our journey from Ei Tu Hta IDP camp to Yeh Mee La [5 miles], and then we had to come back here by ourselves.

**Did you any problems on your way from Ei Tu Hta to here?**

It was during rainy season so we faced difficulties in transportation, especially our children when we were walking to here. We had to sleep two nights on our way from Kaw Thay Der village to here.

**Did you receive any support for your return? For example food and others.**

No, we did not receive anything.

**Did other people return with their own arrangements?**

Yes, there were some people [who returned by themselves].

**How many people returned by themselves?**

There are five other households who returned by themselves; they returned family by family separately like that. There are four families who returned by the arrangement of our leaders [including my family].

**Did you receive any support to restart your life?**

No, we did not receive anything.

**Did you receive any other support such as money, food and materials?**

Our leaders sent us to Yeh Mee La and then we each received around 110,000 kyats for our additional transportation. We rented a car from Yeh Mee La to Kaw Thay Der with all of the money we received. That was all we received without any other support.

**How is the security situation in your village? For example, which armed groups are in your village?**

Currently, there are no security concerns regarding the military activities. However, we do not know about the future.

**Do you feel the current situation has improved?**

To compare the current situation and the situation when we were leaving to IDP camps, it is now improved a little bit. But I cannot say for the future.

**What is the worst security risk for your future?**

I have concerns for every aspect of the situation such as militarisation, livelihoods and everything.

**Have you ever seen any human rights violations and threats since you came back?**

Since I returned here in 2016, I have not seen any major violations and threats.

**Are there any Unexploded Ordnances [UXOs] contaminating your area?**

There are no UXO in my area, but there are in other areas, especially some villages in the Poe Hkee area.

**Can you explain more?**

Some unexploded landmines that were planted by the Myanmar government military when they were attacking, and by the KNLA to defend themselves from the Tatmadaw, might have remained. Some of the landmines were planted [by the soldiers]. However, they do not remember their location so it is impossible to remove them.

**Can you travel freely in the area?**

Currently, we can travel well [without security concerns]; however, we are not sure for the future.

**Are there problems like floods and other natural disasters?**

Yes, especially last year, it was a major flood in my area and it was destroying the farm land, and then a drought followed with a lot of damage. As consequences, our plantations were destroyed and damaged. Additionally, mice also destroyed all the paddy on our hill farms so we could not harvest it this year.

**How about in the past?**

In the past, the mice destroyed some of our paddy and we could harvest some, but this year

was worse so we could not harvest anymore.

**Have you reported it to local leaders?**

We reported it once to the township leaders and religious groups. We received some donations such as rice from the religious group, but not from the township [leaders]. We received one pack of rice per household; however, we could not completely recover our livelihoods yet. In regard to our plains farms, for example, we planted 13 baskets of paddy grains and we should have harvested over a hundred baskets of paddy. However, this year mice were destroying our paddy so we could harvest only four or five baskets. I could harvest only two sacks of rice this year and other villagers also faced the same problems as mine.

**Did you receive any other support for your family?**

No, we did not receive. I would like to tell you more about when we were going to return, we were told that we would receive some support after we returned. They would revisit us and monitor the situation after three months of return. Even though it has been more than three years, we have not been receiving any response.

**Are they the people who are responsible for repatriation?**

Yes, they are.

**How had your possessions survived since you left your village [for the IDP camp]?**

We had left the village for 11 years, so all of my properties like household materials were gone [destroyed].

**Do you have access to enough food and clean water to cover your daily needs?**

We have enough fresh water and air in the village; however, we have to struggle very hard to recover our livelihoods in difficulties.

**What is your main water source?**

It is the river.

**How about hygiene in your village?**

As we are in a mountain village, the hygiene has not been properly taken care of. Nearby, there are only two toilets in the village.

**How do you dispose of your trash?**

We mostly throw it outside of the village like that.

**Do you have access to electricity?**

[She is laughing because it seems like access to electricity is impossible] We do not have access to electricity.

**How do you cook?**

We cook by firewood.

**is it easy to get firewood?**

Yes, it is.

**What difficulties did you face in rebuilding your shelter when you came back?**

We had left the village for 11 years so we had to build our house from the beginning and it was extremely hard to get wood and bamboo for building the house with bamboo.

**Do you have access to healthcare services?**

There is a [KNU] clinic in our area, but it is around a four-hour distance from our village on foot. It does not have sufficient medical supplies. There is only paracetamol [acetaminophen] for general illnesses such as headaches.

**Is it a Myanmar government or KNU or self-funded clinic?**

It is the KNU clinic.

**Is the quality of the healthcare services good?**

It is not high quality services; it is just the basic ability of the village.

**What are the most common sicknesses affecting the returnees?**

It is dengue fever, and children mainly face long coughs for two months and more.

**Can children access school?**

Yes, they can because we have a school in the village.

**Do you think the quality of education is good?**

It is not completely [qualified] because we have insufficient [resources].

**What insufficiency do you mean?**

We do not have enough books and school materials because of the distance.

**Do you have middle school in the village?**

No, we do not have it. We have only primary school.

**How long ago was the school constructed?**

It was set up when we [IDPs] returned.

**How many Standards does the school teach?**

It is up to standard Four.

**Where do the children go to school after they finish Standard Four?**

They just have to look for their way in order to further their education. If they want to go to [Myanmar] government school, they have to apply for an Identification Card, and if they cannot go, they have to go to KNU Township and District schools.

**Is the school run by KNU or Myanmar government?**

It is the KNU school.

**How far are the schools located from the village?**

They [Middle schools] take more than a day by bicycle.

**What are the main challenges in accessing education?**

The main challenge is their family's food [livelihoods]. Currently, it is almost the end of the year and their parents have to pay rice for supporting teachers, but they can not pay it.

**How many of your family members are working to secure your livelihoods?**

There are only me and my husband working for our daily livelihoods because our children cannot work yet.

**Can you earn enough income to cover the needs of your family?**

No, it is not enough yet because we do not have other job opportunities apart from working on farms. Therefore, it was better when we could harvest enough paddies on a yearly basis. However, our paddy was destroyed by mice, and our cardamom plants also died because of the heat. The mice also ate the fruits. Those are the biggest problems in my village and in the whole area.

**What is the easiest way to work for your livelihoods?**

It is working on hill farming. However, it is worse when [our paddy] is destroyed by weather [drought and mice].

**Do you have land to farm?**

Yes, I have some.

**Did some of your relatives or neighbours have to leave the village to find a job?**

In the other villages, there might be some people; however I do not know them. There are no people in my village who have to leave the village to find a job.

**Did you receive vocational training in the IDP camp? For example weaving etc...**

I have been working as a teacher so I am continuing doing it until now. Therefore, I did not receive any other vocational training.

**Were some of your lands confiscated while you were displaced?**

No, my lands were not confiscated.

**Is your farm land productive?**

The soil is not fertilized well so it cannot produce enough crops for us.

**Do you have legal documents, such as ID card, birth certificate, household registration documents?**

No, I do not have ID. We do not have household registration documents in my area. Do you mean KNU or Military [Myanmar government]?

**Both?**

For the KNU, they started collecting the survey of the household registrations.

**Did you have it before?**

I do not know, but the process has started since I arrived here two or three years ago. And then we report it annually [to the KNU].

**How about the Myanmar [government document]?**

We do not have any Myanmar [government document].

**Were you separated from your family when you were displaced?**

No, we were not. My older son went to study in Beh Klaw [Mae La] Refugee camp for two years [so he had to live far away from us]. However, we are now reunited.

**Do you know about the upcoming national elections in 2020?**

I heard about it, but I do not know when it will be.



**Do you plan to register for the upcoming national election in 2020 for electing new leaders?**

I think it is not easy because we are just ordinary villagers and even though we dream to go, we will not have rights to access to it

**Why?**

Because we are just simple and ordinary villagers so they [the Myanmar government] might not recognize and value us.

**Do you have the opportunity to participate in local decision-making procedures (community meetings, meetings with local authorities, etc.)?**

I think it depends on us. If we are willing to be used [involved], we can have the opportunity [to be involved in it]. However, if we back away [not trying to be involved], we will not get this opportunity.

**What are your pressing needs since you returned?**

We need food, livelihoods security and job opportunity the most. For example, our paddy was destroyed by animals so we face major livelihoods problems this year.

**Which authorities control this area?**

It is under the KNU control.

**Do you think the current situation is stable [peaceful]?**

No, it is not yet.

**Do you think you might have to displace again?**

I am not sure. It [the future] is just like a dream so it all depends on the situation.

**What do you think the Myanmar government and other actors (KNU, CBOs, NGOs, etc.) should do to help IDPs return to their area of origin and better support returnees?**

Organisations such as the KNU, Karen Refugee Committee [KRC] and others should support us as they promised us [before we returned]. [They promised to support us] for three years so that we would be able to rebuild our lives. They also said they would do monitoring every three months [about the returnees' situations as well]. We returned three years ago already, however, we have not seen any of them visit us yet. I just would like to highlight that their actions do not match their words [no implementation]. They told us in vain without action. We were hopeful [to receive support from those organisations]. Later on, we had to accept that it might only be words because there has been no follow-up action for us.

**Who helped you in your early return?**

There were three organisations in cooperation that provided us around 110,000 kyats for my family. They were Karen Youth Organisation [KYO], Karen Women's Organisation [KWO] and I do not remember the other organisation's name. We were told that these 110,000 kyats was for us to use over three months, however, they sent us to Yeh Mee La area and they told us to manage our additional transportation by ourselves. We had to pay around 100,000 kyats for the car so all of the money was gone [on the way]. We think that they should have monitoring as they were telling us. However, it has not happened in reality. Therefore, we assume that they were just telling us by words [not actions].

**Do you regret coming back to your village?**

No, I do not. Even though I cannot recover my livelihoods well, I am happy to return and live in

our own country.

**Is there anything you would like to add or share?**

There is no other additional information. I just would like to get the response about the support that we were promised to provide for three years of our reintegration and their regular monitoring. I just would like them to urge the leaders to consider this issue for us. We are now curious whether they think that we [returnees] are just simple civilians without knowledge and we believe whatever they told us easily. It will satisfy us if they follow what they had told [promised] us.

**What is the most important thing in your community and village?**

Everything is important in my community such as security, food, livelihoods security, education and healthcare services.

**Do you have anything to add?**

That's all I have mentioned above.

**Can we use the information that you provided for us?**

Yes, if it can reach to the higher level of people [stakeholders] for positive change, you can use it.

**Thank you.**

Thank you

**Source #24**

Source doc #	Source #24
Log #	19-21-A1-I1
Interview date	March 3 <sup>th</sup> 2020
Location	Lu Pleh Township, Hpa-an District
Full Text	
<p><b>Hpa-an District interview   Naw Aa--- (female), Mae La Way Ler Moo repatriation site, Lu Pleh Township</b></p> <p><b>Status:</b> UNHCR-repatriated refugee  <b>Temporary shelter or IDP camp:</b> Mae La [Beh Klaw] camp  <b>Return date(s):</b> February 2019</p> <p><b>Ethnicity:</b> Karen  <b>Religion:</b> Buddhist  <b>Marital status:</b> Married  <b>Occupation:</b> Plantation  <b>Position:</b> Villager</p> <p><b>How many children do you have?</b>                  I have six children.</p> <p><b>How many sons and daughters do you have?</b></p>	

I have three sons and three daughters.

**Why did you decide to return?**

I returned because this is my village.

**Don't you enjoy living in the refugee camp?**

I do. But the rations donation from [TBC] is decreasing.

**Did you guys receive other supports?**

No. We were told older people would not be given rations but only to children.

**Did older people still get the rations in the refugee camp by the time you returned?**

As for me, I never registered to get rations in the refugee camp. But my children did before. Since we came back here, none of us get rations provided in the refugee camp.

**Did you live in Beh Klaw [Mae La refugee camp]?**

Yes.

**How many years since you returned here?**

It's been five years.

**Since you returned here, you never went back to the refugee camp to register to get rations, is that correct?**

Yes, we never went back to register to get rations.

**What do you do for your livelihood [after coming back to live here]?**

I work on a corn plantation [hill plantation] and farming.

**Do you have UN registration?**

Yes, I do.

**Have you ever considered going to live in foreign countries?**

I realised it will not be different going to live in foreign countries. And, my children did not want to go to foreign countries. Then, I decided to go back to Myanmar.

**Why did other people not decide to return?**

I have no idea.

**Did you receive supports such as rice and foods as well as transportation when you returned here?**

I am not sure whether we will be provided with food or not, as this is the beginning of our return. But I don't know in the future because our return to here has not been even a month yet.

**You were saying that it had been five years since you returned. Wasn't it?**

That was not an arrangement by the authorities. At that time, I was staying in the farm. Actually, this is our new return which was arranged by the authorities [UN, IOM, Thai and Myanmar]. After I decided to live in the allocated house for refugee returnees, I was given a house to live in.

**Do you have electricity provided?**

No, the electricity is ours [they arranged it]. We were given a house and a piece of land to work

on. We do not have to pay for it.

**You were provided rice by Pu Wa Hkoh, right?**

Yes. He provided a sack of rice.

**What other stuff were you told you'd receive?**

Pu Wah Hkoh cannot provide us as he also has to work for his own [livelihood].

**In the refugee camp, you received rations even though you did not have to work. When you returned here, you don't have enough food even though you are working. Do you like living here compared to the life living in a refugee camp?**

Yes. I do. It is because this is our country. When I lived in a refugee camp, Thailand, we had to be afraid of Thai soldiers.

**You didn't have any other things to be afraid of since you returned here. Is that right?**

Yes. We didn't have any other things to be afraid of after coming back to live here.

**You didn't have to afraid when traveling, right?**

Yes, we didn't have to afraid when we were travelling.

**Were you given land and a house?**

Yes, we were given these [land and house].

**Did you have to buy them?**

No, we didn't. We can live here as long as we want.

**What about education here? Can children access education?**

I have a lot of children. So I cannot afford to pay for all of my children. The school fee for a student is 250 baht.

**How much were school fees for a student when you were in Beh Klaw [refugee camp]?**

My children did not study at school when they were in refugee camp. They attend school since they returned here. I cannot afford to pay school fees for my children.

**Are all your children studying at school?**

Yes, they all are studying at school.

**So school fees you have to pay here are less than school fees you had to pay in the camp, right?**

Yes. Here, the school asked 200 baht a year for kindergarten and primary school students. The school asked middle school students 300 baht a year. Sometimes, I could not pay the complete amount of school fees. But the teachers understand us and ask us to pay it later. That's why my children can study in school.

**What is the healthcare condition living here? Is there any healthcare for pregnant women and mental health issues?**

We have healthcare for pregnant women. We have a hospital here, too.

**Do you have to pay when you go to the hospital?**

No. we do not have to pay.

**Living here, do you have to be afraid of landmines?**

No, we do not have to. We will be informed if there are landmines. Sometimes we go to a distant place in the forest. But we did not see any landmines poster or hazard signs. However, sometimes there were UXO explosions.

**Did people get injured by UXO explosions?**

No, people did not get injured. The explosion happened when we burned to clear our land for farming. But we did not stay on our land when we burned it.

**Living here, do you have fear for your safety?**

No, I can live independently here.

**Are there militaries coming to base themselves here?**

No.

**Does farming alone cover your livelihood within a year?**

Sometimes it is enough and sometimes not. Sometimes we get 100 baskets of rice within a year. Sometimes in a year, we got less than 100 baskets of rice.

**Do you grow only rice?**

I grow rice and plant corn in my farm.

**Returning to live here, were you guys given Myanmar ID cards?**

We haven't got Myanmar ID cards yet. On our return at Myawaddy, we were told that we would get Myanmar ID cards when the Myanmar government agencies process ID cards in the villages.

**Are they going to process the Myanmar ID card in your village?**

Yes, they are.

**Who are they?**

I am not sure who exactly they are. They sent us in our return to here. They are Burmese from the government agency. They told us that they would give us the Myanmar ID card.

**When did they tell you?**

I arrived here on [February] 28<sup>th</sup> 2019. It's been five days by now that they told us they'd give the Myanmar ID cards.

**Do you have to worry for your daughter when she travels in this area?**

No, I do not have to worry.

**Are there healthcare services for disabled people?**

I have no idea because I do not see disabled people in the area where I am living now.

**Were you told that you would receive support as a returnee?**

We were not. One thing they told us is they will visit us in six months.

**Are they the ones who sent you to Mae La Way Ler Moo?**

Yes. They are. They also asked us to contact them when we have difficulties.

**Who sent you on your way from Myawaddy to Mae La Way Ler Moo?**

They were Karen people who work in the process of repatriation.

**How do you feel coming back to live in your place?**

I enjoy it as I can work and travel independently. It is a lot better than living in a refugee camp. When I was in the camp, I was arrested because of going out of the camp to work as a day labourer. Therefore, I had to do voluntary work for a week at the Thai military compound.

**Is travelling restricted here?**

Living here, we can travel for work.

**What is beneficial for you coming back to live here?**

Coming back to live here, our children can study in the school.

**Were you discriminated against by the local people since you returned?**

No.

**Do you know what caused you to become a refugee?**

I became a refugee because of the fighting.

**What message would you like to deliver to refugees who decided to return and who don't want to return?**

I would like to tell them it is much better living in our country, such as working.

**Can I use the information you have provided to me?**

Yes, you can if you want.

**Is there anything else would you like us to know?**

There are still refugee families that will return to Mae La Way Ler Moo.

**Source #25**

Source doc #	Source #25
Log #	19-30-A5-11
Interview date	March 2 <sup>nd</sup> 2019
Location	Noh T'Kaw (Kyainseikgyi) Township, Dooplaya District
Full Text	
<p><b>Dooplaya District interview   Naw At--- (female), Lay Hpa Htaw repatriation site, Noh T'Kaw Township</b></p> <p><b>Status:</b> UNHCR-repatriated refugee  <b>Temporary shelter or IDP camp:</b> Thaw Pa (Ban Don Yang) refugee camp  <b>Return date(s):</b> February 2019</p> <p><b>Ethnicity:</b> Karen  <b>Religion:</b> Christian  <b>Marital status:</b> Married  <b>Position:</b> Villager</p>	

**What is the village tract name?**

It is Lay Hpa Htaw village tract and 300 households in this area.

**How many family members do you have?**

There are now only three of us who came back from the camp and our children are still in the refugee camp.

**They are in the refugee camp.**

Yes, they are in Thaw Pa [Ban Don Yang] refugee camp.

**When did you leave from Thaw Pa? Which date?**

We left Thaw Pa on 21st [of February 2019].

**When did you arrive here?**

We arrived here on the 23rd.

**Did you get to come back well on the way? Were there any problems?**

We could come back from Thaw Pa to Mae Sot well with the arrangement of the Thai authorities and the UN. We could ride the car well too. We arrived to Myawaddy and we got to ride the car at 10 PM at night to come back here. If we have to compare the transportation on Thai side with Myanmar, it was different. The Thai authorities prepared the van for us so we could ride comfortably. But when we arrived to Myanmar side, we had to ride the big truck which carries charcoal and it was very crowded with many people. The driver and his fellows stopped often along the way. We did not understand why, and we thought they were sleepy and they were falling asleep on the way. It was cold on the way so we got a cold.

**How many years did you stay in Thaw Pa refugee camp?**

I think over 20 years.

**Why did you come back here?**

Our aim is for our livelihood and the living area. It doesn't mean we cannot live there, we can stay there. But we have to think for our future to be able to work on fields or plantation. We did not have our own land there so we decided to come back here. We are going to start our lives on plantation and fields.

**How do you call this area?**

It is called Lay Hpa Htaw repatriation site.

**Which towns is it close to?**

It is close to Three Pagodas [Payathonzu] town and also close to Kyainseikgyi and Than Phyu Zayat towns.

**Did any organization arrange for your return?**

Yes, UNHCR arranged for us before we came back.

**Did they support anything?**

Adults above 18 years old got 9300 baht and children under 18 got 7500 baht. But there were no children coming with us in my family.

**Did the Myanmar government support or provide anything on Myanmar side?**

The Myanmar government gave 300,000 kyats for each family plus another 100,000 kyats from

the donation. It will be more than 400.000 kyats including the transportation costs. I don't remember the exact amount we spent.

**Did the Myanmar government go and have a meeting in the refugee camp with the leaders there for the refugees to come back and to support them?**

I don't hear anything about the support. But they said don't worry; you will get to return soon. However, they arranged for those who do not have household registration documents and ID cards and the census documents. They [said they] would arrange for that.

**Are there any problems you face here?**

There are not big problems here. But as we are new to this area, it is hard for us to work for our livelihood a little bit.

**What are the problems?**

The recent problems are the water problem as we cannot access to get much water yet, and it is hard for us to find vegetables as we are not familiar with the area yet.

**Do you think it is safe here?**

I don't know about the safety as there is no threat or intimidation for us for coming back and staying here.

**How about [authorities] meeting or supporting you?**

I don't know. We got the news that they will come here so we are not allowed to go anywhere yet. They will come to do the household registration documents, ID cards and census documents. But we have not seen them come yet. We came back here many days ago already.

**Is there a clinic here?**

There is no clinic in this area yet but the leaders here have arranged a clinic for the villagers to get access to healthcare. But there are not enough medicines yet.

**How about the education situation?**

There is an arrangement for building a school but not in this area yet.

**So those are the problems for people here.**

Yes, those are for our children to be able to go to school and patients to get treatment.

**Are there any human rights violations you face?**

I think as we are new and recently moved here so there are no violations yet. But we are not sure in the future.

**Do you want to add more which I did not ask you?**

As I mentioned our children do not have the legal documents or recommendation letters. But we heard they will arrange for it. However, we do not see anything yet. We hope there will be no one who will threaten us or intimidate us for living here. We hope to get those legal documents from our leaders and [that they will] arrange them for us.

**Do you want to ask for any help?**

We want our leaders to arrange [the legal documents] for us as soon as possible. Then we need land to work on for our livelihood, as people who came back here do not have their own land.

**Will you allow us to use this information?**



Yes, you can.

**Thank you so much for giving us time to interview you.**

Yes, thank you.

**Source #26**

Source doc #	Source #26
Log #	20-1-A2-I1
Interview date	November 28 <sup>th</sup> 2019
Location	Kaw T'Ree (Kawkareik) Township, Dooplaya District

**Full Text**

**Dooplaya District interview | Naw Ac--- (female), Kaw La repatriation site, Hsue K'Lee village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township**

**Status:** Refugee (spontaneous return)

**Temporary shelter or IDP camp:** Klaw Htaw (not a camp)

**Ethnicity:** Karen

**Religion:** Christian

**Marital status:** Married

**Position:** Villager

**Where did you live before you flee?**

I lived in Ew---village.

**When did you leave your village?**

I left it in 1997.

**Where did you displace to?**

I fled to Klaw Htaw village [Phoppbra, Thailand].

**How long had you lived there?**

I lived there for 17 years.

**Why did you return to here [Kaw La village]?**

I do not have land there [in Klaw Htaw village] and we were asked to move so I had to return here.

**Did it because you don't have land or you are not their [Thai] citizen?**

It was because I do not have land and I'm not their [Thai] citizen either.

**Do you have land for your housing here?**

I have just a small area of land for one house only.

**Did you have to build your own house or is there a constructed house for you?**

I had to build my house by myself.

**Were there any problems you faced while you were building your house?**

Yes, there were a lot of problems for me.

**How did you overcome those difficulties?**

I just had to ask for help from other people to build my small house.

**Does your current house have enough space for your family members? Is your house construction strong and safe? For example, does your house protect you from wet?**

Yes, because we built it firmly.

**Is this village your original village or a new settlement place for you?**

This is a new village which is a little far from Ew--- [my village of origin].

**Did local community leaders invite you to return and have work in this area?**

No, I just returned by myself.

**Did anyone help you to return here?**

No, nobody helped me on my return. I returned here by myself.

**Were you and your family separated during your displacement?**

We displaced and then returned [together], so we did not separately live far from each other for years.

**Can your family reunite now?**

Yes, we can live together now.

**Did other families come back with you?**

There were several families who returned [with me].

**What was the root cause of you and other families' displacement?**

We were all displaced because of P'Yaw [Myanmar military] and we had to flee from them [P'Yaw]. We lost all of our lands, but we also do not have land [in Thailand] so we have to return to Karen State.

**How many households returned to Kaw Lah?**

There are around three families [returned to Kaw Lah].

**Did you receive any support for your return?**

No, we did not receive anything.

**I will interview you about the security situation. How many sorts of armed group are in your community?**

There are three types of armed group that are now in my community. They are Democratic Karen Benevolent Army [DKBA], Karen National Liberation Army [KNLA] [and Tatmadaw].

**What is the army camp based nearby your village?**

It is the Tatmadaw army camp which is close [to our village].

**Since you have been returning here, were you intimidated or threatened by any authorities or armed actors?**

No, they do not. However, we feel we are not safe, so we worry that we will have to flee from

the P'Yaw ["Burmans", meaning Tatmadaw] again.

**Are there any Unexploded Ordnance [UXOs] left around your return site?**

I do not know. Maybe there will be some in the bushes.

**Have you known of anyone injured by landmine explosion?**

No.

**Can you travel freely without any intimidation? For example, are you checked [stopped] by the checkpoint.**

There is a DKBA checkpoint, but they do not bother us.

**Are there any other difficulties such as natural disasters and others?**

No, there are not because we live in a hill village.

**Did you receive any support such as financial support to restart your livelihoods? For example, community loan money?**

No.

**Do you own any properties such as land for farming?**

I do not have any property [farmland]. I have only a small [piece of] land for my house.

**Did you buy the land to build your house?**

No, I received it for free.

**How do you access water?**

I access it by water pipe.

**Is the water clean?**

Yes, it is.

**Is the water supply enough for every household?**

No, it is not yet.

**Do you have basic sanitation like a toilet?**

Yes, we have a toilet.

**How do you dispose of your trash? For example, do you have a specific place to throw trash?**

Yes, we have. We do not throw the waste wherever we want.

**Do you receive electricity? If yes, how do you receive it?**

We access it by solar panel which was distributed by Japan [Nippon Foundation].

**Can you cook by electricity?**

No, we cannot. It is enough for light only.

**Have you ever felt like your decision is wrong to return to this return site?**

No, I have not because I have no land in other places to live either.

**Do you have enough warm clothes? For example, blanket, mat, pillows and others.**

Yes, I have.

**Can you access healthcare services?**

Yes, we can.

**Who are providing it?**

Some of them are from Umphang [Thailand] and some might be from Kaw Thoo Lei [KNU health department].

**Is it easy and close to go to the clinic?**

Yes, it is easy and close as well.

**So healthcare services are provided by the cooperation of KNU, Myanmar government and [NGOs] health workers team from Thailand side, correct?**

Yes.

**Do you think medical supplies are sufficient?**

It is not completely enough.

**Where do you access healthcare services when you get major illnesses?**

We have to go to Umphang hospital [in Thailand].

**Is it easy to go?**

It is hard a little bit.

**Do [local] health workers go with you?**

Yes, they do.

**Do you have a primary school in your community?**

Yes, we have it.

**Can all children go to school properly?**

Yes, they are.

**Where does the school receive support?**

I think the support is from Mae Sod.

**It is Karen Education and Culture Department [KECD], correct?**

Yes, it is.

**How far is the school?**

It is close and easy to go.

**Are there any barriers for the children to go to school?**

No, there are not.

**We will go to the livelihoods section. How many of your family members work for your family livelihoods?**

There are three [of us].

**Do you get money for your family daily livelihoods?**

Yes, it is enough for our daily food.

**What is the easiest work to do in your community for you?**

To sell products [from the forest such as vegetables] to the shop is the easiest work for me because it is the only thing I can do. However, sometimes it is also hard to do it.

**Do your families or other family members have to leave their children to work as daily labourers in other places?**

Yes, some of them have to do that [leave their children for work].

**Is it because they do not have jobs in your community?**

Yes, it is because we do not have jobs.

**Did you receive any vocational training when you were displaced [in Thailand]?**

Yes, I did. I learned bakery [training].

**So you know how to bake and apply it for your family income when there is a possibility in the community, right?**

Yes, I can bake.

**Do you have inherited land in your village of origin?**

No, I do not have it any more because all of my lands were confiscated by P'Yaw [Tatmadaw or Myanmar government].

**Didn't they return it to you yet?**

No, it is not possible [to get it back from the Tatmadaw or Myanmar government].

**Have you received any compensation?**

No, they did not give me anything.

**Where is the land? Which township?**

It is in Ew--- village [village of origin], the land where I used to have my house. It is in Kaw T'Ree Township.

**We will go on to talk about the documents. Do you have any document after you returned? For example, National Identification Card, household registration, birth certificate.**

Yes, I have.

**Was it easy to get those documents? For example, did you have to pay money in order to get it and others.**

[Y]es, I had to pay money. It was around 30,000 kyats for each [in order to get the documents].

**I will ask you about the 2020 election, do you know anything about it?**

No, I do not know anything.

**Do you think the government will allow you to vote?**

They might ask us [to vote].

**So you think that you have the right to vote, right?**

Yes.

**Do they [parties] come to your community and explain about the election?**

Yes, they do. However, many villagers do not seem enthusiastic to cooperate with them [the political parties] even when they come to the community and explain about the election.

**Do you mean the villagers or the village leaders?**

I mean the villagers. On the other hand, the village leaders still have to talk with them [parties] [...].

**If you face difficulties or incidents, which justice systems and authorities do you approach?**

The Karen National Union [KNU].

**Can the KNU provide you to address the cases satisfactorily?**

Yes, [KNU] can.

**I will ask you about your perspective and your requirement. What is the main requirement in your community [return site]?**

We need basic support in order to restart our work for family livelihoods.

**To whom do you want to report this need?**

I do not know where to report it to.

**How is the situation in your return site? Is it better than where you used to be displaced?**

I didn't mainly consider the security situation [in deciding to return] even though it is an insecure environment and I always have concerns for my security in my mind. It is because I didn't have land so I had to return.

**Do you think you'll probably have to flee again?**

Yes, I do. That's what I'm assuming myself.

**What do you think the KNU, Myanmar government, CBOs/CSOs and other NGOs should do to improve the situation?**

They should build peace. If they can help us by bringing peace for us, it will be helpful because we are always in fear. It will be better if the foreign countries help us.

**Do you regret your return to Myanmar?**

No, I do not. Because it is my country so I love to live in it.

**Do you want to report anything else?**

I would like to request for food supply for our livelihoods. It will be helpful for us.

**Thank you very much for giving me your time for this interview. Can we [KHRG] use your information for publication?**

Yes, you can.

**Source #27**

Source doc #	Source #27
Log #	19-31-A6-11

Interview date	March 2 <sup>nd</sup> 2019
Location	Noh T'Kaw (Kyainseikgyi) Township, Dooplaya District
Full Text	

**Dooplaya District interview | Saw Ex--- (male), Lay Hpa Htaw repatriation site, Noh T'Kaw Township**

**Status:** UNHCR-repatriated refugee  
**Temporary shelter or IDP camp:** Thaw Pa (Ban Don Yang) camp

**Ethnicity:** Karen  
**Religion:** Christian  
**Marital status:** Married  
**Position:** Villager

**How many children do you have?**  
I have six children in my family; four sons and two daughters.

**Are you originally from here or just returned here?**  
I am newly returned here.

**Where did you live before you came back here?**  
I live in Ey--- village, Yay Township.

**Did you live in other places before that? You came from Yay Township to live here.**  
No, I lived in Yay Township and went to live in 1997 to Ez--- village because of the conflict. Then the Mon soldiers came to our village and the Tatmadaw soldiers were coming to attack them. Then the Mon soldiers went to another place. The Tatmadaw soldiers did not torture us but they burned down all the houses that had no owners [the homes of those who had fled]. However, the local people were afraid of the Tatmadaw soldiers whenever they saw them. The Tatmadaw soldiers burned down one hospital, one school and houses. There were 29 buildings that were burnt down, I think. But I am not sure because it was a long time ago. Since then we moved to Ban Don Yang refugee camp.

**How many years did you stay in Thaw Pa [Ban Don Yang]?**  
It might be 10 years.

**Did you get to go to a third country?**  
No, we did not get [that opportunity] because we were in the newly registered refugee list.

**You stayed in the camp and now returned to this area. I want to know whether you came back by your own decision or you were forced to return.**  
We came back by our own decision; not by force.

**Did you come back with your own plan or an organization's plan?**  
We came back with the UN plan.

**So we know now that you came back with the UN plan. I want to know, how did you apply and what were you told to do to be able to return?**  
There was no one who told us what to do. We heard the UN tell us about the return but they did not force us to return. They said if anyone would like to return, they will arrange for us to be able

to return to the right place. The KNU also had a repatriation plan so we came back to register to take one house. Then the UN planned for us to be able to return step by step. We left from Thaw Pa to San Kla [Sangklaburi] and to Mae Sot but we don't know the places [names] on the way. We slept in Mae Sot one night and came back to Myawaddy Town on the next morning. Then, we came back from Myawaddy to Seikgyi Town. But we could not sleep because we did not have much time to sleep. It was almost morning when we arrived to Seikgyi. The UN transportation plan in Thai side was very comfortable and well organized. But the transportation in Myanmar side was difficult for us and people had to eat unfresh [not fresh] foods. I did not eat because I got car sick and could not eat. In the morning, we got to eat [breakfast] and after eating we came back here.

**You were eager to come back to stay in Myanmar. Did you face any problems after you came back here?**

We are newly returned here so we do not know how to tell yet. We do not know the situation about the Tatmadaw soldiers yet. But we are happy to be able to return to our country. We do not know what will happen in the future.

**Are you satisfied since you returned here?**

Yes, we do not have concerns yet. We also have our ethnic armed groups around this area and we do not see any conflict yet.

**How did the UN and the Myanmar government help you or support you when you came back?**

There are eight members in my family but only my wife, one of my daughters and two of my grandchildren and I stayed in the camp. In the beginning all of my daughters stayed with us in the camp. But my daughter went to work outside of the camp for two years because of our family livelihood situation problem. She came back to get a VE card [identification card attesting that one is a refugee] that is issued in the camp but she became a newly registered [refugee] in camp. However, she did not get a VE card. Only my wife and I and one of granddaughters got the VE cards. The UN only sent people who had VE cards so only three people in my family could come back legally. Therefore, my daughter and my grandchild came back with their own plan by themselves.

**Are there any things that the UN supported you with?**

Yes, the UN gave 9300 baht to adults above 18 years old and 7500 baht to children under 18 years old.

**How about the Myanmar government, what did they provide you?**

We got support twice but I did not know who gave it because I got car sick and I could not concentrate on anything. We got food such as Mama [instant noodles] and some clothes. The UN from Myanmar side picked us up in Mae Sot. They are not Burmese but Karen. We did not know the organization and people who helped us in Myanmar side. We got some other things as well.

**How about money?**

We got money twice and it might be over 400,000 kyats.

**Did they only give it to you when you came back? Did they tell you how many months they are going to take care of you when you are here?**

They said that money is for six months. But it is not enough for us to use for six months.



**Do you think there will be problems and consequences for you for coming back here? What kinds of problems will there be?**

Yes, there will be problems. Since we came back here we will have to eat and we have to work but we do not have land. There is a clinic but it takes some time to get there. We can still go when we get sick. If the disease is serious, the hospital will plan step by step to refer to the other hospitals. However, the only matter is money. When we have money in our hands, it will be better for us when anything happens. The money cannot last long and it can be gone in a short time quickly. When we do not have money, we just have to work as much as we can to be able to eat. If possible and if the leaders plan to give us land for us to work on for our livelihood, it will be good. We will be able to work for our livelihood I think.

**Did you hear the situation about the support, security and care before you came back?**

We don't know and understand the situation yet. We have not seen anything happen yet either. If something changes in the future, we will have to plan our best. As one Burmese proverb said, how you dance depends on the theatre [live and act depending on the situation]. I think we can go somewhere else if anything happens, even if it is not my hometown. My hometown is in Irrawaddy Region.

**[So the problems are] The healthcare situation, and there is no land to work on for a livelihood. The money is provided for six months but it is not enough. So what are your concerns for the future? How do you want the leaders to help or plan things for you?**

We are afraid to ask anything from the leaders.

**Yes, but just report about your problems on the ground that you are facing. What do you want to report to the leaders in this side, not to UN?**

I don't know what to say now.

**As you mentioned, you said you need the land to work on. Is there a school here?**

No, there is no school yet. But the camp leader told us before we came back here, the school will be built here. If the school has not been built yet this year, we will have to send our children to Lay Wah Plo School. There is a primary school near this area but the Middle School is in Lay Wah Plo. My granddaughter has to attend the middle school so I have to send her there.

**How about the transportation?**

Yes, there will be a transportation problem as well.

**What are your concerns for the future?**

Yes, we have. If our money is gone within six months, there will be problems for us. We have our leaders [KNU] here and this is the only close organization that we know. But we do not know where to report and ask for help. I think we will still have ways to eat and work for our livelihood.

**I have asked you many questions as well. Do you want to add more things that I haven't ask you?**

I don't have.

**Will you give me the permission to use this information?**

Yes, you can.

**Thank you so much for your time and providing the information to me.**

Thank you so much.

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**Source #28**

Source doc #	Source #28
Log #	19-31-A7-11
Interview date	March 2 <sup>nd</sup> 2019
Location	Noh T'Kaw (Kyainseikgyi) Township, Dooplaya District
Full Text	

**Dooplaya District interview | Nan Fa--- (female), Lay Hpa Htaw repatriation site, Noh T'Kaw Township**

**Ethnicity:** Karen

**Religion:** Buddhist

**Marital status:** Married

**Position:** Repatriation committee member

**What responsibility do you take in this area?**

I am a member of a committee for repatriation and I have to take care of the returnees. I have to give them the houses. They have to bring their household registration documents and the ID cards when they take the houses in the repatriation site. I have to take the responsibility because of the direction from the Township. I am still taking this responsibility until now.

**How many years ago these houses were built?**

It was since 2016.

**Were you taking responsibility since 2016?**

Yes, I took the responsibility since 2016 when they started levelling the lands and building the houses in May. I was pregnant that time.

**How many households in this area?**

There are 300 houses in this area.

**Have all the houses been taken?**

Yes, all these houses were taken. Some people returned the houses but there are new people who came and took them.

**Do all the people who took the houses come and live in those houses?**

No, not yet. The refugees from Noh Poe and Ban Don Yang came and took the houses but they had to register to UN and KRC to return. If they are allowed to come back, then they can come back. But before that, they came back and started cleaning the houses.

**What kinds of people are allowed to take these houses? Are there IDPs, or who can take these houses?**

These houses are for IDPs and people who had to flee from the fighting and people who do not have land and houses. Some people had to flee because of the fighting and they do not have land and houses so they have to stay in other people' farms. If they bring their household registration documents and ID cards, we arrange the houses for them.

**Which refugee camps came back and live here the most?**

In my record, there are only people from Noh Poe and Ban Don Yang refugee camps.

**How long since they [refugees from Noh Poe and Ban Don Yang refugee camps] returned here?**

They returned on February 23rd 2019.

**How many households returned?**

In the first round, there were 13 households; one from Noh Poe and 12 from Ban Don Yang refugee camps. There was another one household from Fb---village. I arranged one house for them because they had no house to live in. They arrived here yesterday and on February 28th 2019, we had a meeting with them. All I know is that there are only 14 households who returned here at the moment. But I don't know the population because the population record was taken by the leaders.

**What are the problems that the returnees had to face on the way back here with the transportation arrangement and the support? You can tell me any kind of situations they faced.**

Some people said it was too hot because they had to wait for the car a long time. And the food was not good as well. However, they got to come back well and comfortably on the Thai side until the border. But they had transportation problems on Myanmar side. Some people had to face problems because they have small children. It was hot on the way because the car was not vans [like on the Thai side]. It was a big truck without a roof. If they got sick on the way back here and when they arrived here, we would not be able to send them to the clinic or hospital because we do not have anything. Therefore, it was hard for them. They faced sleeping problems as well, as the beds were not arranged and organized well [this truck trip took place overnight]. They were afraid to go and find food when they arrived in Kya In town because they worried that by the time they got to find food, if the car left it would leave them behind. Therefore, they got to eat late and even the food was not fresh. The armed group from that area said that they do not have money to prepare food for the returnees so they asked the local people to donate money for food. The local people told me that, but I am not sure whether it is true or not. So we have to make sure of it. I told them, if you'd told me this before I would tell them [to prepare food without needing contributions]. They just sent them as far as the start of the 300 houses area [repatriation site; if your house was at the other end this would be a long hike with all your children and belongings]. If the way is not fine, they can arrange the nearest way and better way for the returnees. Now half of their way was good and half was not good. If we could arrange better transportation for them they will feel better and more comfortable. They told me that they were checked on the way but they did not know whether by DKBA or which armed group. It was dark so they did not know it.

**How did they check?**

They were stopped on the way. I think you better ask Thara Fc--- because he was coming along with the other returnees as well. He will know more than me.

**As you are the one who has lived here a long time, you know the situation of this area well. Do the returnees get access to water?**

Yes, we started accessing water already but some people get water and some people don't. The pipes are not well organized so the water cannot flow through the pipes well. So they need to fix the pipes. We can access water because I can wash the clothes once in the morning and once in the evening as well. But because of the new ways of accessing water, the water cannot flow well yet. The local leaders here will rearrange and fix the pipes for the water to flow well.

They will make the air blocking the pipes clear out. Then it will be fine for the water flow. We arranged to store the water in the six big water tanks.

**How about the security situation? Can you please share your experience of it?**

The security situation is good but there are DKBA soldiers near Paya Taung and forestry staff close to this area. There are some Tatmadaw soldiers as well.

**Are there any disruptions in this area from those armed groups?**

There was one time the soldiers came and checked. I contacted with Fd--- from the Township and he handled it and there is no problem now.

**How about the education system? There are more people now in the area and there are children who have to go to school. Is there any plan to build a school in this area?**

There is a primary school in between Deh Ther Pler and 300 houses [repatriation site]. It is not very far but it is the only primary school. The students from middle school have to go to Lay Wah Plo village or Three Pagodas Town. There is a problem to build a school. But we have a plan to build a middle school if there is any good chance and support for us. If we can build a school, we will have to find the support for the teachers as well. We will also have to prepare the houses for them. We had a plan to let the teachers stay in the guest houses and we had planned two houses. If they do not stay yet, we can let the other guests stay when they come to this area. We have to arrange depending on how many middle school students are in this area, including the students from the camp who had returned. Whether we have to build a big or small school depends on the numbers of the students. Also what number of teachers we should hire. So we need to talk about that and find ways for those. It will take some time. We already have a primary school but we need more qualified teachers for the primary school.

**How about the healthcare? Is there a clinic in this area?**

There is no clinic here in 300 houses area yet. But there is a hospital in Lay Hpa Htaung [Zee Pin] and there is one hospital at Lay Wah Plo. We go to those areas when we are sick. Some people go to a UN hospital in Lay Wah Plo as well. For those do not have car or motorbikes or bicycles and cannot go to the hospital, there are some health workers in this area. Some people who have money, they even go to Three Pagodas hospital. Some do not go to the hospitals near here. We just go to the hospitals around here because we do not have money.

**Do you think there should be a clinic in this area?**

In my opinion, there should be a hospital and schools, if possible there should be primary school, middle school and high school and even nursery school. There are many children who have to go to nursery school but there is no nursery school. We do not know when the school will be built as well. Some parents ask, will the nursery school be built in this area. I have to tell them it will be built but it hasn't been built yet. I told them, let your children go with their brothers or sisters to the primary school before the nursery school is built. There is some difficulty for them if their younger children go to primary school as well. Therefore, it will be good if there is a nursery school built in this coming rainy season. We will also need the teachers as well. There are many needed things.

**Have you reported these problems to the higher leaders?**

Yes, we always report about it [to our leaders]. We report [that they should] build a hospital, nursery school and school in this area in any meeting held here. I think leaders should investigate the local situation [but they do not]. For example, just count one child from each family, there are 299 houses here. One was destroyed by a tree falling on it so we do not rebuild it anymore because people are afraid to stay there. There are almost 200 children because

more people are coming back to stay here.

**Do you think there are more returnees or people from the areas around here who do not have land and houses?**

It is not much different. There are almost the same numbers.

**I have asked you many things already. Do you want to add anything that I haven't asked you?**

I would like to say for anyone who will come back and stay here, the responsible leaders should come along with them. Because some people know the places and are used to travel, but there might be some people who never travel and don't know the places. When they are coming back on the way, they do not know where to find food and who to contact. Therefore, they do not get to eat and get hungry on the way. We do not want to hear those kinds of problems. We want them to come back safely and comfortably. They should take the contact person as well. I did not know when they arrived in Kyar In and when the leaders asked me I could not answer. We make sure of everything such as their household registration documents that are provided by the immigration and population office, their names and themselves, and how many people with their genders. If we do not know where they come back, we won't be able to answer if any questions come up. The leaders should visit the returnees sometimes as well. If anything is needed, they can come anytime. I welcome them all. Sometimes when I see the leaders travel through this area, I told them to visit us as well. I told them if you do not come then should I burn this office? Because no leaders come and visit.

**What do you want to suggest to our organization?**

I think nothing special because I see you go around these areas. It is better to travel now because it was difficult to travel in the past, you have to climb the mountains. I also heard the information from Lay Kay Kaw repatriation site.

**Thank you so much for providing the information for us. Will you allow us to use this information?**

You can use it and let the people hear who want to listen to this information. If they are not satisfied with listening they can come and see the situation on the ground. Some people can visualize the situation when they listen. They can come if they want. They will see the situation here and how people are living here.

**Thank you so much for your information.**

Thank you.

**Source #29**

Source doc #	Source # 29
Log #	20-17-A2-11
Interview date	January 26 <sup>th</sup> 2020
Location	Ta Naw Th'Ree (Tanintharyi) Township, Mergui-Tavoy District
Full Text	

**Mergui-Tavoy District Interview | Saw O--- (male), Ap--- repatriation site, T'Keh Area, Ta Naw Th'Ree Township**

**Status:** IDP returnee

**Temporary shelter or IDP camp:** Ap--- Displacement Site

**Return date(s):** Since 1997 (Currently living in the site)

**Ethnicity:** Karen

**Religion:** Christian

**Marital status:** Married (Four children)

**Occupation:** Farmer

**Position:** Chairperson

**I would like to interview you about your experiences in displacement. Firstly, may I ask you about your personal information and the village situation? How do villagers here secure their livelihoods?**

We work on hill farming.

**How long have you been here?**

I have been here since 1997.

**Why did you displace to this place? Do you refer to this as a village or just a jungle area?**

This is just a displacement site in the jungle. We just displaced to here for hiding.

**How is the current situation going?**

Since the situation is improved now, we can organise [gather] together more. We could build a worship place and improve our living condition. It is gradually improving like this.

**When did other people displace to here?**

You have to ask them individually because I also do not know all of their arrival dates. When I first arrived here, there were only four families. I can't find all of them anymore. I tried to organize [gather] displaced people whenever I could reach them so that we can stay closer as a group.

**Why did you displace here?**

I used to work as KNLA soldier during the conflict period. The village head did not want us to enter or stay in the village because the Tatmadaw already found [recorded] our names. We were also afraid of the Tatmadaw, so we had to displace.

**Did the Tatmadaw try to arrest you?**

Yes, when I served as a KNLA soldier, I came back to the village just to take a rest at home. But the Tatmadaw found out their enemies were in the village, so we dared not stay [in the village] anymore. Then, we had to flee and displace ourselves. If we kept staying in the village, they would arrest us for sure. We could not imagine how would we be treated if the Tatmadaw arrested us.

**Do you still remember the unit number of the Tatmadaw group that tried to arrest you?**

I cannot remember their battalion and names anymore. I just knew that they were based in Ha---. We called that Tatmadaw group 'Mah Chauk Tin'.

**How long would it take to go to Ha--- from here?**

It would take a day by walking, but would not take long if we go by motorbike.

**Is 'Mah Chauk Tin' a Light Infantry Battalion [LIB] or IB?**

I do not know about that, we just called their name as everybody called them.

**Were there any challenges while you displaced?**

Yes, there were challenges such as food and accommodation [shortages]. We had to leave our family behind and fled out [of the village]. Later, my wife came and found me here.

**How did you solve all the challenges?**

When I reached here, I met with an Uncle who already arrived before me. I borrowed food and relied on his help. Later, I worked [on a field] by myself and returned what I had borrowed from him.

**Did you receive any humanitarian aid such as financial support and food from any organization?**

We received monetary aid twice and rice once from Pado [KNU government officer] Kloh Moo in Ta Naw Th'Ree Township.

**How much money and rice support did you receive?**

We received 8,000 [kyat] once and 4,000 [kyat] once. I received food such as beans, rice, and oil and we also received mosquito nets and torch lights.

**In which year did you receive the humanitarian aid?**

I do not remember the year very well, but I think it was about in 2005 and once again in 2015.

**Was there any other support provided by other organization?**

I only know this humanitarian aid provided [by KNU] in my area. I do not know about others.

**Was the humanitarian aid provided for every displaced household as a whole or only partial?**

All of the 20 households who displaced here at that time received the aid. Other people did not receive it because they had not arrived yet. They gave it to every household at that time. People just moved here temporarily and then returned [to their village] because this was not a permanent place [as home].

**Did you receive any other support from the KNU or other organization?**

There was no other organization except the KNU.

**Do you face any security risks during your displacement here?**

A company came and consulted [with local leaders] to operate logging business and install the MPT telecommunication cable [tower]. I informed the Township leader [KNU] about this and they responded that "We do not have mandate to prohibit them, it depends on the permission [of authority] from above". That company just stayed here for a week and then they left. Later, Maung La Than group came to the area and they conducted logging business for about four to five years.

**Was there any other threat from the military sides?**

Since 2015, we have not been seeing or hearing any threat.

**How is your livelihoods situation?**

It just goes as usual, in good times and bad times as well. Sometimes, we have got enough rice from the hill farm but sometimes it is not enough.

**What about the healthcare situation?**

We have to go to the nearby village to access healthcare service when we are sick. We used to access healthcare service in Hb--- which is a Burmese village. Starting from 2019, we accessed healthcare services in Hc--- area. Health workers come to the village once a month to monitor the community's health condition and provide treatment as needed.

**In regard to education, how do students continue their studies in another place after graduating from the local school?**

They have to get a school transfer letter after they finish Standard-4 from the village, in order to continue their study in another school. Every Standard-4 student is informed about this and whoever gets a school transfer letter, they can continue their studies.

**Where do most students from Hd---usually continue their studies?**

It depends on the parents' decision; they send their children to different schools such as schools of Hc---, He--- and Hf--- villages.

**Do you have electricity in this village?**

We were provided with solar panels. We did not know where it came from but it was distributed through Hc--- village head.

**Was it provided by NGOs?**

I am not sure but I wonder if this came from the Myanmar government in Tanintharyi Township.

**Did you have to pay for the solar panel?**

It was free distribution. We received a solar panel, five bulbs and a battery per household.

**Did every household receive the same support?**

Yes, all 40 households received the same amount of support.

**Did they bring those materials by themselves to the village?**

They brought it to Hc--- village by themselves.

**How did you know how to install the solar panels? Did the provider provide any knowledge and training?**

One of the community members, Thra Hg---, had learned how to install the solar panels. We watched how he did it and then we could install it by ourselves, so everyone can install it by themselves.

**Do you have adequate clothing and household materials for all of your family members?**

Sometimes, but sometime it is inadequate.

**How has your life before displacement and during displacement differed?**

Being displaced was challenging. We displaced to the forest and sometimes we fled to Hh--- village. When the [KNU] Township leaders learned about it, they reported to relevant authorities in order to grant humanitarian aid for us. Our lives became easier when we received support. Otherwise, it would be so difficult for us to survive.

**Were there other villagers from another place displaced here?**

Most displaced people here are from Hh--- village and Hi--- village.

**You said there are 40 households in this site. Do you know the average population**



**number?**

There used to be 140 + but we have not tracked the population for a while. So we do not know the exact population anymore. I assume it would be around 200 people including children and adults. There were around ten more households that entered after the population tracking.

**Do you have legal documents such as ID cards and household documents?**

Yes, we have it.

**Did the authorities access your community to provide such legal documents?**

No, they did not come to our village. We had to process it in Hc--- village.

**Did you have to pay?**

No, it was free of charge.

**Did every villager receive the ID card?**

Yes, everyone who applied for an ID card received it.

**What about children?**

The ID card is only provided for everyone above 18 years.

**When did the displaced people arrive here?**

Some people arrived before me, so I do not know their arrival dates. I only know arrival dates of those who came after me. In 2000, 20 households arrived to the displacement site. The other 20 just arrived after 2015 and the years after. They did not come at the same time. They arrived one by one.

**I still have a few questions to ask. Do you have an opportunity to be involved in voting in the state election?**

Not many people voted [the last time]. The Myanmar government workers came and made ID [cards] for us and collected the population number in our community. Actually, everyone who has got an ID card from the Myanmar government can participate [in the election] freely but we didn't [participate].

**Do you know which group they voted for; the NLD or the Myanmar government?**

As I know, local people in Hc--- area voted for the Myanmar government.

**Is there any other information you want to share?**

I want to propose some support for the schools. We have already built a school but we need teachers. Currently, we hire local teachers but we have difficulty to pay them. Therefore, we would be very grateful to have teachers provided by the government.

**What about the healthcare situation?**

We have a health worker Daw Hj--- who monitors and provides healthcare service every month. She is Burmese. She offers vaccines for infants, children, pregnant women and medication for sick people. She comes once a month in summer and winter but she does not come to the village in rainy season because of poor roads and flooding.

**Do you have to pick her up and pay for the healthcare service?**

Sometimes she comes by herself but sometimes we have to pick her up. She communicates with us by phone. The treatment is also free of charge. It is not a big deal to pick her up because we want healthcare service.

**Is there any other healthcare service provided for other common sicknesses, whether through government or NGOs?**

In the past, the KNU health department often reached out to us and provided healthcare service. It has been two years that they have not showed up. We do not know if it is because they've moved far away or they don't have time.

**You said you faced challenges in health, education and also transportation because you cannot travel in rainy season. Is that right?**

Yes, that's right.

**Do you want to share any other information?**

I don't think I have more information.

**Well, thank you so much for sharing all this information.**

Of course!

**Would you allow me to take a photo of you and use your information in publication?**

Yes, I am happy for that.

**Source #30**

Source doc #	Source # 30
Log #	20-14-A2-11
Interview date	February 7 <sup>th</sup> 2020
Location	Noh T'Kaw (Kyainseikkyi) Township, Dooplaya District
Full Text	

**Dooplaya District Interview | Saw Hq--- (male), Lay Hpa Htaw repatriation site, Lay Wah Plo village tract, Noh T'Kaw Township**

**Status:** Local Authority

**Temporary shelter or IDP camp:** Lay Hpa Htaw Repatriation Site

**Return date(s):**

**Ethnicity:** Karen

**Religion:** N/A

**Marital status:** N/A

**Occupation:** N/A

**Position:** Local Authority

**What is the name of the refugee return place here?**

It is called "Lay Hpa Htaw".

**When was it [camp] built?**

It was built in 2015 or 2017. I do not remember the exact date.

**Who constructed the house buildings [for refugees and IDPs]?**

The local KNU authorities managed the house construction project and it is funded by Japan Nippon Foundation.

**Where is Lay Hpa Htaw?**

It is located in Lay Wah Plo village tract, Noh T'kaw Township.

**How many refugees returned to Lay Hpa Htaw area?**

There are 300 houses in the area. I think there are hundreds of people here. I do not have a document [number of people]. I do not know exactly how many people.

**Who are the returnees in Lay Hpa Htaw area? Are they from Noh Poe refugee camp or Thaw Pa refugee camp?**

12 households from Thaw Pa refugee camp came back here. There are some people from Noh Poe refugee camp. The rest of the people [from Noh Poe refugee camp] have not come back.

**Did some people [from Noh Poe refugee camp] register their names because they want to return?**

Yes. There are 50 or 60 households who reported that they want to come back. In the past, there were over 100 households who reported that they would like to come back but some of them chose not to return.

**Is that from Noh Poe refugee camp?**

Yes.

**What about Thaw Pa refugee camp? How many people from Thaw Pa refugee camp reported that they would like to return?**

As far as I know, there are 30 or 40 households from Thaw Pa refugee camp who reported that they would like to return but only 12 households came back to Burma.

**What about other ethnic groups? Do they return?**

I do not know how to deal with that. In the past, when Tharamu Hk--- managed the camp, she accepted people [refugees] who are mixed ethnicities. For example, if a husband is Karen and his wife is Burman, Mon and Shan, she accepted that kind of mixed ethnicity in the camp. Now our camp secretary accepts everyone [regardless of ethnicity or mixed ethnicity]. There are only a few people who are mixed ethnicity in some households.

We also have some issues regarding houses [for refugees]. When those two brothers HI--- and Hm--- went to meet with camp leaders from Noh Poe refugee camp and Ban Don Yang refugee camp, they discussed about the situation that people do not go back to stay in houses [in Lay Hpa Htaw] because houses are already built [for refugees; some people have been assigned houses but then return to the camp or elsewhere]. They said they will confiscate the houses if people [refugees] do not go back to live there. Then, they will give these houses to other people. That is why we should carefully interview people who really want to return. We should check their documents [prove that they are refugees]. Then, we can accept them to stay in the resettlement site. Therefore, the village head from Lay Hpa Htaw village assigned a security officer, village secretary and justice staff to interview refugees. Then, we have to let him know who is going to return.

Later, Lay Hpa Htaw village head was busy with managing food for people because they were going to celebrate Karen New Year. That is why he was assigned to manage food for the people who come to the event. He was responsible for managing food service the whole month.

**What is the name of the village head?**

His name is Hn---. He said, "If justice grandfather [refers to the interviewee] accepts the people who come back to stay, I also will accept what he accepts". Later, when the village secretary managed the people [who will return], he [village head] gave houses to everyone who asked for a house to live without informing me and the security officer. He just let everyone stay [regardless of who they are]. I noticed one house. They have cars at their house. I have seen that they changed to use five different cars on different days but they just claimed that they only have one car in their house. They also have a bus.

When he [village head] distributed houses to the people, they asked money from people. In the beginning, I did not know about this. One of the Noh Poe refugees wanted to register his name in order to stay [in Lay Hpa Htaw area]. On December 22 [2019], he called me to go with him [to register his name]. His name was put in the list of the three hundred house project. Then, he had to pay 500 Baht. The reason to ask money is that 250 Baht will be used for the cost of reservoir construction [because they do not have enough water]. The other 250 Baht will be used for village fundraising. However, I did not say anything about whether or not they should give money. Some people who have money gave more than 1,000 Baht. There is a man called Saw Ho--- in this village. He gave 2500 Baht because he has money. However, I did not say anything. I just documented the information about it. As I documented, there are four houses in section (6). This section (6) used to be called section (2). There is a house in Section (1). The total is five houses. I did not document information from Section (3). The people from those five houses gave money. Some people gave 500 Baht. Some people gave more than 1000 Baht. Some people gave more than 2000 Baht. [According to what he said], the reason to ask money is to pay the cost for the construction of a reservoir. However, it is not the right way to do this kind of thing because he [a village secretary] did not let anybody know. Later, he just told the village head about his plan. The village head told him, "Yes. You can collect money if you want to collect but I cannot agree with you if you collect money for village fundraising".

**Did the village secretary tell the village head like that?**

Yes.

**What is the name of the village secretary?**

His name is Hp---. On November 1<sup>st</sup> 2019, we held a village meeting. In the meeting, I reported everything about this situation [asking money]. The way he is doing now can negatively affect our leaders' honour and generosity because our leaders [KNU] have to meet with Myanmar government one time every month or every other month to discuss the ground situation. If Myanmar government found out that this kind of thing [asking money] happened on the ground, our leaders would be ashamed in front of Myanmar government staff. That is why I raised this issue in the meeting. After I told the case to the villagers, I raised my opinion that I wanted to expel the village secretary from the village committee. Till now, I do not recognize him [Hp---] as a village secretary. I do not listen to what he is saying. Since the day I talked about what I wanted to do in the meeting, he did not speak to me anymore. In the past, when I solved the problems in the village, I could not manage the cases well because he tried to disturb me when I was handling the issues. Later, I could manage the cases well [as he does not speak to me anymore]. [In that meeting], I also told everyone that I wanted to leave from the committee. I cannot follow what he is doing because I feel ashamed in front of villagers. I feel ashamed because it damages our leaders' honour. But the village head told me, "Justice grandfather, you cannot leave from the committee. Even if you want to leave, we the village committee do not agree with you." Then, I did not leave.

However, I told them [the committee] that I would have to go back to [refugee camp] for the checklist process [refugees are counted regularly to plan food and items distribution]. I would be busy so I told them I will come back on February 10<sup>th</sup> [2020] but I came back [to village] just a few days ago as I had to show the people where they are going to dig the ground for the reservoir. However, I reported everything that I know. I want our leaders to expel those two people from the committee [village secretary and village head]. The village head also made a mistake. I would like to tell you about him. He sold the land to other people.

**Which land did he sell?**

He sold the houses.

**Which houses did he sell?**

He sold the houses that were built [for displaced people] near his house. He also sold six plots of empty land. In the beginning, I did not know anything about it. In August, when we celebrated Karen Wrist Tying Ceremony in Lay Wah Plo village, the village tract leader told me about this case. I told him, "Just sell it if they want to sell". Actually, I did not know anything. I think they cannot hide what they are doing. He [village head] told the people that he sold the land in the meeting but he did not tell how much money he received from selling land. He said that he bought a motorbike for the village tract secretary and also a motorbike for the brother in law of the village tract leader. For the rest of the money, he used it for building a dining hall. This is what he said. However, the people [villagers] saw that it is not right to do this. If we say honestly, this is the village head's mistake.

Another thing is about the village secretary. He always called meetings. In every meeting, he raised the names of the people who are ethnic armed actors because there are some armed actors who live in the village [Lay Hpa Htaw area]. In one meeting, I talked about this. It does not matter whether they are DKBA or KNU. If they live together with us, we should consider them as civilians. We should not call out their names [as armed actors]. We should hide their names [who they are] because the current situation is not stable. The ceasefire agreement is not a guarantee for us. The fighting can happen at any time. We cannot predict whether the fighting will happen tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. Since then, he does not talk about it anymore. Now he's become a member of a political party.

**Which political party did he join?**

He joined the Kayin Democratic Party [KDP]. He already put the signpost of the logo of his party in front of his house. I would like to know who are the leaders of the party. They are doing politics now as they have a political party. So, it would be better if they can solve our village management issue. My daughter told me, "If you do not report the problems, nobody will come and help you. You should report the problems [in the village]." I would like to report issues but I could not go back to the village until now as I am busy. I told my daughter that I will report the issues when I come back because I have the evidence and documents about issues in my house [in the village]. So, I do not know much how to deal with it now.

**Is he taking the position as village secretary?**

Yes. But he does not work much as village secretary now.

**So, it means he is still a village secretary?**

Yes. Nobody wants him to resign from that position, only me. So, how can he be expelled from the committee?

**What is your position?**

I am working as a member of the village committee [customary justice provider].

**What do people call you in the village?**

My name is Hq--- but everybody calls me justice grandfather because I am working as a justice provider. Actually, it is risky to work at [KNU] organisation. There is not only KNU organization but also other [armed groups] organizations. Therefore, our leaders should do the best for us. There are two people [village secretary and village head] who have disagreements regarding resignation of village committee [members]. If he wants to resign, another one does not agree. If another one wants to resign, he does not agree. It is complicated to me. It would be better if they both leave. I am talking about this because these three hundred houses should be provided for a particular group of people [displaced people]. Now they provide it to everyone as they said they want to unite all the people. It is not good if they welcome everyone in the village. However, the Township leader told me that they would like to make this village as a role model village. I told Hr--- that it is not possible that this village will be a role model village if they just do like this kind of thing. I do not think this village will be a role model village because people are not united. In the current situation, there are three sections in the three hundred houses area. One of the section leaders resigned from the job as he wished. Now we cannot ask him to manage the plan for the construction of a reservoir.

**Why did he resign from the job? Did he resign because of those two people [village head and village secretary]?**

We do not know why he resigned.

**Do the people accept the village head and village secretary to be their village head and village secretary? Do the majority of the people like them to be village head and village secretary?**

For the village head, he has many people who support him. For village secretary, I think a few people support him. When the election was made at village level, they just selected the people for committee members in an informal way. Actually, 25 percent of the people should vote a person to be a committee member in the official way. There are 460 households in the village. So, a committee member should get votes from more than 200 households. Now they only get votes from 120 households. Among 120 households, they stole votes from 20 households.

**Did the villagers complain about the way they asked money?**

Yes. The villagers complained about this. The people who complained about it are Mon and Burman people. Some people can pay money because they have money but some people cannot pay. There is a villager called "Hs---". He is very poor. He is just a daily worker. He said that he does not have enough money [travel fee] to go back [to his house in the refugee camp] after he paid 500 Baht. I told him, "You cannot do anything now. It is finished because you already paid. Do not think too much now." I cannot do much regarding this case. However, as I told you what I said in the meeting, I do not recognize him [Hp---] as village secretary.

**Did he [Hp---] discuss with anyone [from the committee] regarding asking money [from villagers]?**

He did not discuss with anyone.

**Did the people know how he will use the money?**

I will tell you about this case. Before we celebrated Karen New Year day, the Township leader [KNU] ordered the village head to manage cleaning every house's compound [in the village]. Therefore, the township leader asked the village head to hire the people who will cut plants [bushes]. Each cleaner should get 200 to 300 Baht [per day] but the people cannot do it

because the plants are very tall. So, they demand 300 to 500 Baht. That is why the village head will have to use more than 6,000 Baht. [After he was asked by the township leader] he said he would come to meet us tomorrow, along with some committee members. The next morning, the village secretary just did it on his own initiative. Then, he called the people [not sure about whether they are refugee or not] to come and stay in the village. Some people that he called do not have anything such as official documents and they do not have any evidence [of being displaced]. However, he just personally welcomed them.

**Did he [village secretary] accept them?**

Yes.

**Do they live there now [in the village]?**

Yes.

**Who are they?**

They are Mon and Burman people. One of them even brought another wife when he came to stay here. When he came to ask to live here, he said that he does not have anything such as his village head's improvement letter or document. He also said, "I will stay here if you let me stay. I will not stay if you don't let me stay". However, he [village secretary] let him stay and he also asked him 500 Baht. One morning, the village head called a meeting with all the section leaders regarding asking money but he [village secretary] was not in the meeting. However, he thought he will try to persuade other leaders regarding asking money if the village head follows this way [to ask money]. So then he can just avoid taking responsibility if anything happens [because he was not at the meeting].

However, the village head told section leaders to hire people to clean the compound of every house. So, the money that section leaders collected should be used in advance for hiring people to clean the compounds [the cost for hiring people would be provided later]. They also cleaned my house's compound. So, if I had to give 500 Baht for cleaning fee, I would give 500 Baht in advance. This is how section leaders should do it. But I do not know what happened later regarding the money that they collected. He [village head] called me on the phone when I travelled. Then, he told me, "Justice grandfather, you have to come back and solve the problem today". I asked him, "What is the problem?" He said that the village secretary reported the case [asking money] to the village tract leader. I told him, "I am now in Kyainseikgyi town. I'm just following with other people to come back [he does not have his own vehicle]. I cannot go back now. So please try to solve the problem as there are many people there [committee members]." This issue [asking money] is on-going. It never ends till now.

**If the people have to give 500 Baht for a house, do you think the people [from the refugee camp] have money to pay if they would like to return? Do you think it will be a problem for them?**

He [unknown] confiscated four houses where people already stayed. Then, he gave them to other people. These four houses are used by the people from Noh Poe refugee camp. There is another man who opened a local small shop and his house was confiscated. There is Ht--- whose house was confiscated. Hu---'s pupil's house was confiscated. There is also a woman who lives in section 1 and her house was confiscated. These four houses were given to other people.

However, I did not want to say anything about house confiscation because nobody went to meet with anyone [from the committee] on 22<sup>nd</sup> December. December 22<sup>nd</sup> is the deadline. I do not want to say anything about the confiscation but it is not good to ask money from the people. Hv-

-- asked me on the other day, "Did he [village secretary] tell anyone from the committee about asking money?" I told him, "He did not tell the committee members but I am not sure whether he told the village head or not. The village head is now busy in the dining hall. You can go ask him if you want to know it." It is difficult for us to handle this case. Even the village leaders do such a thing like this, so think about how section leaders would do. Therefore, we have to do something. I will go to meet with village tract leader. Also, I will submit the [complaint] letter. When I came back yesterday morning, I did not see the village tract leader because he was busy with another meeting.

**Do you have any other issues to tell? For example, management issues.**

Regarding management, each section leader just manages their own section. The village head told section leaders that, and the section leaders told me about it. He said [to the section leaders], "I put my position in the community hall [he will not manage everything in the village]. So, it is fine if you [section leader] can manage the issues in your section". Now I am assigned to manage house provision. If anyone would like to stay in houses, he or she has to come ask it from me. There were five people who asked me for houses. I told them to wait until I come back because they have time to wait. I am not doing this on my own decision. I will let all section leaders know about this. I will tell other committee members [who will give their inputs] but I will not tell the village secretary because I do not recognize him as the village secretary. I will also tell the village head because I recognize him as a village head. But I rejected the village secretary since January 1<sup>st</sup> [2020].

**You just reject him by yourself but nobody [from the committee] rejects him. Is it true?**

I do not care whether other people refuse him or not but I just refuse him alone. Just myself. I cannot recognize him [as village secretary] because I do not want my leaders to be dishonoured [because of him]. I was born in a place where the KNU control. I was raised [under the KNU control]. I try to help my community as much as I can. Therefore, I will not go against them [KNU leaders] even if we want to do it.

As I told you regarding these three hundred houses, you should tell the leaders to give us a special chance if possible when you go back. If they can give a special chance, we can make this village as a role model village. This village cuts a big mountain. There is a cave over there. Here are three hundred houses. If you look at the bigger map, it is close to Three Pagodas Pass. As I cannot drive a motorbike, it is not easy for me to walk from the beginning to the end because the village is too big and wide. Sometimes when we have a meeting in the community hall near the church beside the cross road, it is not easy to walk to the community hall if you live in the three hundred houses area. It takes more than 30 minutes to walk there. So please tell the leaders to give us suggestions in terms of village development if you go back. If other people see our village, I think they will say bad things about our village. I think it will take a lot of time to be unified in the village because most of the people here are other ethnic groups such Mon and Burman. In Hw--- area, there are only Mon and Burman people. There is no one who is Karen. There are only two or three Karen family households in Section (2). There are some Karen people in Sections 3 and 4.

**Now the number of Karen people in the village is less than other ethnic groups?**

Yes. I think so. There are many mixed ethnic groups in the village. There are only a few people who are Karen. When Tharamu Hx--- managed the village, I saw that there is Hy---'s family who is purely Karen. I think the people from Noh Poe refugee camp will come back to stay here if everything is ready. I mean after everyone goes under the process. Not everyone finishes the checking process now. For this issue, the leaders should be patient. I heard that some groups of family members [from Noh Poe refugee camp] will come back to stay. It will take a while to



return to Burma [Myanmar]. It is not easy to return immediately because they might not have lands to work on when they go back. We have to wait if we would like to return in the official way. If we do not wait, we will not get financial help such as transportation cost. It is better if they can get some financial help. Therefore, I would like to request local authorities to be patient because many people and new generations from our country have learned many skills as well as education from Noh Poe refugee camp. So, we should understand this situation and know the benefits of [welcoming people from] Noh Poe refugee camp. Therefore, they should be patient. It is not the right way to do like 'If you do not return [from the camps or other villages] immediately, you cannot stay here. We will confiscate your houses here if you do not come back.' They [local authorities] should not behave like that.

**Thank you so much for the information. We will let other leaders and relevant stakeholders know about what you are sharing with me today.**  
 Yes.

**Source #31**

Source doc #	Source # 31
Log #	20-14-A1-I1
Interview date	February 3 <sup>rd</sup> 2020
Location	Noh T'Kaw (Kyainsiekkyi) Township, Dooplaya District

**Full Text**

**Dooplaya District Interview | Saw Ae--- (male), Lay Hpa Htaw repatriation site, Lay Wah Plo village tract, Noh T'Kaw Township**

**Status:** UNHCR-repatriated refugee  
**Temporary shelter or IDP camp:** Lay Hpa Htaw repatriation site  
**Return date(s):** February 2019

**Ethnicity:** Karen  
**Religion:** Buddhist  
**Marital status:** Married  
**Occupation:**  
**Position:** Village Secretary

**How do people call the place you live now?**

It is called "Lay Hpa Htaw". This is a project area of three hundred houses. Higher authorities from four Townships work together to build this village. So, they gave it a name. It is Lay Hpa Htaw.

**Where is Lay Hpa Htaw located?**

It is located in Noh T'kaw Township, Dooplaya District.

**When was Lay Hpa Htaw built?**

It was built after the 2012 ceasefire preliminary agreement was signed.

**How many organizations [armed groups or governments] formed this village?**

Myanmar president U Thein Sein, Minister of Karen State, KNU president Mu Tu Say Poe and

higher authorities from four Townships worked together to form this village.

**Who funded the project [of three hundred houses]?**

The houses in the village were funded by Japan Nippon Foundation because the construction project was managed by [KNU] District authorities as they are on the repatriation committee.

**Which refugee camps [from Thailand] come to stay in this village? How many ethnic groups stay here?**

There are many different ethnic people who live here such as Mon, Burman and Karen but we do not have Muslims here. We have some IDPs here. We have also poor people who do not have houses to live in. We have refugees from Noh Poe refugee camp and Ban Don Yang refugee camp in the village.

**How many people from Noh Poe refugee camp come back to live in the village?**

Currently, there are two households from Noh Poe refugee camp who came back to live here. They returned to this village in the official way. One of them does not live here anymore because he went back to Noh Poe refugee camp as he needs to take care of his children who study in the refugee camp. I am also a refugee from Noh Poe refugee camp who has come back to stay here. There are more than 20 households from Ban Don Yang refugee camp who returned to this village. There are some refugees who returned to this village in unofficial ways.

**How many people from Noh Poe and Ban Don Yang refugee camps registered their names because they would like to come back?**

There are 60 households from Noh Poe refugee camp who would like to return to three hundred houses area. There are 46 households from Ban Don Yang refugee camp who wanted to return. However, there are only 16 households from Ban Don Yang refugee camp who returned to the village. There are only a few people from Noh Poe refugee camp who come back to live here because some of them always come back here and go back to the refugee camp. In total, there are 467 households in this area including IDPs and refugees. They live in both the old village and the new village. The total number of people in this village is 2268. The female number in total is 1094 and the male number in total is 1174.

**Who are the majority of the people in the village?**

Karen are the majority of the people in the village. There are seven different ethnic groups who live in the village including Shan, Mon, Burman, Dawei and Rakhine but we do not have Muslims here.

**What difficulties do the people face when they return to the village? Do they have land to work on? For example, livelihood difficulties.**

We face livelihood challenges here because there are only a few original inhabitants here. The land is provided to the villagers for working. Each villager gets the land that they can use to plant two baskets of paddy seeds. So, last year one person had to pay 500 Baht: 50 Baht for forest department, 50 Baht for village head, 400 Baht for a person who will show them land to work on. This year they have to pay 600 Baht: 50 Baht for forest department, 50 Baht for village head and 500 Baht for a person who will show them land to work on. However, not everyone in the village gets land to work on because the village head confiscated land and gave it to other people. Therefore, it created internal conflict in the village. Some people in the village lost their land. This year he [village head] distributed land to villagers but villagers did not get it. Villagers faced many different difficulties and they do not know how to talk to local authorities. They said that this is land owned by the forestry department. They said they have to pay because it is the tax. They get tax receipts. However, we cannot work on the land. Or even though we can work,

it is the land owned by other people. So, we have to pay taxes. To my views, it is not the right way to do like this.

**You said that the land is owned by the government? Which government owns the land?**

The land is owned by the forestry department from KNU. They said the land is in the KNU reserved forest area. The Myanmar government also have reserved forest in this area. When the Myanmar government staff came to meet me, they told me that they will abolish the reserved forest area if the KNU approves it. But the KNU does not give them any opportunity. That is why we have to live in [two different] reserved forests. The people talked to me and they complained that the land is very complicated. Some people gave 5,000 Baht in order to get plains land but the village head does not take any responsibility for this. The village head's name is Hz---. I am not speaking to make a problem. I just tell you the truth. He is a man with good judgement. He tried to make sure that the people from refugee camps do not control the village of Lay Hpa Htaw. However, according to the people's desire, I was selected to be a committee member but I am actually a refugee. We try to work for the village in a good and fair way because the people from refugee camps face many challenges when they return to the village.

**You said that villagers have to give money to the village head. Can you explain more about it?**

Villagers have to give 500 Baht to a person who will show them the land that they will have to work. They have to give 50 Baht to the village head for the approval. They also have to give 50 Baht to the forestry department from KNU. The total payment is 600 Baht. The person who is in charge of the forest department is Ia---. However, if any problem happens, nobody takes responsibility to solve the problem. They just try to bounce the ball [to others; they want to avoid taking responsibility for problem solving]. That is why villagers face difficulties [to work on land]. As for me, I do not have any land. I thought I was going to ask land from them but I did not ask because of this kind of situation. I have livelihood difficulties since I live in the refugee camp. I am telling you the truth. I was given financial help but it is not enough [for my family]. I do not know how to earn money. Now I try my best as I am a village secretary. I just think I am going to work as a day labourer to earn money. I will try to solve my problems in many different ways, even though nobody supports me. We also have water shortage in the village.

**If the villagers give 600 Baht, will they own the land? Or they can just work on the land?**

There are some widows who do not have motorbikes to travel, but the land that was provided to them is in the mountainous areas. How can the widows go and work there? If they cannot work on the land this year, it will be confiscated next year. According to the KNU land policy, the land can be confiscated if people do not work on it for three years, but he [the village head] will confiscate the land if we do not work on it this year. I think he should not do like that. The KNU leaders should know the situation on the ground. Also, the Township authorities do not give the people full awareness [about the policy]. Now the village head confiscates the land but the forestry department do not confiscate the land. We can understand if the forestry department confiscates the land. Now only the village head confiscates the land. So, the villagers are not happy about it. I am also a villager. I am not happy about it too even though these lands are not my land. I do not want to go against the KNU authorities. We just have to find ways for villagers. Actually, the KNU works for the villagers. I just want the KNU leaders to come and see the situation on the ground and they should look after villagers.

**Do the people in the village face livelihood difficulty because they don't have land to work on?**

Yes. When the village head provides the land to villagers, he just marks other people's land that

they already work on. Then, he takes those lands to give other people. It is not easy for the people to work on the lands again because they are afraid. This becomes a problem because they lost 500 Baht if their lands were taken away. You can also ask Daw Ib--- from the repatriation committee regarding this issue. She knows well about the land issue. Now he [village head] sells the land in the project area. One plot of land is for 5,000 Baht. However, the villagers do not know about this case. He just told the villagers after he sold it. Actually, we planned to make a football ground in the project area but houses are already built on that land. The repatriation committee also do not know about this. He said that the forestry department just provided these lands to the people. As we are villagers, we do not want to find fault. That is why the KNU leaders should come to solve this problem.

**Whom did he sell the land to?**

He just sold it to other Karen people who do not have official documents. One of them is from the USA. He came back to Burma and he bought the land. Then, he built the house. He just approached the village head to get the land. I am a village secretary but I love the truth. That is why they do not come to me [to get the land]. They just go to the village head to get the land. They bought it with 5000 Baht. This money is not for village fundraising but it is used for education. It is not a problem for me but the village head told me. I do not remember the exact date. He told me that he sold the land because he wants to support KED teachers. He said he will give 3000 Baht to KED teachers per month as salary next year. This is what he said. However, he also said that the land he sold is only in section 4. Actually, the project area has nothing to do with sections. The project area should be used for the project. Even though many people do not agree with what he said, we do not dare to talk to him. The people are afraid of him because of his family's historical background. In the past, his father shot dead a man called "Ic---" in this village. Now he becomes the village head. That is why villagers are afraid of him.

**As you are the village secretary, do you know what challenges villagers are facing? For example, do villagers have to pay taxes as they live here?**

According to the KNU policy, they collect taxes in other villages. Villagers have to pay 1 basket of rice as annual tax but village authorities decided that villagers just have to pay four bowls of rice. However, they have not collected taxes in the three hundred houses area. It will not be easy for the villagers in the Three Hundred Houses area if they have to pay taxes because they are refugees and IDPs. They are poor. They do not have lands to work on. Therefore, it will be difficult for them even if they have to pay 100 Baht as a tax. It is not easy for them to earn 100 Baht because they do not have a job. Even though I got the land to work on, I did not know much how to earn money when I came back to live here. This year, I worked on cassava plantation. I just got six bags of cassava. The price of one kilo of cassava is 4 Baht. I only got less than 500 kilos of cassava this year. So, I just got more than 1000 Baht by selling them. It is difficult to support livelihood [with the amount of money that he earns]. Other people face similar difficulties. Actually, there are many challenges for us. Therefore, it will be a problem for us if we have to pay tax.

**Was there anyone who only can stay in a house if he or she pays money to the village head?**

Firstly, we have discovered that the people [IDPs and refugees] do not come back to stay in houses. So, we will confiscate the houses. Therefore, we would like to call a meeting with camp leaders from refugee camps regarding this case. The camp leaders told us that they wanted to meet us on 20<sup>th</sup> [January, 2020] after Karen New Year day but they did not come to meet us on the 20<sup>th</sup> [January, 2020]. Therefore, we confiscated the houses. However, we will let the people stay in houses if they want to return but we will collect 500 Baht if they want to stay. We collect 500 Baht because we will build a reservoir as we face a water shortage in the village. We will

not use that money for personal interests of the village committee. We do not have enough water in the three hundred houses area. [...] That is why we just ask help from them if they come back to stay. However, they said they agreed with what we plan. So, they told us, "We can help you." We just try to persuade them [to help us]. We do not force them to pay money. We just take money if they give it to us. However, the village head wanted to cancel our plan. Besides, he used the money that we collected. He took 6100 Baht but he used that money to pay wages for those people who clear the bushes in the compounds of houses in the village. I will tell you why he pays wages to the people who clear the bushes. Before we celebrated Karen New Year event in the village, the guests would be staying in the three hundred houses area. Therefore, the township leader ordered the village head to manage clearing the compounds of houses but the township leader did not provide money to the village head. That is why the village head had to hire the people to clear the bushes. However, I reported to the village head about the case that we are collecting money. Therefore, he used some of the money that we collected [to hire the people to clean the compound of houses]. Then, it created internal problems in the village. Therefore, other people [from other villages] thought that we sold the houses and we asked 500 Baht from the people if they want to stay. They thought that people were forced to pay money. In reality, we did not tell the people like that. It is not a problem. We do not care what other people think because we always explain to township and district authorities why we are doing like this. The people in the village understand very well why we are collecting money. Now we collect money again because we have to add the money into the savings [for the cost of reservoir construction] because some of the money was already used by the village head [to hire people for clearing bushes].

**Are there any organizations who come to help villagers in terms of access to water?**

We do not receive any support from other people regarding the water shortage. Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees [COERR] came to support the village in terms of water. They just made a reservoir. They put water into the lake but they use that water for agricultural purposes. That is a community-based project. That water is not used for villagers' needs. There are two tube-wells in the three hundred houses area but we can only use one tube-well to get water. We face a water shortage. I think my house is located in the lower part of the land so the water cannot go to my house [through the pipe from the hill stream] for months [it is all used by the houses higher up before it gets to his house]. That is why I have to go and carry water from the Buddhist monastery. If we look at all of these difficulties, it is related to why we are collecting 500 Baht [from each household] because we want to build a reservoir. I also requested 5,000,000 kyats from the National League for Democracy [NLD] government to help us. They told me that they will help us but we have not received the money yet. Besides, Na Ta La [Ministry for Progress of Border Areas and National Races and Development Affairs] helped us. They gave [money] to Id--- who is in charge of the refugee return committee in Dooplaya District. That [money] is for three hundred houses area but the village head said it should be used for the needs of the old village. Now we face water shortages in three hundred houses area. There are a lot of people who are not original inhabitants in three hundred houses area. Now they face difficulties because they do not have enough water. I would like to say that villagers are oppressed by the village head.

**As villagers do not have enough water, do they have health problems because they face water shortages?**

Yes. Villagers mostly face health problems during rainy season. I got Chikungunya.<sup>1</sup> In the rainy season, we mostly use rainwater because we cannot get water [from other sources]. In the hot season, we just have to go and carry the water [from a stream] as we do not have enough water

<sup>1</sup> A mosquito-borne virus causing fever and severe joint pain.

in the community. We just have to find water on our own.

**Is it far to go and get water?**

It is not far for those who have motorbikes but it is far for those who do not have motorbikes because they have to walk.

**How far is it?**

It takes 30 minutes to reach the place that we get water by foot but then we can just carry a bottle of water. We cannot carry much water if we walk to get it. It will just take a short time to go and get water if we go and get it by motorbike. However, we cannot use the water if there are many people who are taking a bath there because it is not very deep, so the water can get dirty.

**Is it because the water is not clean?**

Yes. The water is not clean.

**What do villagers need the most?**

Firstly, what we need the most is water. Secondly, we need education because we should be educated. Even though we came back to live in the project area [for returnees], there is no school for us. There are a lot of kids here but we do not have a kindergarten. We talked about this issue in the meeting of the village committee but the discussion was not successful. Also, it is coming to rainy season soon. We do not have a kindergarten school. Nobody comes to solve this problem. There is a Kaw Thoo Lei [KNU] clinic in Lay Hpa Htaw village but it is a mile distance between where we live and the clinic. It will take longer if we walk to the clinic. It is not a problem if we have motorbikes but it will be a problem for those who do not have a motorbike.

**So, the most important things for villagers are water, school and clinic?**

Yes. These three things are important for us.

**If you get support regarding water, school and clinic, do you think this village will be developed? Do you think that many refugees will return to this village if they meet their basic needs here?**

I think more refugees will come back if we receive full support. I also want to say something for refugees/IDPs because they only want the cold place immediately but they do not want to live in the hot place [they're not patient to move there and then help develop the place]. Most of the refugees from Noh Poe and Ban Don Yang refugee camps come back to see the situation before they return. They want water, education and clinic. Even though we have good roads, it is difficult for some people to get [access to healthcare and water] as it is too far. That is why some refugees do not want to return. Our village will be developed if we receive full support. Then, this village will be a town as the KNU wants to have it. They said that they would like to build a town here but we do not know whether this town will be governed by the KNU or the Myanmar government. We asked [the KNU] township and district authorities regarding this but they did not tell us anything. If the KNU would like to build the town, the KNU should govern the town. If the Myanmar government would like to build the town, they should govern the town. Now we do not know who will build the town and who will govern the town. If local authorities try to make villagers feel afraid, villagers just feel afraid. Villagers are afraid of local authorities, township and district authorities and Bo le---. We have to be afraid of everybody. Even though I am the village secretary, I face this kind of challenge. There are many challenges in the village.

**I came to know the situation as you provided the information. We will write a report. And then we will advocate for the issues that villagers are facing. So, will you allow us to use the information that you've shared?**

Yes. I allow you to use the information. I also look for other Myanmar media groups and other organizations in order to let other people know our situation. I want them to publish our information because our villagers should receive a lot of support but they do not receive much. We do not receive much support because village authorities try to prevent our rights. If village authorities prevent villagers' rights, villagers do not know what to do. Now many villagers do not get ID cards. We already reported it to the village tract leader in order to get ID cards but we receive no assistance. I wanted to go to Three Pagodas Pass in order for villagers to get ID cards but they do not agree with me. They told me not to divide the villagers. No, I do not try to divide villagers. I just try to help them. It is time to claim our rights now. If we do not claim it, when are we going to claim it? It is important to be a citizen. If we do not have ID cards, we will be stateless people. As for me, I returned to the village by the arrangement of the VRC [UNHCR Voluntary Repatriation Center]. Therefore, I got an ID card. However, there are many people who do not get ID cards.

**Why didn't village authorities allow the villagers to get ID cards?**

If we look at the situation in the past, Japan [Nippon Foundation] wanted to donate solar panels to villagers but they [village authorities] did not allow it. They rejected the donation because they worried that people from three hundred houses area would receive the support. The people from three hundred houses area have the rights to receive support but they did not allow it. Now I am the village secretary in the three hundred houses area but they do not like me very much because they said, "New people [committee members] do not have the authority to manage us". This is what they always judge because they said "People from three hundred houses area do not have the power to manage us". Today, we held a meeting with township and village tract authorities. We talked about this issue in the meeting. The village secretary and the village head do not get along with each other because we have misunderstandings. In the village, the village head forced villagers to work on his plantations but he did not pay anything. He told villagers, "If you do not work for me on my plantation, do not come to ask help from me if you get in trouble.". This is what the village head said.

**It means villagers can ask help from him if they work for him?**

Yes. Villagers can go and ask help from him if they work for him. If villagers do not work for him, they cannot go and ask help from him. Therefore, villagers have to be afraid of him. Villagers said, "Who else should we rely on?"

**What is the name of the village head?**

His name is Saw Hz---

**Is he Karen?**

Yes. He is Karen. He used to be village security officer when he came to live here in 2012 or 2013. In 2014, he became the village head. Now he is still the village head.

**I am so happy that you've shared a lot of information. Can we come and meet you again if we need more information?**

Yes. You can. I want to see that our Karen people can improve their lives. So, I accepted the Karen People's Party when they came to our village. I joined the Karen political party because we just want to improve our Karen communities. We try our best in order for all the Karen people in Karen State to get their rights. In order for Karen people to get a job, we will join the Karen political party to work with the Myanmar government. In order to reduce the oppression, we will form the party to claim our rights. It is a Karen political party. It is not NLD or Union Solidarity and Development Party.

**Thank you very much for sharing information. Thank you for giving us permission to use the information.**

Yes. Thank you.

### Source #32

Source doc #	Source # 32
Log #	19-21-A3-11
Interview date	March 3 <sup>rd</sup> 2019
Location	Lu Pleh (Hlaingbwe) Township, Hpa-an District
Full Text	

#### **Hpa-an District Interview | Naw Aj--- (female), Mae La Way Ler Moo repatriation site, Lu Pleh Township**

**Status:** UNHCR-repatriated refugee  
**Temporary shelter or IDP camp:** Mae La Camp  
**Return date(s):** N/A

**Ethnicity:** Karen  
**Religion:** Christian  
**Marital status:** Married (two children)  
**Occupation:** Kindergarten Teacher  
**Position:**

#### **What is your occupation?**

I am a kindergarten teacher.

#### **Where did you live before?**

I lived in Ka Mah Moh [Myine Gyi Ngu] when I was a kid.

#### **Then, you went to stay in Beh Klaw [Mae La refugee camp], right?**

I went to stay in Beh Klaw in 2007.

#### **Why did you return?**

Beh Klaw is not a sustainable place for us. Returning here, we have our home and land.

#### **Did you return because of no opportunities in the refugee camp?**

No. We had good opportunities in the camp. My parents and my siblings returned to live here. That's why I came back.

#### **Why did other refugees not want to return?**

Some people love staying in the refugee camp because they receive rations.

#### **What about you? Were you not given rations?**

We received rations, too. But, my husband is teaching here. That's why I decided to come back to stay with him. I don't want to travel back and forth to the refugee camp.



**Were you given support during your return?**

Before we left Beh Klaw, we were given support. When we arrived at Myawaddy, Myanmar authorities provided small aids.

**What kinds of supports did they provide you guys in Myawaddy?**

Myanmar authorities provided 30,000 kyats financial aid to households that have more than three family members. They also provided us food, a sack of rice and other stuff, and clothing.

**Were you supported every month?**

No, we did not receive them every month. The money authorities provided to us was to cover for three months.

**Will they continue to support you after these three months?**

I don't think they will be supporting us after these three months.

**Did they tell you about it [the support]?**

No, they did not tell us about this. I think the support has finished.

**Did you face difficulties living in the camp and coming back to live here?**

No.

**Did you have to apply for the repatriation?**

Yes, we had to apply for it.

**Were you given a house when you returned?**

Yes, we were.

**Did you have to buy the house?**

No, we did not have to buy it. Actually, we were given a place to build our house. We had to build it by ourselves.

**Were you given land to work on like the other people?**

No, we were not given land. Some people had to clear land in the forest and work on it.

**What is education like here?**

The education is good here. If students who finish Grade 10 would like to continue their studies, the school looks for a scholarship for them.

**Did people who work in the repatriation process tell you anything about education?**

No, they did not. The school headmaster is always ready to send students who are enthusiastic for further education.

**How well are pregnant women taken care of here?**

Most of the pregnant women go back to Beh Klaw for child delivery. Some women gave birth at home.

**Didn't they tell you that there will be school and hospital when you returned?**

No. Because this place already has a school and hospital.

**What is the security condition here?**

Living here, we have freedom of movement.

**Have you heard of landmine explosions since you returned and until now?**

No. I had never heard of it.

**What is your occupation?**

I teach in the school. I sew clothes when we have school holidays or when the school closes. Sometimes I do weaving. I received 1,000 and up to 2,000 baht in a month.

**Were you told about them providing Myanmar ID cards to you?**

We have Myanmar ID cards. When we arrived in Myawaddy, they told us that they would get a new household registration for us.

**Did you have a Myanmar ID card a long time ago?**

I got a Myanmar ID card in 2014. New household registrations will officially be given to us. They are about to give it to us.

**When are they coming to give the household registration to you?**

They did not tell us when.

**Is there a place to take care of victims of sexual violence?**

We have Karen Women Organisation [KWO] staff here.

**Are disabled people given care by the hospital?**

Yes, they are.

**Were you provided support when you returned?**

Yes, we were. All returnees got support by the time we returned.

**How do you feel living here?**

I feel happy living in my country.

**Did you confront difficulties in the very beginning of your return?**

No. I did not.

**What are things beneficial to you living here?**

I am able to teach students and they also benefit from it.

**Were you discriminated against by the local people when you returned?**

No. they warmly welcomed us.

**Why did people become refugees?**

It was because of the fighting.

**What message would you like to deliver to the refugees who do not come back?**

I would like to tell them that living here is also enjoyable.

**What is the situation in the refugee camp now?**

I think it is like before. I heard the provision of rations is decreasing. Actually, the refugee camp is just a temporary shelter for refugees. But now it has been over 20 years.

**Is there anything would you like to add?**

No.

**Can we use the information you provided and photo of you in publication?**

Yes, you can.

**Thank you so much.**

**Source #33**

Source doc #	Source # 33
Log #	20-21-A1-I1
Interview date	January 17 <sup>th</sup> 2020
Location	Ler Doh (Kyaukkyi) Township, Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) District

**Full Text**

**Kler Lwee Htoo District Interview | Saw Ag--- (male), If---village, Law Muh Thaw village tract, Ler Doh Township**

**Status:** IDP returnee

**Temporary shelter or IDP camp:** Law Muh Thaw Village

**Return date(s):** 2013

**Ethnicity:** Karen

**Religion:** Christian

**Marital status:** Married

**Occupation:** Bean plantation

**Position:** Member of village committee

**Where do you live?**

If--- village, Ler Moo Thaw village tract, Ler Doh [Kyaukkyi] Township, Kler Lwee Htoo [Nyaunglebin] District.

**Are you married?**

Yes, I have four children.

**Do you have responsibility in the village such as being a village head or a member of village committee?**

I am just a member of the village committee.

**Where did you live before?**

I lived in Ig--- village.

**In the period of instability, were you displaced?**

Yes. I was displaced.

**Where were you displaced?**

I was displaced to Ih--- village.

**Where is lh--- village located?**

It is next to li--- village. lh--- is located between the li--- and lj--- village.

**How many years did you live in lh--- village?**

I lived in lh--- village for three years.

**Then, you were moving to lg--- village?**

Yes.

**Did you displace again later on?**

No.

**How many years have you been living in lf--- village?**

I have been living in lf--- village for three years already.

**Have you been displaced to refugee camps?**

No, I have not been displaced there.

**This is not your area [refers to lf--- village] of origin?**

Right, it is not.

**When did you come to live in lf--- village?**

I came to live here in 2013. It has been seven years by now.

**How many people from lg--- village came to live in lf--- village?**

There are over 20 households from lg--- village who came to live in lf--- village.

**Coming to live here, were you supported by someone or any organisations? Or did you come back to live by yourself?**

The Organisation arranged this place for us to live.

**Which organisation are you talking about?**

I am talking about the organisation from this side [KNU arranged this place for them to live].

**What difficulties have you experienced living here? Anything like food shortage or difficult access to get water?**

The only difficulty is accessing water. This is our current difficulty. People who live next to the car road have wells. People who live on the hill do not.

**Where do you have to get water then?**

We have to go down to get water from the wells next to the car road.

**Coming back to live here, have you received any kind of support (such as money, food and materials) given by any organisations? I mean support from organisations like NGOs.**

We received a rice donation from an organisation two years ago.

**From which organisation was the rice donation support from?**

It was from the Nippon Foundation.

**I heard supports from CIDKP also came here, right?**

Yes, CIDKP came here as well.

**What is the security concern living here? Was there fighting between armed groups since 2013, while you were living here?**

We have no difficulty concerning security.

**Do you feel safe living here?**

I don't feel security concerns now in the same way as what we have been through [before]. Regarding security, it is slightly better now when compared to the past. Now, we can go in and out of our village whenever we want.

**What security concern do you have related to your family and villagers?**

I just feel like we do not have security concerns currently.

**Have you experienced threats from anybody that disrupted you from coming to live here?**

No. I have not experienced any of that.

**Does this place [if--- village and places around] have unexploded landmines and UXOs?**

I think there might be unexploded landmines and UXO in this village and its surroundings. We have not experienced any explosion yet.

**Since 2013 while you were living here, have any of villagers been injured by landmine explosion?**

No, there were not.

**Were there unexploded landmines and UXOs awareness training given in the village?**

Yes, there were trainings.

**Have you witnessed this yourself?**

Yes, I have seen it myself. I have seen landmines hit people too.

**When have you seen that landmine explosion?**

That was in 1988 and the years after that.

**Does this village have a military gate? Do you have security concerns to go in and out of the village at night time?**

No.

**Like you were saying, you guys are facing water scarcity living in this village. It is hard for some villagers to access water. What assistance did organisations or those in charge of this displacement site give?**

They prepared wells next to the car road for us.

**You have been living here since 2013. Have any organisations supported you guys with money?**

The Nippon Foundation provided only rice to us.

**What is the situation of your current occupation?**

We can secure our daily livelihood.

**You get water from the wells, right?**

Yes.

**Is the water from the well clean enough? Can people drink it?**

People can use water from the wells and drink it.

**Does this village have enough toilets and bathrooms for each household?**

Yes, they have enough in this village.

**Where are wastes [plastic bags] disposed of in this village?**

They are burned.

**What do people use to get electricity?**

Most of the people living here use solar panels for the electricity.

**What do people use to cook for meals?**

They use firewood for cooking meals.

**There is lots of firewood to get, right?**

Yes.

**When you came to live here, did you have to build a new house for yourself?**

Yes, I had to build a new house.

**What difficulty did you have to build a new house in this village?**

I had no difficulty to build a new house.

**Currently, you live in this house with your four children. Can you all fit in the house?**

Yes, I have four children, but they are living in the other village. I came to live here only with my wife. [...]

**Do you have enough bedding items [bed, blanket and mosquito net] for your family?**

Yes, I have enough of them.

**Is it easy to get access to healthcare at hospital when you get sick?**

Yes, it is.

**Do you guys have a clinic here?**

Yes, we do.

**Does the clinic have healthcare workers?**

Yes, it does have healthcare workers.

**How long does it take you to get to the clinic?**

It takes us 20 minutes from where I live.

**Is the clinic run by the Myanmar government or KNU?**

It is run by the KNU.

**Where do healthcare workers receive payment? Do they receive payment from the KNU or just from the village?**

All the payments for the healthcare workers are given by the KNU.

**Can healthcare workers provide good treatment to the patients?**

Yes, everything is good.

**What are the common diseases affecting both children and adults in the village since 2013 and up to today?**

There are many kinds of diseases.

**What diseases mostly affect people?**

Dengue fever is the most prevalent disease affecting people in rainy season.

**Can children from the village access primary education?**

Yes, they can. However, some of the children went back to live in their former villages.

**What do you think of the education quality these children receive?**

I think they receive the same quality of education.

**The school is now KED [Karen Education Department], right?**

Yes, it is KED School.

**What is the quality of education comparing Myanmar government school and KED School?**

KED School can provide good English skills.

**Does this village have a middle school?**

No, if children from this village want to continue in middle school, they have to go and attend in other villages that have a middle school.

**Do other villages that have middle school accept students from this village who have passed primary school?**

Yes, they do accept.

**Do they get accepted in Myanmar government school?**

Yes, they do.

**Does the primary school in this village have Myanmar government assigned teachers?**

No, there are no Myanmar government assigned teachers in this primary school.

**Where do students go to school after primary school here?**

With the acceptance of schools in the former village, some of them return to attend school with the mutual understanding between two schools.

**Did they have to get school records [school registration certificate]?**

Yes.

**Do students have to travel far to get to the school?**

No, they don't.

**What difficulty do you guys have in education?**

We need more teachers.

**How many of your family members have to work to secure a livelihood? Are you working alone or with your wife?**

Both of us are working.

**Are your children helping you sometimes?**

Yes, they are helping me sometimes.

**What else are you working for your livelihood apart from the green pea plantation?**

We plant green pea twice a year.

**What is the most common work among villagers from this village?**

In the rainy season, villagers work on peanut plantations. And in summer, we are all working on green pea plantations.

**Are there any other jobs apart from these?**

We go back to do farming [i.e. rice farming] in our former village [lg--- village]. We have to go and search for foods, such as rice and fish paste, there.

**Among your relatives, have any of them gone to work abroad?**

No, there are not.

**Were there vocational trainings given in the village?**

Yes, there were.

**Which organisations came to give vocational training?**

CIDKP came and gave vocational training on plantations.

**Do you think these vocational trainings benefited you?**

Yes, it is benefit for us.

**Is the vocational training helpful to you for applying the skill in green pea plantation?**

Yes, it is helpful.

**Do these pea plantations and farming produce enough for you to cover your livelihood, healthcare and education for your children?**

I can say that it [income] is only enough for the two of us. It is not enough to cover [the needs] of our children. Some of my neighbours do not earn enough [from their farming products] to provide for their whole family.

**What else do these people do since they have not earned enough benefit from their farming products?**

These people work as [seasonal] day labourers. However, it is still not enough to secure their livelihood.

**What kinds of daily-paid jobs are they?**

They are seasonal jobs. People are participating in the daily-paid jobs such as picking green pea and harvesting according to the time of its due season.

**Was your land confiscated when you displaced to lh---?**

No.



**Were your houses being destroyed when you displaced?**

No, but we had to dismantle it ourselves and left it behind. The roofs of our houses were ruined during the rainy season.

**Were you supported to rebuild your houses?**

No, there was no help.

**Do you have land to do farming since you returned?**

Yes, I do have land.

**Currently, do you have Myanmar household registration, Identification Card and birth certificate?**

Yes, I do have all of them.

**Are these household registration, Identification Card and birth certificate provided by the KNU government?**

No, the KNU do not provide any of them yet.

**You have land to farm and plant green pea. Do you have any kind of land title for these lands?**

Yes. I have land form #105.

**Do you also have the grant form produced by the KNU?**

Yes, I do have them all. I have these land forms produced from both the KNU and the Myanmar government.

**You are living separately from your children. Can you tell us why?**

We are living separately from our children because we have another job to do here.

**During your displacement from lh--- village to lg--- village, have your family been separated?**

No. We have not separated.

**In 2020, there will be national elections in Myanmar. Do you know about this national election?**

Yes.

**Do you think you can vote in it?**

Yes, we do have to be involved in the voting.

**As a member of the village committee, do you participate in the village's decision making?**

Yes, I do participate.

**Were you discriminated against as a non-Burmese speaker when having association with others related to work?**

No.

**What years did you go to live in lh--- village? Do you remember?**

It was in 2006.

**During that period, have any of your rights such as healthcare, education and livelihood been violated? Have any of your rights been restricted for you to have full access to healthcare, education and livelihood?**

Yes, our rights to have full access to healthcare, education and livelihood have been restricted.

**By which organisations?**

Our rights were restricted by the Myanmar government. We had to be in the village at 6:00 PM.

**What about healthcare?**

For accessing healthcare, we were restricted due to the situation of whether we can go there or not.

**What about education for children?**

Yes, it was also restricted in the conflict period.

**You have lost your rights such as education, healthcare and livelihood during the conflict period. What do you think the Myanmar government should do to bring justice for your rights?**

The Myanmar government did not do anything for us.

**They did not apologise, right?**

No, they did not.

**What do you think Tatmadaw soldiers should do now for their past violations of human rights?**

We want peace. That is why we want them to bring peace. And they should do that. They are making a peace which does not have any certainty. If the peace process is genuine, civilians can travel independently.

**What things do villagers in If--- need the most?**

We need water [access to water] the most. We want electricity if possible.

**Which government has control in this village? Is that KNU or the Myanmar government?**

This village is controlled by the KNU.

**Are there actions taken in the village to get justice when something happens?**

Yes, we have actions taken when something happen.

**Do you think the peace process is sustainable now? What is your perspective on the peace process?**

In my individual perspective, the situation is getting better because of the peace process. We could travel easily a few years ago. We do hope the situation is getting better.

**You think the situation is getting better now, right?**

Yes, compared to the past, the situation now is getting better.

**Do you have any concern [of fleeing from the village again] due to the peace making process?**

No.

**Do you think you will have to run again in the future?**

I have no concern even if I have to flee from the village again. I hope for everlasting peace.

**What do you think Myanmar government, NGOs and CBOs/CSOs should do to help refugees and displaced people and villagers?**

They should help with healthcare, education and water.

**Do you regret coming to live here?**

I have no idea.

**Do you have anything else to say?**

Like I was saying, we want water and electricity. And, education and healthcare are also most important things we need. We want them all to be complete.

**Thank you so much.**

**Source #34**

Source doc #	Source # 34
Log #	20-21-A2-11
Interview date	January 17 <sup>th</sup> 2020
Location	Ler Doh (Kyaukkyi) Township, Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) District

**Full Text**

**Kler Lwee Htoo District Interview | Saw Ai--- (male), Ik--- village, Law Muh Thaw village tract, Ler Doh Township**

**Status:** IDP returnee

**Temporary shelter or IDP camp:** Law Muh Thaw Village

**Return date(s):** 2018

**Ethnicity:** Karen

**Religion:** Christian

**Marital status:** Married

**Occupation:** Farming [Plantation]

**Position:** Member of village committee

**What is your occupation?**

I do farming and work on a hill plantation.

**Are you married?**

Yes, we have six people in our family.

**Do you have responsibility in the village?**

I am just a member of the village committee.

**Where did you live before?**

I lived in Ik--- village.

**Where do you live now?**

I live in Il--- [Im---] village, Law Muh Thaw village tract, Ler Doh Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District.

**How many villages are situated close by here?**

There are In---, Htoh Il--- and Im--- [villages].

**In the past, you lived in Ik--- village. Were you displaced because of fighting?**

Yes, we had times of displacement in the past.

**Where were you displaced and when did the displacement happen?**

I do not know exactly about the situation of displacement because I was growing up involved in the revolution [served as a KNLA soldier]. I participated in the revolution in 1983. For villagers, they had to move to a place that Tatmadaw soldiers had arranged for them. It is called lo--- village. Villagers suffered a lot living there. The situation they suffered back then is like the situation now in Rakhine State. Every situation was strictly controlled by the military [Tatmadaw soldiers]. Villagers were restricted to go in and out of the gathering place [lo--- village forced relocation site]. These places had been battle grounds in the past. These places were our military operation areas.

**Have you ever gone back to your village since you left? When you served in KNLA, did villagers talk to you about difficulties they had confronted?**

I always faced difficulties because fighting happened often. Civilians always reported difficulties they had confronted. At that time, fighting never stopped between these two groups [KNLA and Tatmadaw]. The fighting happened very often. That was really difficult for the civilians.

**What common difficulties did civilians face at that time?**

Villagers were persecuted by the Tatmadaw claiming that they had contact with rebels and that they had relatives in rebel groups. Villagers suffered a lot of cases of torture at that period.

**Were villagers being killed?**

Yes, villagers were killed by the Tatmadaw soldiers. Sometimes, even in armed groups, they committed the killing of civilians. All armed groups were guilty of killing people.

**When did you come to live in this village?**

I came to live in this village on January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

**Did you come to live in Im--- village?**

Yes, I came to live in Im--- village.

**Why do you think you came to live in Im--- village?**

I had been serving in KNLA for a long time already. Therefore, I asked to resign from serving in the military. Now, I am living as a civilian.

**Were you forced to come to live in Im--- village?**

No, it had been up to our decision. This is my place of origin. That is why I came back to live here [Ik--- village tract, Ler Doh Township].

**Did leaders allow you to choose places to live?**

It was up to my desire.

**How many of you came back to live in the village? Did you come all together with your family?**

Yes, I came back to live in the village with my family. Currently, my youngest son is studying in the border area.

**How many people are there in your family?**

We have six people in our family. I have three children. We live together with my son-in-law and they have a child.

**Were your friends with you when you returned to live in your village?**

No, I came back alone and only with my family.

**Where did you go to live?**

I went to live at KNU [Karen National Union Headquarters] in Lay Wah.

**Since you came back, have you been received aid from organisations [KNU] or NGOs to cover your transportation?**

I came back covering transportation costs for myself. On my way back to my village, I followed my friend on the car.

**Were there any difficulties you confronted during your return?**

No.

**Since you returned to your village in 2018, was there any aid that you received?**

Yes, the Myanmar government came to collect lists of persons with disabilities in Myanmar. My friend put me in the list. They helped us for four months. They financially aided people with disabilities 50,000 kyats each month in rainy season.

**Were you injured when you served in the military?**

Yes, I was injured serving in the military.

**Were there any other special aids that you received?**

No, there were no other special aids apart from that. In the Il--- village, there was a modern farm which is planted by the KNU department of agriculture. There were also modern farms in other places. However, they are not big or numerous. They just supported us after the training of how to grow crops.

**How many years has your return to this village been?**

It has been over two years by now if counted since 2018.

**Do you feel safe living in the village now regarding fighting and military operations?**

Currently, there are no situations like this in the village. We have to wait and see in the future. We have to figure out the situation coming ahead regarding the NCA [Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement]. The situation in the country will only become smooth in the future when people apply a federal system. Then they can create everlasting peace. In my perspective, all ethnicities in Myanmar should have the rights they deserve. After that, all ethnicities can create a federal union. Only a federal union will create sustainable peace. Without having a federal government, I think there will be no sustainable peace.

**Have you heard of or seen unexploded landmines and UXOs in your area?**

Nowadays, we do not have these landmines and UXOs exploding in our area. In the past, there used to be unexploded landmines and UXOs in these areas. They must be ruined by now.

**Have you been received landmine awareness training when you were serving in the military?**

Yes, I received landmine awareness training when I was serving in the military.

**Are there checkpoints in these areas? Are you guys able to travel independently?**

There are no checkpoints in our areas. I see people can travel independently.

**What are the difficulties villagers have living in the village?**

Living here in the village, we can still survive even though we are facing water scarcity. Some people face worse difficulties compared to us. It will be better if there are more supports in the village. However, we can still live in this critical situation.

**Were there any organisations, NGOs and government aiding with the difficulty of water scarcity?**

I have no idea whether they will intend to have in the future. In the past, CIDKP came and supported us to solve these kinds of difficulties. Since I returned to the village [in January 2018], the support has decreased.

**You received vocational training and financial aid as person with disability, right?**

Yes.

**Currently, do you receive these kinds of supports?**

No. I received financial support for four months in the rainy season.

**Have you ever heard about KDM? KDM is also working on the landmines issue [helping with victims of landmines].**

Is this KDM coming from the KNU?

**No, KDM is a Non-Government Organisation. KDM is also operating in Hsaw Htee [Shwegyin] and Ler Doh and Moo [Mone] Townships.**

It isn't the group helping people with disabilities? [...]

**You left your village of origin in 1983. Why did you have to leave your village? Was it your enthusiastic desire?**

At that time, the situation in our areas was really bad. The Tatmadaw military were behaving in a very bad way coming here. They were asking for villagers [men] to attend militia training and we had to accompany them in the frontline with them if the Tatmadaw asked us to. I attended militia training once conducted by the Tatmadaw. I had to attend that training for over a month.

**How old were you at that time?**

At that time, I was turning eighteen years old.

**Did the Tatmadaw force you to accompany them in the frontline?**

They had orders separated village by village. The Tatmadaw demanded specific numbers of people from Ik--- village, Iq--- village, Ir--- village, Is--- village, and It--- village who had to attend militia training. Then we had to help them with security. They ordered us to go with them in the frontline. I thought it was not good to be there. That was why I joined in the Karen revolution.

**You were forced to do it even though you were not willing to do so, right?**

Yes, we were forced to do it. A lot of people were being forced to be porters. Many people died that way. Fighting was so serious at that period.

**How was your feeling leaving your family and things behind? What difficulty have you experienced?**

The Tatmadaw soldiers were very severe to my family and siblings after I left home to serve in the revolution. We had to go to Ler Doh Township office to resolve the persecution the Tatmadaw soldiers had on our parents saying that we have connections with rebels.

**Were your lands confiscated after you left your village? Were you able to work on your land when you came back to your village?**

Our lands were not confiscated. It is because my family was in the village when I left.

**You are farming, right? Do you have enough food to provide for your family with the farm's produce in each year?**

I would say yes if we can manage it well.

**What about farming produce this year?**

We have enough to survive for our livelihood.

**In the hillside fields, crops were eaten by mice. Do you have a situation like this in your farm?**

The green pea plantation is ruined a lot. For me, I don't plant green pea. I plant elephant yam. There are less destructive bugs or animals to deal with.

**You get water from the wells, right?**

Yes.

**In summer, it is really difficult to get water, right?**

Some wells are getting dry.

**Coming back to live in the village, do you guys have enough toilets and bathrooms?**

I would say it is really difficult for most of the people who live in the village. Some of the toilets are getting old and ruined. Some people could not use what they had been offered properly.

**Is it easy to get hygiene products in the village?**

It goes to their personal care. That is why they have their own arrangement for this.

**Where do you dispose of trash in the village?**

We go to dispose of it in the pit [on land] we are not using. When the pit is getting full with the disposal, we burn it. Concerning disposal of trash, we dispose of it properly.

**What do people use to get light in the village? Do they have electricity, solar panel or candle light?**

Most people use solar panels to get light in the village.

**What do you use cooking for your meals?**

I cook meals with firewood.

**You can easily get firewood in the forest, right?**

Yes, there is no problem for us finding firewood.

**Did you have to build your new house when you came back to live in the village?**

Yes, I did.

**What difficulty did you have in building your new house?**

I would say there was no difficulty facing me to build a new house.

**Can everyone in your family fit in your house?**

Yes, all of my family members can fit in my house.

**Is it a disaster proof home?**

If natural disasters are not too strong, our house can stand against natural disaster.

**Do you have enough bedding items?**

Yes, I do have them.

**Does Il--- [Im--- village] have a hospital or clinic?**

We have a clinic.

**Where is the clinic located? And is it operated by the KNU or the Myanmar government?**

This clinic is operated by the KNU.

**How many healthcare workers are taking responsibility in the clinic?**

Sometimes there is one healthcare worker taking responsibility in the clinic. Sometimes there are two healthcare workers taking responsibility in the clinic.

**Where do these healthcare workers come from?**

These healthcare workers are from the [Ler Doh] Township and the [Nyaunglebin] District.

**Do they not stand by in the clinic?**

There is one stand-by healthcare worker in the clinic.

**What do the healthcare workers' skills look like? Can they give treatment to the patients with serious sickness?**

This is just a clinic that provides medication. If there are serious health issues coming up, they cannot give treatment. We can get them anytime (day and night) where there are sick people in the village. They have done enough taking care of patients.

**What kinds of provisions (financial and etc...) are given to these healthcare workers and who [KNU or villagers] supports these healthcare workers?**

Mostly, everything is provided by the KNU. However, villagers provide some other stuff to them.

**Do villagers in the village have financial issues for medical injection costs if they needed to do so?**

There are no fees charged to villagers if they [the clinic] have enough medication. They are free from medical charges. If there are not enough medications in the clinic, patients can go to hospital in Ler Doh Township.

**You returned to live in the village since 2018, right? It has been two years by now. During your time in Il--- village, what were common diseases affecting villagers in the Il---**



**village?**

People in the village commonly suffer from cold and runny nose when seasons change. Sometimes, villagers suffer from dengue fever. I have not heard of any other serious diseases yet.

**Some of your children have their own children, right?**

Yes, two of my daughters are married. My youngest son is studying in the school.

**Are your grandchildren able to study in the primary school?**

Yes, they are able to study in the primary school.

**Do you think the quality of education in the village is good enough?**

The quality of education in the village is good. On the contrary, some people don't know how to reflect on the education they received. If they can use it wisely, it will really benefit them so much.

**Does this village have a middle school?**

No, there is no middle school in the village.

**Do children have to go far from here to the village to attend school?**

Children have to walk about ten minutes to get to the school.

**Is that a Myanmar government school or KECD School?**

That is a KECD School run by the KNU.

**What difficulty do these children have to attend school? Are there some children who are not studying in the school?**

Some children are not well disciplined by parents and they are just lazy to attend school. Karen and Burmese people in our areas are lazy to attend school. These children are not different.

**Some of these children are not studying in the school. Do you think it has to do with their family's livelihood situation?**

Difficulties of their family's livelihood situations are one of the reasons leading children not to study at school. Every family has difficulty. However, parents who think of the potential for their children's future development could have sent their children to school. It is because these parents struggled sending their children to study in school. Different parents have different thinking and the ways they discipline their children are different too.

**You have six people in your family, right? How many members in your family have to work to survive for your livelihood?**

Three people in our family are working. Some of our family members are studying in school.

**Are some of your children supporting you?**

Yes, they are. We help each other.

**Do you have enough income for family needs?**

There are no specific jobs that can provide enough income in our areas. Governments [refers to both KNU and Myanmar government] also do not have specific jobs where people can have enough income to survive for their livelihood. That is why some people work as day laborers, raising chickens and some people are working on their farms. Some people raise goats and pigs. But, still it is not easy to sell these livestock for our income.

**What are the common jobs villagers have in the village?**

Most of the people in the village are poor. That is why they are working daily jobs. There are not many lands people can work on. They can only work on the lands granted by the KNU in the rainy season. Not all the lands granted by the KNU are workable in the dry season [they are not irrigated].

**Villagers are commonly working in daily paid jobs?**

Yes.

**How much do they get paid in a day?**

They get 4000 kyats per day.

**Do men and women get the same amount of money?**

Yes, they do. But people who get hired in the hill farms receive 5000 kyats per day.

**Are there any of your relatives who work abroad to have income?**

Not much. Yet, there are some people who go and work abroad. But, I have no family members who go and work abroad.

**You have received vocational training on agriculture, right? Was this training helpful for you?**

I see this as really helpful. Some people just learned and then did not apply it.

**Can you use the knowledge on agriculture?**

Yes, we were encouraged to grow crops naturally. I applied what I have learned and they were successful. Now a lot of people use chemicals in their farms.

**What crops do you plant currently?**

I planted elephant yam in the lands granted by the KNU.

**How many acres have you planted?**

Only one acre of elephant yam is planted.

**How many acres of land were granted to you?**

The KNU granted five acres of land. But when measuring the land, some people got up to seven acres of land.

**What difficulty have you encountered in planting elephant yam? How many years has elephant yam been planted in your land?**

It has been two years that I've planted elephant yam in my land.

**For income, how many times in a year do you sell elephant yam?**

It will depend on the size of the elephant yam. If we sell them after three years, they will be big enough. We look at the size of the elephant yam by the size of the plant.

**Do you have concern from thieves?**

Yes, there are also thieves. I heard about thieves in several places. We just can't do anything yet.

**Where do you do farming?**

I do farming in the field right down here.

**You are planting elephant yam and doing farming. But still these products do not cover enough for your livelihood, right?**

Yes, these products are still not enough for us.

**What do you think you would do if the farming does not work out for you in the years ahead?**

Currently I raise chickens. And I have cows as well.

**You have been granted lands from the KNU, right?**

Yes.

**You also have lands in Ik--- village, right?**

Yes. My sibling shared land with me.

**Do you have Identification card, birth certificate and household registration provided since you returned to live in the village?**

Do you mean from the KNU or from the Myanmar government?

**I am asking about both governments.**

When we returned to live in Im--- village, we were provided with household registration.

**Is that household registration provided by the KNU?**

Yes, the household registration was provided by the KNU.

**Do you have these kinds of documents provided by the Myanmar government?**

I have a Myanmar ID card that I got in lu--- village, Hlaing Bwe Township a long time ago.

**Do you have a land form such as land form (7)?**

Yes, we have been provided very well.

**Do you have a land form for your farm provided by the Myanmar government?**

Yes, I do have a land receipt provided by the Myanmar government.

**Did you come to live in the village together with your family?**

Yes, I came back to live with my family.

**You did not have to live separately from your family, right?**

No, I did not have to live separately. Sometimes, we travel to another village [Ik--- village] and here [Im--- village], back and forth.

**Did you have difficulty to live together with your family?**

No, we did not have any difficulty to live together with our family.

**Do you know there will be a 2020 national election in Myanmar?**

Yes, I heard about it.

**Do you think will you be able to vote in the 2020 national election?**

I think I am voting.

**As a member of the village committee, were you involved in the meeting [sometimes held by the KNU] in Im--- village?**

One person per household was invited to the village tract meeting before. We had to be in the meeting discussion. Living in the village, we have to collaborate together.

**Were you discriminated against since you returned to live in the village?**

No.

**In the conflict period, you guys were beaten and forced to be in militia. What do you think the Myanmar government should do about it? Should they apologise for it?**

The Tatmadaw soldiers were brutal in the past. They treated villagers very badly. Nothing can repair what they did in the past. They do not think of anything that will bring benefit for the civilians. They will not listen even if we tell them what to do.

**What is your perspective on the peace making process?**

The Myanmar government, Tatmadaw soldiers and armed groups must build more trust when they have consultation meetings among them. Self-determination and equal rights must be given to all ethnicities. If not, they cannot create a federal government. If self-determination and equal rights are given to all ethnicities, then they must set boundaries of control. The sustainable peace will follow only after the fulfilment of the ethnicities requirement. The peace they proclaim now is just like peace had been proclaimed in time of the 8-8-88 crisis. Until now, no one feels complete democracy. They must create a federal government to have sustainable peace in the country.

**What is your perspective on the Tatmadaw road construction in brigade (3)? The Tatmadaw soldiers will be constructing a road to Iv---. Villagers protest against the Tatmadaw road construction. What barrier does this Tatmadaw road construction bring to the peace making process? What do you think about this personally?**

The road construction is an agreement which has been enacted since the signing of the NCA. However, if they break the [NCA] rules, fighting might occur. If they proceed with what civilians don't like, we cannot do anything.

**What do you think is the biggest necessity in the village?**

For our village, education and healthcare are the very most important things. Both the KNU and the Myanmar government should build trust among them. Then, they should build hospitals that should benefit the civilians. Likewise, both governments should support education. There are no proper collaborations between these two governments. Education and healthcare are really necessary in our village.

**Is this area controlled by the KNU or the Myanmar government?**

Most of the areas here are controlled by the KNU.

**Can people get justice if a case happens in the village?**

Both the KNU and the Myanmar government judicial systems can be used to solve a case.

**Do you think the peace making process now is sustainable?**

In my point of view, I would say no. They just signed the NCA. However, there is no peace. [Tatmadaw commander in chief] Min Aung Hlaing said "surrender first and then discuss about politics." Our leaders stand firm on the principle that "for us surrender is out of the question". That's what I have experienced when I served in the military. It is not easy for us to surrender. We must enjoy full rights and equal rights. The right to a federal government should also be

granted. Then, there will be sustainable peace.

**Do you fear having to flee from the village in the future?**

Fighting might happen in the future if they [the Myanmar government] do not [agree to] a federal government and allow for self-determination. The current situation is just a ceasefire. If the fighting resumes, it is certain that civilians will have to suffer.

**What do you think the KNU and the Myanmar government should do to support the internally displaced people?**

I want them to consider job vacancies for the civilians so they can earn income and live a comfortable life.

**Now, villagers have to work in daily paid jobs, right?**

Yes. Daily jobs are not always available in this area.

**Have you ever regretted returning to live in the village?**

No, I am so glad to tell people that areas which had been battlefields became villages. We are happy that as more people became fruitful and become many, there are more villages. We asked our relatives or acquaintances to come and live in the village. Some people are afraid to come and live in the village because they are afraid that fighting will occur again. This time, we can work together with human rights groups if something happens.

**What would you like to say to the KNU and the Myanmar government in the end of this interview?**

In my point of view, I would like both of them [Myanmar government and KNU] to sit in person to discuss and build full trust. If a conflict happens between them, they should have a discussion to find the best solution. If not, if something serious happens, the civilians will have to suffer a lot. That is why I really want them to build more trust between them.

**Well, thank you so much.**

**Source #35**

Source doc #	Source # 35
Log #	20-19-A5-11
Interview date	February 12 <sup>th</sup> 2020
Location	Bilin Township, Doo Tha Htoo (Thaton) District
Full Text	
<p><b>Doo Tha Htoo District Interview   Naw Ao--- (female), lw--- village, Htee Hpa Doh Hta village tract, Bilin Township</b></p> <p><b>Status:</b> IDP returnee  <b>Temporary shelter or IDP camp:</b> Ko--- village  <b>Return date(s):</b> Around 2017</p> <p><b>Ethnicity:</b> Karen  <b>Religion:</b> Buddhist  <b>Marital status:</b> Married</p>	

**Occupation:** Farming

**Position:** Villager

**What do you do for your livelihood?**

I am just doing farming and clearing fields.

**How many children do you have?**

I do not have children. I am a spinster.

**When were you displaced?**

When I was 16 years old.

**Where did you go to?**

We were forced to leave at that time so we went to lw--- and stayed there for three years. Then we again moved to lx--- for over 20 years I guess. We came back here just two or three years ago.

**Is this place your birth place?**

Yes.

**How long have you been returned here?**

It is around three years since we returned here.

**Were you pressured to come back here?**

No, there was no pressure.

**What did the authorities there tell you when you returned?**

They did not say anything much. They said we can choose to live in the place we prefer.

**Were there any other families who came back with you?**

No.

**Have you got any support since you came back here?**

No, I do not receive any support since I came back but when my father came back before us, they got rice. And I heard that there was a financial distribution as well. That was before I came back.

**Who distributed it?**

I do not know.

**Is this place safe for you to stay?**

Since this is our own place, we feel safe to stay.

**Were you threatened before you returned here?**

No, we just returned to our original village so some people are very happy for us. But some people say that this village is not organized well. We do not have any educated people here so how can we lead the village very well?

**Are there any UXOs in this area?**

I do not see any UXOs as I walk through the village.

**Are you able to travel and work freely when you live here?**

I do not travel to very far places. I just go here and there so there is no problem.

**Are there any check points?**

No. I do not see any check point here.

**Are there any flood issues and livelihood difficulties?**

No. We do not experience floods in this area yet.

**Do you get any financial support from any organisations?**

No.

**Are you able to access food and clean water properly?**

We can access it because we have to go get it by ourselves. We use the water from Iw--- River here. But it is a bit far from here.

**Do you also have a shower place and toilet?**

We only have a toilet. We do not have a shower place.

**What about the soap or health-related products? Do you get support for that?**

No. We do not get that.

**How do you manage to throw the rubbish?**

We throw the rubbish in the bush.

**How do you cook here?**

We cook here in our house but the roof has turned black because of the smoke. So we are thinking that we will cook outside.

**Where did you get the kitchen stuff and firewood?**

We go out and cut the firewood.

**Did you build your house by yourself after returning here?**

No. We just live as it is, it was built for us like this.

**Do you have any plan to rebuild or repair the house?**

I do not think I can build and also I think I will die before this house collapses.

**Do you have enough space for your family members?**

I only live with my father so we have enough space for both of us.

**Do you have enough mat, blanket and mosquito nets?**

We got mosquito nets but not mat or blanket.

**Do you have a clinic here?**

No. I just buy [vitamin] B1 and B6 for myself because I have to take that daily. I do not even have money to buy it anymore.

**Is the hospital far from here?**

The closest clinic is in Ix--- but the hospital is in Iy--- so it is a bit far from here.

**What are the common diseases here?**

Just body aches and tingling.

**Are the children here able to get primary education?**

I do not know about that much. I do not understand it.

**How do you think of the education quality?**

I do not know.

**Is the school far from here?**

Yes, a little bit far.

**Is the school run by Myanmar government or KECD?**

I think it is a KECD school.

**How many of your family members are working to secure your livelihood?**

I work alone but now I cannot work very well anymore. However, I have to work as much as I can to survive.

**Are you able to secure the livelihood of your family?**

I cannot secure our livelihood well.

**What are you doing to secure your livelihood?**

Just hill farming. Everyone here is doing hill farming.

**Are there any of your relatives or neighbours who are working abroad?**

No. I do not see people go out and work outside but one of my nephews went to Bangkok to work. He went there a very long time ago.

**Do you have any official documents such as ID card, birth certificate and household registration document?**

No. I do not have that.

**Have you ever been separated from your family?**

No. We live together.

**Do you know about the 2020 election in Myanmar?**

No. I do not know about that.

**Have you ever voted in that?**

No. I do not even understand that. But if people say that it is compulsory to vote then we have to. But if people say that it is fine whether we vote or not then we will not vote.

**What are the essential needs of the people here?**

For me, food is very important and it is the essential need.

**Who controls this area? KNU or Myanmar government?**

I do not know about that.

**Do you think that the current situation is sustainable enough?**

If we are not forced to leave this place then I think we will stay here as long as we can, so I



hope the situation will be stable for us. We do not want to move to other places.

**How do you think the NGOs or other organizations should help you?**

They should help us with food. If we have food, we can live better.

**Have you ever regretted returning here?**

No. I do not regret it.

**Do you have anything to say to me or ask me?**

I do not have anything more to say. In the past, we had to move here and there a lot. We had difficult times. We had to stay in the forest and it was very hard.

**Thank you so much for your time.**

Thank you.

**Source #36**

Source doc #	Source # 36
Log #	20-15-A6-11
Interview date	November 28 <sup>th</sup> 2019
Location	Htaw Ta Htoo (Htantabin) Township, Taw Oo (Toungoo) District

**Full Text**

**Taw Oo District Interview | Saw Ak--- (male), Iz--- village, village tract, Htaw Ta Htoo Township**

**Status:** IDP returnee

**Temporary shelter or IDP camp:** Jd--- Village

**Return date(s):** Around 2015

**Ethnicity:** Karen

**Religion:** Christian

**Marital status:** Married

**Occupation:** N/A

**Position:**

**Where do you live?**

I live in Iz--- village. It is where I was born. However, my family had to flee to Ja--- [village] when I was around four years old. Later on, my mother passed away and then my family had to move to a plains community. Moreover, we were continually forced to re-relocate to Jb--- village by P'Yaw [Tatmadaw or Myanmar government] and we lived there for a year. Then, they forced us to return to our village of origin in the mountain community. At that time, I was just at the age of this boy, the son of this house owner [interview place]. Then, I gradually grew up and could remember the incidents.

**What is your religion?**

I am a Christian.

**What is your job?**

I am working on fields and plantation.

**When did you leave your village?**

I could not remember it well because I had been relocated multiple times and it was around 22 years ago. Therefore, I could not remember the date.

**Where were you displaced?**

I relocated to places such as Jc--- and Jd---. [Additionally], [a villager] stepped on a landmine on our way back from carrying rice [for KNLA] during the Myanmar military offensive at Jf--- and Jg-- hills. I was startled because it was near to me, if not for him, I would have stepped on it.

**When did it happen?**

It was in October or November 2010 before the ceasefire. After two years, the ceasefire was signed.

**How many of you went [for carrying rice]?**

There were four villagers [including himself] and four other people [not clearly mentioning who they are].

**Did you bring rice for yourselves?**

We carried rice for the government.

**For Myanmar government?**

For Karen [KNU] and it unexpectedly happened on our way. We didn't know whether it was the landmine of the KNLA or Tatmadaw. [Unfortunately,] he died on the way in the forest.

**How many years since you returned to your village?**

It has been around four years after displacing from places to place.

**Did you receive any support during your displacement?**

We received some slight supports like rice.

**Who provided it for you?**

They are Karen Office of Relief and Development.

**How about medical supplies?**

There were some military health worker teams [providing some healthcare services; possibly Free Burma Rangers].

**Could you please explain me more about your experiences during your displacement? For example, your livelihoods ...**

Before the ceasefire, we had to access food from Jh--- and Ji--- [Karenni State] couple times. I also went to do hill farming in Jh--- once. I also went to Jj--- with many villagers, around 60 or 70 of them, to carry food. We even travelled during night time.

**Did you just go there for carrying rice?**

Yes. When we came back on the way, we did not use torch lights. So, we tripped all along the way. We carried rice and stuff, as much as we could, because all those things are what we really need. And we had to carry it very far. The Tatmadaw army camps are based side by side close to Jj---. We could not use torch light [because they worry that Tatmadaw will notice]. It was

during rainy season. The rain cover sheets that we wore were scratched with the branches all the way. It was very hard for us. We had to work very hard for our livelihood.

**What changes do you see after the ceasefire and NCA?**

I do not see that much change. We just work day to day normally.

**Do you have a school here?**

We just have a school this year. We did not have the school until last year.

**Until which standard do you have?**

We have until standard three. In the past, the children went to other places for studying. Some students finished their study but some did not.

**How many students are there in this school?**

I think they are around 15 students.

**How many teachers are there?**

Only one teacher is here.

**Who funded the school? Is it a self-funded school or funded by other organizations?**

The villagers cooperate together with KNU [KECD] to support the school.

**What about the distribution of text books? Who supported it?**

KECD.

**Do you think this peace process is sustainable for you?**

I have no idea whether [the peace process] is sustainable or not because I see Tatmadaw soldiers everywhere.

**In your personal opinion, what do you think?**

I think it concerns me a little bit.

**Why?**

It is because the Tatmadaw soldiers in the frontline in our area here are not going back to their own place yet. If they go back, maybe the peace process could be sustainable but they are not going back.

**Is this village close to a Tatmadaw army camp?**

Of course. Their camp is based just there, around Jk--- village. It does not even take one hour and thirty minutes by foot [to get there]. So we are concerned that they are not going back yet. I cannot trust them because they detained me once or twice in the past. It was when I was young.

**How is your livelihood situation?**

The mice eat and destroy our paddy. In the past, I planted four baskets of paddy and in return I expected to get around 45 baskets of paddy. But I got less than 10 baskets of paddy since the mice ate and destroyed my paddy.

**Was that enough for your family?**

No way. I have seven children and we should have around 30 sacks of rice to secure my family. I had to buy 30 sacks of rice every year.

**How do you find ways to secure the livelihood of your family?**

We find and sometimes buy fruits or stuff to sell in order to buy rice. We cannot do anything else other than that. There is no other way. It is hard for us to earn money. We just work and eat one day at a time.

**What would you suggest for this peace process to be sustainable and long lasting?**

I think we just have to pray to God to help us because we cannot do anything by ourselves.

**Did people in this village leave to the refugee camp?**

Yes, some people already left to third countries.

**Did they come back here too?**

Some of them came back.

**Why do you think they came back?**

I am not sure. Some people might have come back because there was not enough food in the camp, or some might have come back because they did not want to stay there anymore. Some might just visit the village and leave to go there again.

**Do you think they have job opportunities and more safety in the camp?**

How can they have job opportunities? They have to collect T'La Aww leaf and sell it. We had no choice to do other jobs.

**Do they get enough food?**

They are distributed food month by month so they do not get enough.

**What do you think are the essential needs of this village?**

If there is genuine peace for us to be able to work in peace, it will be better. We cannot do anything.

**Are there any land confiscation happening here?**

No.

**Is there any drug use here?**

No.

**For the last question, do you have anything more to say or ask me?**

I do not think I have any.

**Can we use this information to write a report or for publication?**

Yes.

**Thank you.**

**Source #37**

Source doc #	Source # 37
Log #	20-19-A3-I1
Interview date	February 12 <sup>th</sup> 2020

Location	Bilin Township, Doo Tha Htoo (Thaton) District
Full Text	<p><b>Doo Tha Htoo District Interview   Saw Af--- (male), JI--- village, Htee Hpa Doh Hta village tract, Bilin Township</b></p> <p><b>Status:</b> IDP returnee <b>Temporary shelter or IDP camp:</b> Jm--- Village <b>Return date(s):</b> Around 2017</p> <p><b>Ethnicity:</b> Karen <b>Religion:</b> Buddhist <b>Marital status:</b> Married <b>Occupation:</b> Farming <b>Position:</b> Villager</p> <p><b>What do you do for your livelihood?</b> I am just doing a farm and clear the fields.</p> <p><b>How many children do you have?</b> I have five children.</p> <p><b>When were you displaced?</b> It was when I was very little. I could not remember.</p> <p><b>Where did you go to?</b> We went to Jm---.</p> <p><b>How long did you live in Jm---?</b> I did not count but I think it would be over 20 years. We went there when we were little and since we were students until we got married and had kids.</p> <p><b>How long have you been returning here?</b> It is around three years ago that we returned here.</p> <p><b>Is this place your birth place?</b> Yes.</p> <p><b>Were you pressured to come back here?</b> We just came back to our own place so there was no pressure.</p> <p><b>Did you inform the authorities there?</b> Yes, I told them that my parents already came back here and my mother was sick so I needed to come back to look after her. We told them like that and we came back.</p> <p><b>Were there any other families who came back with you?</b> Some people came back ahead and some came back later than us but we did not come back together with any other families.</p> <p><b>Was there any arrangement for your return trip to here?</b></p>

No.

**Did you come back on your own?**

Yes.

**Do you face any challenges here after returning?**

Not really. We just work day to day like this.

**Have you got any support since you came back here?**

No.

**Is this place safe for you to stay?**

Yes. We do not really have security concerns here.

**So you mean you feel safe here?**

Yes.

**Were you threatened before you returned here?**

No.

**Are there any UXOs in this area?**

In the past, children saw it when they went to school. There was one beside the road and I told people not to touch it.

**Are there any incidents caused by UXOs?**

No. It did not happen here. But we are not sure whether there will some more, but even if we see it, we will not touch it.

**Are you able to travel and work freely when you live here?**

Yes.

**Are there any flood issues and livelihood difficulties?**

No. We do not experience floods since we are doing hill farming.

**Do you get any financial support from any organisations?**

No.

**Are you able to access food and clean water properly?**

We go and get the water from the river source so we can say that we get clean water there.

**Do you also have a shower place and toilet?**

Yes, we have.

**What about the soap or health-related products? Do you get the support for that?**

No, we do not get those.

**How do you manage to throw the rubbish?**

We collect it together and throw it in the valley sometimes.

**Do you get electricity and water here?**

As I told you earlier, we get the water in the river source.

**What about electricity?**

Yes, we are given this electricity [probably solar panel].

**Did you build your house by yourself after returning here?**

No. It was already built. We did not build it.

**Do you have enough space for your family members?**

No, it does not have enough space so we built it to expand it more.

**Do you have enough mats, blankets and mosquito nets?**

People gave us mosquito nets once or twice but we have very limited mats and blankets. We use one for two to three persons.

**Do you have a clinic here?**

No.

**Where do you get treatment if you are sick?**

We have to go back to Jm--- village again to get treatment.

**Is it far from here?**

It takes around one hour by foot.

**Do you think the healthcare services are good?**

Yes, they usually treat us well. If we need more serious treatment, they send us to the hospital in K'Mah Moe or other places that have a hospital.

**What are the common diseases here?**

We mostly have coughing and fever but we do not really need to go to hospital because it is just a common minor illness. We just take medicine at home.

**Are the children here able to get primary education?**

Yes.

**How do you think of the education quality?**

I think it is good.

**Is the school far from here?**

Just a little bit far. But not so far.

**Is the school run by Myanmar government or KECD?**

It is run by KECD.

**Are there any challenges for children to get the education?**

I do not think there is a challenge.

**How many of your family members are working to secure your livelihood?**

I just work alone because my children are small and their mother is taking care of them so I just work alone.

**Are you able to secure the livelihood of your family?**

It is hard to secure our livelihood because it is not enough for us.

**What are you doing to secure your livelihood?**

I just cut the fields and climb the betel nut trees. We have to work very hard for our livelihood.

**Are there any of your relatives or neighbours who are working abroad?**

Yes, people most likely go out and work during summer.

**Do you get the vocational training while living here?**

Yes.

**Do you have any official documents such as ID card, birth certificate and household registration document?**

Yes, we have.

**Do you have land title?**

I have some.

**Who did it for you?**

KNU did it for us.

**Have you ever been separated from your family?**

No.

**Do you know about the 2020 election in Myanmar?**

No.

**Have you heard of that?**

No, I have never heard of that.

**It is the election of the president in Myanmar once in four years. So for this, are you given opportunity to vote?**

No.

**Have you ever voted for that?**

No.

**Have you experienced any human rights violations here?**

We are not sure because we do not know the meaning of it.

**What are the essential needs of the people here?**

We need water that we can access easily because the water source is very far. We have to climb a mountain to get there.

**Do you think that the current situation is sustainable enough?**

I do not know but we hope that it will be sustainable.

**How do you think the NGOs or other organizations should help you?**

I do not know how to tell. The houses we are living in now are actually the help of others already. They built it for us.



**Have you ever regretted returning here?**

No. We do not regret so far.

**Do you have anything to say to me or ask me?**

I do not think I have.

**Thank you so much for your time.**

Thank you.

**Source #38**

Source doc #	Source #38
Log #	20-19-A2-11
Interview date	February 11 <sup>th</sup> 2020
Location	Bilin Township, Doo Tha Htoo (Thaton) District
Full Text	

**Doo Tha Htoo District Interview | Naw Ah--- (male), Jn--- village, Htee Hpa Doh Hta village tract, Bilin Township**

**Status:** IDP returnee

**Temporary shelter or IDP camp:** Jm--- Village

**Return date(s):** Around 2017

**Ethnicity:** Karen

**Religion:** Buddhist

**Marital status:** Married

**Occupation:** Farming

**Position:** Villager

**What do you do for your livelihood?**

I am just doing farming and clearing the fields.

**How many children do you have?**

I have four children here with me. The other one already got married and lives in another house.

**Do you still remember when you were displaced?**

I think it was over 20 years already.

**Why were you displaced?**

It was because of the Tatmadaw.

**Where did you go?**

I went to Jm---.

**Why did you return here?**

It is our own place so we wanted to return.

**How long have you been here after returning?**

I think we returned and stayed here for over three years already.

**Is this village your birth place?**

I could say it is my birth place because I grew up here.

**Were you pressured to come back here?**

No. We returned on our own. We did not have any property there so we returned here.

**Did you inform the camp authorities before returning?**

Yes. As we returned on our own, no one told us anything. They did not say whether we can go back or we cannot go back.

**Did any other families come back with you?**

Yes, the Jn--- villagers came back too.

**How many people returned to stay here?**

I am not sure. I do not count the people.

**Did anyone take the initiative and manage the returning trip for you?**

I am not sure whether people managed the trip for us or not but we just talked to each other and then came back.

**So you just came back on your own?**

Yes.

**Did you face any challenges when returning back home?**

No.

**How many people from this village have already returned?**

No idea.

**After returning here, do you get any support from any organization?**

We got the support only once when we first came back here. It was a long time ago.

**When was it?**

It is turning to four years since we came back so I think it was over three years already.

**Do you feel safe staying here? Have you been threatened or something here?**

No. I have not experienced that kind of thing so far here.

**Were you threatened before coming back?**

No.

**Are there any UXOs here?**

I do not know that kind of thing so I do not know.

**Are you able to travel and work freely here?**

Yes, we just go to our farm and return home like this every day.

**Do you need to cross any check point?**

There is no check point when we go to our field.

**What about when you travel outside? Have you ever crossed check points?**

I do not go out. I just stay home and go to my field.

**Do you get any financial support when you stay here?**

No.

**Did you have to leave your properties like domestic animals or other things when you fled to Jm---?**

I did not have anything at all so I had nothing to lose.

**Are you able to access enough food and clean water?**

We just use the water from a river that flows nearby here.

**Do you have a shower place and toilet?**

We only have a toilet. We do not have a shower place.

**Do the people here get health-related supplies such as soap or sanitary pads for women?**

No. We do not get those things.

**How do you manage to throw your rubbish?**

We just throw it in the valley.

**Do you get the electricity and water?**

We only get the electricity. We do not get the water.

**How do you get the electric?**

I do not know.

**So how do you cook?**

We cook with the bamboo and firewood.

**Is it hard to get the firewood here?**

No. We can get it easily here.

**Do you have enough space for all your family members in your house?**

It is very compressed for us. We just live like that. We cannot afford to make [our house] bigger.

**Do you have enough mats, blankets and mosquito nets?**

We got two mosquito nets but we bought mats and blankets by ourselves. We also got blankets from the teachers. They gave one blanket each to the students.

**Do you have any clinic here?**

No. We do not have it here. We have to take the medicines in another village. If my knees are painful, I cannot walk there. I have to limp slowly.

**How far is the clinic from here?**

It is very far but I cannot describe it.

**Does the clinic belong to KNU or it is self-funded?**

I think it is a self-funded clinic.

**Do you think the service is good?**

If they take care of sick people well, I think it is good.

**What kind of disease is common in this area?**

I do not know because different diseases affect different people.

**Which one is most common?**

I think joint pain like knee pain and dizziness are common.

**Do you have a school here?**

Yes.

**Until how many standards does the school have?**

It has until seventh standard.

**How do you think of the quality of the school?**

I cannot read or write so I do not know. I think they give the education the best they can.

**Is the school far from here?**

Not really.

**Is it a KECD school or a Myanmar government school?**

I am not sure.

**Are there any challenges for the students to go to school?**

I do not know about others. But for my kids, during rainy season, I have difficulties buying rain coats and umbrellas for them because I do not have enough money for it. Even if I can buy one for them, it is spoiled in the next two or three days.

**How many people in your family are working to secure the livelihood of your family?**

I work with one of my daughters. My son is a little bit small.

**How about your other kids? Do they also help you?**

They do but not all the time.

**Do any of your family or your relatives go abroad to work?**

No. I do not see people go outside of the country to work. They just work here.

**Do you also get any vocational training here?**

No.

**Did you get your land confiscated when you were displaced?**

No. I have my land.

**Do you have any official documents such as ID card or household registration document?**

No. I do not have that.

**Do you know about the 2020 election?**

No. I do not know or understand that.

**Do you plan to vote in the election?**

I do not understand that because I have never done that.

**What do you think are the essential needs in this place?**

We need water.

**Who controls this place?**

Village head.

**Do you think that your current situation is sustainable?**

I do not know. If I do not die early, I think I will live longer and it will be more sustainable.

**Do you have any concern for your future?**

Yes, I might be concerned if I get older and cannot work anymore.

**How do you think you should be helped by others?**

I do not know but if they help, it will be great.

**How do you feel about staying here?**

I just feel normal. We live, work and eat, like that.

**Do you have anything to tell or to ask me?**

No.

**Thank you so much.**

**Source #39**

Source doc #	Source #39
Log #	20-24-A4-I1
Interview date	February 16 <sup>th</sup> 2020
Location	Ta Kreh (Paingkyon) Township, Hpa-an District
Full Text	

**Hpa-an District Interview | Naw Av--- (female), Mae La Ta Law Thaw repatriation site, Paingkyon Township**

**Status:** Refugee (spontaneous return)

**Temporary shelter or IDP camp:** Mae La Camp

**Return date(s):** Around 2014

**Ethnicity:** Karen

**Religion:** Christian

**Marital status:** Married

**Occupation:** Farmer

**Position:** Villager

**How many children do you have?**

I have three children and all of them are women.

**Are they going to school?**

Yes, they are.

**What is the name of the village you have returned to? Which village tract, Township and District?**

It is Mae La Ta Law Thaw area. I do not know the village tract, Paingkyon [Ta Kreh] Township, Hpa-an District.

**What is your religion?**

I am a Christian.

**Where is your village of origin?**

My origin village is Jp---

**Where is it?**

It is in District #5 [Hpapun].

**Which township?**

Dwe Lo Township

**Which refugee camp did you shelter in?**

Mae La Camp.

**Why?**

My parents-in-law first went to Mae La camp so my family also followed them to the camp.

**Had you ever experienced displacement before you moved to the camp?**

Yes, I had.

**Can you explain it a little bit more for me?**

It was when I was a child and single. I got married in the camp.

**How long were you in Mae La camp?**

I came to the camp in 2001 and then I got married with my husband. After that, I returned to my village once until I had two children and then I returned to the camp after my parents-in-law resettled to a third country. Furthermore, I gave birth to my youngest child and then we repatriated here [Mae La Ta Law Thaw].

**How did you return to here?**

I returned by myself.

**How are your livelihoods here?**

I am just working on farming such as corn, bean and paddy.

**Do you have land?**

Yes, I have.

**Do you think you will return to your original village?**

No, I do not think of it because I do not own any land there.

**How long have you been back here?**

It has been around six years.

**Did you receive any support for your return? For example, money, food and others.**

No, I did not.

**Do you feel secure?**

There are other people who live here, so I think I can live here.

**Do you have any security concern to live here?**

No, I do not have it.

**Are there any unexploded ordnances [UXOs] in this area?**

No, I do not hear about it.

**Did you receive Mine Risk Education [MRE] training in the camp?**

My husband attended it.

**Can you travel freely?**

Yes, I can travel for our livelihoods such as collecting bamboo, leaves and others.

**What army group is based in this area?**

It is only KNU/KNLA PC.

**Are there any natural disasters in this area? For example flooding, storm etc...**

Yes, there is. Especially this year, our paddy grains were destroyed because of the weather [drought] and it stopped raining immediately.

**To you think about going back to the camp and then officially returning by the arrangement [of UNHCR]?**

No, I do not. I think I will gradually work for my livelihood like this.

**How many households return by their own arrangement like you?**

There are some people; however I do not know them.

**Can you access fresh water?**

I dug a well for my family and access it by water pipe. We receive fresh water.

**Do any organisations provide support such as food and others?**

Young children under eight years old received oil and tinned fish once.

**Do you have enough hygiene sanitations?**

Yes, I have. We also received it from KNU/KNLA PC. We also received gardening tools such as watering can and a hoe.

**Do you receive female hygiene sanitation? For example, napkin..**

No, we do not receive them.

**Are there any people [organisations] constructing toilets for you?**

We received a toilet bowl and cement so we built a toilet by ourselves.

**Do women feel secure to stay alone in the house?**

Yes, we do.

**How do you manage your trash?**

For my family, we burn the trash such as plastic and keep the bottles separately.

**Do you have access to electricity? For example solar panel..**

We were informed that we will all get solar panels on the 20<sup>th</sup> this month [February].

**What organisation will provide it?**

I do not know the organisation's name. However, the village administrator knows it.

**How do you cook?**

I am cooking by charcoal that we have to buy from other villagers.

**Does your house fit your entire family?**

Yes, it does.

**Do you have enough clothes such as mats, mosquito net and blankets?**

Yes, we do. We also received mosquito nets once early last year and it was distributed by Thai [organisations].

**Do you receive any support from health worker teams?**

Sometimes they provide medicine for us and they also provide elephantiasis vaccination for children.

**Where do you access healthcare services?**

We do not have any clinic here so, whenever I am sick, I access healthcare services in Beh Klaw [Mae La] camp. There is one female health worker person in the area too.

**How about the other people?**

Some people go to Mae Taw [Ban Tha Song Yang Thai government hospital/clinic].

**What are the common illnesses facing people in your area?**

Mostly we face fever, running nose and cough.

**How much do you have to pay for a taxi from here to Beh Klaw?**

It is 70 baht per way.

**Do you have any concern on your way [to Beh Klaw]?**

Yes, we worry that [Thai] police will arrest us.

**Have you ever experienced it? And how did you deal with it?**

Yes, they [Thai authority] did not allow us to enter into the camp so that we had to return, like that.

**What is the grade of your oldest daughter?**

She is now in Grade # 7.



**What grade does the school in your area go up to?**

It is up to grade # 7.

**Do the children in your area go to school?**

Some children do, but some of them do not.

**Why don't they go to school do you think?**

I do not know. It might depend on their parents.

**Do you think the education is good quality?**

Yes, it is.

**What curriculum does the school apply?**

They use Karen Education Department [curriculum].

**Are there any problems for the repatriated children to access education?**

There will be no problems if their parents support them.

**How much do you have to pay for school fees per year?**

We have to pay only 100 baht and half a basket of rice per year.

**Are there any returnees who graduated in the camp?**

Yes, there are.

**What are they doing when they return here?**

I think they are working as teachers.

**Do any of them have access to job opportunities under the [Myanmar] government?**

No, they do not.

**Do you think the Myanmar government will recognise their education achievement certificate? Why?**

I personally think they do not recognise it, but I do not think about why they do not recognise it.

**As you mentioned that you work on farming and cultivating beans, paddy and biofuel corn, do you have enough food annually?**

Hmmm... we just have to work like this [seems like, it is just enough], however, it is not always proportionate for what we have to work to recover our livelihoods. For example this year, we did not harvest enough [paddy].

We got loans for [corn and bean] seeds from the [Thai] boss and then we have to pay them back with interest by the end of the season.

**How did you get the land?**

I bought it. I just saved [money] for buying it.

**How many acres is your land?**

I do not know.

**Do you have any type of land document?**

No, I do not have.

**How about the other people in this area?**

None of them has it yet.

**Have you tried to apply for it?**

We got an annual KNU land receipt that we have to pay the tax. We received information that people [KNU] will measure land [for land grant] for us.

**Does your land have good fertile soil?**

It is mixed with sand.

**So it means not really fertile soil. Do people who returned by the arrangement [of the UNHCR] access land for farming?**

I do not know. I think they do not get it. They might have to struggle for their livelihoods as I have done.

**How did you recover your livelihood before you could harvest the first crop from your farm?**

I just had to buy food from the shop.

**Are there any other job opportunities?**

There is seasonal daily labourer work on [corn and] tapioca plantations.

**How much are they paid per day?**

Women are paid 120 baht per day and men are paid 150 baht per day.

**Did you receive any vocational training [in the camp]? For example, beauty salon, tailoring, weaving and others.**

No, we did not.

**Are there any returnees of the UNHCR arrangement who have to leave their house for jobs in other places?**

Yes, there are some.

**Do you think to look for jobs in other places?**

No, I do not.

**Do you have access to National Identification and household registration documents?**

My two younger daughters, me and my husband got ID cards at the [KNU-KNLA] PC headquarters [Mae La Way Ler Moo], but I did not get the household registration document yet.

**How old is your youngest daughter?**

I think she was 11 years old when we got an ID card for her.

**Are you informed that she will have to renew it?**

Yes, we were informed about it.

**Who provided the ID card for you?**

I do not know.

**Have you ever lived separately from your family?**

Yes, I have, but it was a long time ago.

**Could you please explain it more for me?**

It was a long time ago so I do not want to talk about it.

**Where are your parents?**

My mother passed away and my father is now in my village of origin.

**Do you have a plan for him?**

Sometimes my father visits me.

**So you have communication with him?**

Yes.

**Did you hear about the 2020 election?**

No, I did not.

**Do you think you will have rights to vote?**

I have no idea [another woman present said we have never known about the election].

**Were there any people who voted in 2015?**

No, nobody, because we are just farmers so we have never voted.

**Do you want to vote?**

We have never voted for the new government.

**Can you participate in the village decision making level?**

If other people agree with any project, we also agree with them.

**Are you discriminated against as you are refugees?**

No.

**Do you have rights to worship?**

Yes, I do.

**What are the main requirements for your return?**

Our annual livelihoods [are the most important]. We can go to church and my children can go to school.

**Do you think you will permanently stay here?**

I cannot predict for the sustainability.

**In your opinion, what support should the government, local authorities such as PC and KNU provide for the returnees?**

They should support schools and construct a hospital for us.

**Do you regret your return?**

No, I do not.

**Do you want to add more information?**

No, I do not have any.

**Thank you very much for your time.**

Thank you

**Source #40**

Source doc #	Source #40
Log #	19-40-A1-I1
Interview date	March 2nd 2019
Location	Lu Pleh (Hlaing Bwe) Township, Hpa-an District
Full Text	

**Hpa-an District Interview | Naw Aw--- (female), Jq--- repatriation site, Lu Pleh Township**

**Status:** UNHCR-repatriated refugee

**Temporary shelter or IDP camp:** Mae La Camp

**Return date(s):** February 20<sup>th</sup> 2019

**Ethnicity:** Karen

**Religion:** N/A

**Marital status:** Married

**Occupation:** Hill Farming

**How do you call this area?**

It is called Jq---. Before they called it Jr--- and they did not like it so they changed it to Jq---.

**How many family members do you have?**

There are four people now.

**Which refugee camp did you live in before?**

I lived in Mae La refugee camp.

**When did you leave from Mae La refugee camp?**

We left there on February 20th 2019.

**When did you arrive here?**

We arrived here on February 21st 2019 because we slept in Myawaddy one night.

**How many people came back with you?**

There were over 500 people.

**Were they all from Mae La refugee camp?**

Yes.

**How many males and females?**

I did not know. There were over 500 people including males, females and children. I just heard people say that. [...]

**Where did they go back to?**

They went back to Js---, Jt--- and Ju---.

**Were the 500 people coming back to these three places?**

Yes.

**Can you please tell me how you came back and how the process was?**

We came back well from Mae La to Myawaddy. We had to wait to leave from Myawaddy all morning and they gave us one plate of fried rice to eat but we were not full. Some people wanted more but we could not ask for more rice. They said it is gone. We waited and we could leave from Myawaddy at 10 AM. We could not go out to find food while we were waiting for the car and we could not eat rice on the way as well. We were so hungry on the way. Later we asked the driver to stop the car beside the small shop on the road and we bought snacks to eat. We just got to eat light food [snacks] and Kway Tee Yo [Thai noodles]. It was not delicious but we had to eat because we were hungry. That was difficult for the small children. Even the adults could not bear it on the way because the journey was rough and hot on the way. Our bodies were so painful and tired the next morning when we got up.

**How about in the Thai side?**

It was no problem on the Thai side. The UN gave us rice packs and water.

**How about the time?**

It was no problem as well.

**You said you came back from Myawaddy on 21st right. Where did you sleep in Myawaddy?**

They called that place Red Cross [a place organised by Red Cross].

**Did the 500 people all sleep there?**

There were four rooms just like barracks.

**Did you meet with other refugees from other camps?**

Which refugee camps?

**For example like Noh Poe, Umphiem and others.**

No, we did not meet. We left very early because they said the refugees from Noh Poe will come back too. So we just went directly [Myawaddy].

**Can you please tell me about the food problems from Myawaddy that you faced?**

We got food cards and we went to take food in the evening. We got to eat fully in that evening. Only in the morning, we just got to eat lightly such as one pack of fried rice with a fried egg. The small children could not eat much but the teenagers were not full with that amount of food. They asked more but they did not get extra. The adults got to drink one cup of coffee as well.

**Did the children drink the coffee as well?**

Yes, they all drank.

**I heard the other refugees from the other camps got to eat rice that was not fresh. How about the rice you ate?**

I don't know [about the others] but we did not have to eat stale rice. We only did not get to eat enough rice. They said the rice is gone because they only had one pack for each person. I think

they got to eat the leftover rice that was prepared for us. [The packets of fried rice were probably the quantity urban dwellers would buy from a food stand, based on 3 meals a day. However, Karen villagers are used to much larger quantities of rice eaten less often and so would find this insufficient. This reflects cultural insensitivity in the organization of the repatriation logistics.]

**Why did your body ache?**

Our bodies ached because we had to ride the crowded car with many people and the road was so bumpy. We could not even sit in the car.

**What kind of car?**

The car [open-backed truck] had no roof and no back cover.

**What kind of car? How many wheels?**

It was a four wheel car; two wheels in the front and two wheels in the back. It was not very big. The car that carried our bags and things was big. Some little boys and men rode on that car.

**Were 500 people riding in one car?**

No. There were four cars; two cars for those whose would return to Js--- and two cars for Jt--- and Jq---

**There were four cars for 500 people.**

Yes, we had to ride very crowded. There was another Hilux car [Toyota pickup] but some little boys rode in that car as well.

**So you got body pain.**

Of course, we got body pain.

**Did you come back in the day time or night time?**

We came back in day time. We left there at 10 am but it was dark when we arrived here.

**Was it hot?**

It was very hot and dusty. We had to cover our heads, faces and noses. We were very dirty with the dust and looked like monkeys. We could not breathe well.

**Did anyone get sick when they arrived here?**

Yes, some children got sick and some people could not get up in the morning.

**Were there any supports for healthcare?**

I did not know. The local people just stayed at their houses. We thought we would get to come back so we would be happy. But we got so tired on the way and my sister told me that if the journey is like that I won't go back with my children.

**Do you think you were safe on the way?**

Yes, I thought it was safe and the Lu Pleh township administrator came along with as well.

**Were you checked by any armed groups on the way?**

No, we were not. The township administrator was with us because he had the responsibility to send us back.

**Were you provided information on returning and support before you came back?**

It was not enough on the Myanmar side. Before they told us each family would get between 500,000 to 1,000,000 kyats. But we did not get that amount, we just got 360,000 kyats. Then they said 60,000 kyats was for the transportation costs. They put 300,000 kyats in the envelope and kept 60,000 kyats apart and gave the envelope to my husband. Then they collected another 10,000 kyats from each person for transportation costs.

**So you had to pay 40,000 kyats for four members in your family.**

Yes.

**They took it from you.**

Yes. We had to pay for the household registration documents and ID cards they made for our family. We got food costs of 77,400 kyats for four members and if we add it all up it will be 430,000 kyats.

**How about from Thai side?**

We got the right amount of money as they'd said. Adults over 18 years old got 9300 baht and children under 18 years old got 7500 baht.

**What other things did you get in Myawaddy?**

We got some clothes, blankets, soap, and one box with one men's sarong and a women's sarong and shoes.

**How about the tooth paste?**

Yes, we got tooth paste, tooth brushes and soaps and cups.

**Who gave you the money?**

I don't know. Wasn't it Red Cross?

**Didn't they tell you who gave the money?**

No, they did not tell us. They called each family to go and sign and they gave the money. They gave us a big blanket. The Red Cross and UNICEF also helped us.

**What did the Red Cross and UNICEF help you with?**

The Red Cross gave us one box and there were tooth paste, tooth brushes and soap in it. The UNICEF gave us a big bottle with mosquito nets.

**Were the things enough for the family members?**

It would be enough for a family that has few members. But our family got enough.

**How many pairs of shoes did you get?**

We got three pairs of shoes; two pairs of men's shoes and one pair of women's shoes. The shoes lasted only three days and they were damaged. I think they just fulfill their responsibility ['tick the box']. I am not sure as well. I got a pot with a cover too. I told them but they did not give me more. We just wanted to come back so we did not ask them anything anymore. They did not let us go outside as well. There was a woman, her grandchild cried a lot because of hunger and wanted to eat snacks. That woman and another woman wanted to go outside and went to ask the permission but they were shouted at by the responsible people. And they did not get to go outside as well.

**Were they shouted at harshly?**

Yes.

**How long have you lived here now?**

It is just over a month now since we came back.

**Is the situation the same as you expected before you came back here?**

The situation is very different from what we thought.

**How did you think?**

We thought we would get something so that we can start and work for our livelihood. For example, I thought if we get a rice mill or animals, we can work with that for husking the paddy. We will have to go to someone else's rice mill to husk the paddy but we cannot afford it.

**What kinds of animals did you mean?**

I mean the animals that we can do husbandry with here.

**Did you get those?**

No, we did not get.

**What did you get when you got here?**

No, we did not get anything.

**How about land to work on?**

Before the leaders said this area was a forest [no one stayed here] so we are coming back to stay here together to become a village. I thought we would be able to work for our livelihood independently but I don't know what will happen in the future as well.

**Do you regret or feel sad because you left the refugee camp?**

Yes, I do. If I have known, I would not come back here. As other people can live and can eat there [in the refugee camp], we would be able to do that too.

**Why do you think it will be better if you stay in the refugee camp?**

We thought before that if we come back here, we would be able to work independently. But now the leaders have started measuring the land for road construction, but I don't have much hope. There is also land measuring for planning to construct the houses in the area. Even though we thought we would be able to work independently, there will be fewer areas of land to work on. I think we can be able to live in the refugee camp with the supports and care.

**Did you clean the areas of the land here?**

Yes, we cleared them to work on for our livelihood.

**How many years did you clear these lands?**

It was already five years.

**Who are planning to construct the road?**

They are from Peace Council [KNU-KNLA-PC].

**Are there any problems for the returnees who came back and cleared the land to live and work on here?**

I think there will be problems in the future.

**How about now?**



There are also some problems now because we have to cook for the workers who construct the road. Therefore, we lost our rice and chickens for cooking for them. However, we are afraid to complain about that because we are in their control areas. There is no one who will help us as well. Tomorrow they will come for measuring the house area as well and we will be called to measure that in the sun. Even if it is hot and we have to eat our own rice. One Burmese proverb says, you are taking care of your aunt's cows but you have to eat your own rice.

**What are the other problems? Can you tell me more?**

We heard that the area where we are living now, they will use it as the army camp. Therefore, we will have to move from this area but some people have built new houses recently. We will have to dismantle our houses and go back to stay in the areas that they limited for the returnees and local people to live. We will have to buy the land there for building a new house. The local people told them "you can only survive as an armed group because of the local people as well." The local people are now starting to raise their voices.

**Is anyone's land affected by the road construction?**

Yes, there are many people whose lands are affected. They plough and level the land which belongs to the local people. There is one person from Js---, he has land in front of my house and is working there. He said his lands were confiscated by the government. Who the government is, it's PC [KNU/KNLA-PC].

**Why did they confiscate?**

I think they will use it for their military purpose.

**Was he informed before his lands were confiscated?**

The PC authorities organized a meeting before and told us there will be a road construction project in the area. "If your land is included in the road construction project, you don't need to complain about that. It is just for you, for your village to have a good road. If any help is needed from you, you will also have to help." They even asked us to pay 1000 kyats from each house. Some people did not give because they could not afford that.

**Why did they confiscate the land of that villager from Js--- village, if they say the road construction is for the villagers?**

I don't know why as well. They will construct the road, a village and buildings.

**Did he receive compensation for the land?**

I don't know and I don't ask him as well. I think he won't get it because it was PC who confiscated his land.

**How do you think he will feel?**

He is feeling sad about that because he works on the land every year and clears it every year. He built a hut and planted banana trees on his land. But all of his banana trees were cut down. Your Uncle [an elder] said we have planted but we do not get to eat the fruit anymore. They cut our banana trees and Jw---'s banana trees as well. They feed their cows with those banana trees.

**Who is that person?**

He is the Operations Commander.

**Who is that Operations Commander?**

I don't know his name.

**Is his name Pu Jx---**

No. He is the PC Operations Commander. You will see them tomorrow when they come.

**Did the land owners get the compensation?**

No, no one gets it.

**Are there a lot of people whose lands were confiscated?**

All the people who live here, their lands were confiscated. You see now right there are three roads just in front of my house. How will you do it?

**Why do they construct a lot of roads?**

They said this will be a town in the next three years. I am not sure whether it will become true or not. Will it happen only after I die because this place is not good [enough to be a town]? But I am not sure.

**Do you hear if people whose land was confiscated will get the compensation?**

I don't know about that. I heard some people say they will give but some said they won't give.

**How about yourself? How do you think?**

I am not sure but I think I won't get compensation for the land. The Operations Commander said it was not easy to clear the areas around here. Yes, he said it. "In the past, if you brought a dog in these areas, it would not be able to come back. If you threw an egg in this place, it would not be broken [there was so much undergrowth]. We should give people payment for clearing these areas."

**Did he mean it when he said that he has to give the payment?**

He just said that. He doesn't do anything in reality. I don't see anything.

**Is there any meeting called to give compensation?**

No, there is not.

**Are there any other people whose lands were confiscated? You told me only the lands in front of your house were confiscated. Are there any other lands?**

All of Ma Jy---'s lands were also confiscated already.

**How many people?**

There is everyone who lives here. Saya Jz---'s also included. All of Ka---'s lands on the mountain side will be confiscated. They will level the lands and build a tower clock.

**Do the land owners say anything?**

They don't say anything yet because the PC hasn't started their plan yet. They only talked about the plan and which part of the land will be included in the town project.

**No one talks about anything yet.**

Yes.

**Do they dare to talk about it?**

I don't think so. If you complain about anything, you will be punished so one dares to talk about it.

**How about Ma Jy---**

She told me about her land case when I went to harvest the corn. She said, she will directly talk about this case to Pu Jx---: "I won't be satisfied if I don't get it."

**What does 'it' mean?**

It means the costs of the land.

**Do you mean compensation?**

Yes, because many acres of her land were confiscated. She said I must get the payment for every plot of land. You could even set up one whole [village] section on her land.

**Who is Pu Jx---**

He is Pu Jx---

**What is his position?**

He is in charge of this area.

**How many years have the land owners been working here?**

It was the same year as me. It might be over five years now and almost six years. But Ma Jy--- has worked here for many years because she came here before us.

**How many years will it be?**

It might be 7 to 8 years. She cleared the land and talked to Pu Kb--- and called us to here. They set up the place step by step.

**What did they tell you before you cleared this area?**

They said you can clear any plot of land area that you want and you will get them all. Later you can pass them to your children.

**They said those lands will be yours. What are the differences now with what they told you and what they are doing now?**

The Burmese proverb says, "Ka Daung Ta Cha Pay Ta Cha" [the authorities promised to share half the land with those who clear it]. Instead it all became theirs. Even though we have cleared the land, now they are doing whatever they want to do on the land.

**Do they own all the land?**

Yes.

**What do you think the local people whose lands are being confiscated will do for their livelihood?**

They [PC] said there will be better and more job opportunities when the town is built. We don't know what kinds of jobs and what we have to do for them. We do not have land anymore so how we will work?

**How will it be better?**

I don't know. They said that companies will set up. I don't know how it will be better.

**What can you do if you do not have land anymore?**

If we do not have land to work on, we will have to be other people's servants [workers].

**Will there be work for you?**

I do not know. We have to find work. If we do not have land, we won't be able to do anything.

**What are your concerns now?**

Yes, I have a concern about the road. I have built my house already far away from the road but they built a new road near my house. Therefore, I think I may need to move my house if they do more things.

**Do you have concerns for your family as well?**

Yes, of course. My family has to go whenever they call meetings. My son has to go and help measure the lands tomorrow even he is not feeling very well.

**Do they say it is volunteer work?**

They do not say that it's volunteer work [loh ah pay, literally voluntary work contribution but previously used by the military to demand forced labour], they just say to help them. He has to go tomorrow and has to pack his own lunch.

**Does everyone have to go?**

They want a lot of people but some people are busy. They cannot call everyone and now people started complaining about it.

**Do they pay for it?**

They do not pay anything. Even rice they do not give you so how will they pay you. They do not give us, so we say they do not give.

**Are there any houses that are affected by the road construction?**

Yes, there are. They plough and level the land in front of two houses. It might collapse in the rainy season when it rains. The houses are just built newly but they will be dismantled.

**Are there any houses that have been dismantled?**

Yes.

**Do they pay the compensation?**

No, they don't. They said they are constructing the road.

**Do the house owners say anything?**

No, they do not say anything.

**Are the house owners satisfied with that?**

They cannot do anything even if they are unsatisfied with that.

**Do they dare to complain?**

No, they don't.

**There is no compensation as well.**

Yes, there is none.

**I am going ask you about food. Did you receive any food when you came back?**

No, we did not receive. We have to work for ourselves.

**How about rice or paddy? How about the vegetables?**

They sometimes give us rice but we have to plant the vegetables by ourselves.

**How do they give?**

When my husband helps them work, they give one basket or one sack of rice.

**Do they give monthly and regularly?**

No, they do not give monthly. You can ask from them [local authorities] if you do not have enough to eat.

**Did the people who sent you [back here] give rice?**

The Myanmar government staff gave us one sack of rice.

**What else?**

There were two bottles of cooking oil, two packs of salt and 15 packs of noodles.

**Do you think those are enough for your family?**

How can it be enough? We have to buy them ourselves. We also shared those 15 packs of noodles with other people.

**How many acres does your family work on?**

There are only two acres left. We cannot guarantee even for those two acres.

**Do all the 500 people get one plot of land each?**

I don't know. I think they do not get.

**Do the women-led widow families get special supports?**

No, they do not get anything.

**What kind of land do you get? Are they VFV?**

Yes, they are VFV so we do not have the guarantee for them. [Vacant, Fallow and Virgin lands were decreed by an NLD government law to be automatically forfeit to the government.]

**Can you eat the plants that you have planted on the land?**

We can eat the vegetables that we have planted.

**Do you get anything or materials for farming?**

No, we do not get.

**How long do you think the leaders should help you after coming back here? How many months for you to be able to stand on your feet?**

They said they will take care of us for six months but we do not see anything.

**How about the rice?**

No, we do not get.

**Do you think you will be able to stand on your own feet after they help you for six months?**

I think so if we have our own land to work on.

**How certain are you that those lands will remain yours?**

If they cannot help us with the flooding, we can plant the peanut in summer on the land.

**How about paddy?**

Yes, we can.

**Do you know how many years you will be able to work on the land?**

I don't know but they said you can work on it for one or two years.

**How about after one or two years?**

I think we won't be able to work on those lands after one or two years.

**Will there be problems for the local people?**

Yes, there will be.

**What will be the problems that the local people will have?**

How we can work for our families if there is no land?

**Are there any landmines or UXOs?**

There are no [landmines and UXO] here but I think there are some in the forest.

**Were there any landmines or UXOs when you came back recently?**

Yes, we heard the explosion when people burned the fields last month.

**Where was that?**

The explosion place is close to our farms so we could hear it.

**Was it in March?**

Yes.

**Was it a big sound?**

Yes. It sounded under the ground.

**Was it under the ground?**

Yes. It might be many years already. It was heated by the burn and exploded.

**Are there [landmines/UXO] in other areas where people returned?**

I think those will be under the ground but we do not see them.

**Do you see them on the ground?**

No, we do not see. There is one big shell but I am afraid to go and look at it.

**Are there any children who see it when they go around or go hunt in the forest?**

They saw pieces of bullet shells but we threw them away.

**How about the bullets?**

No, we do not see them.

**Don't they see it when they travel?**

I don't know, they might throw them away if they see.

**Has anyone been injured by the bullet or landmine explosion?**

There is one person.

**Who is that?**

Saw Kc---'s father.

**When was it?**

It was in April [2019], when he was burning his farm. He stayed close to the burning area and when [the UXO] exploded, it hit his calf [leg]. He had to be hospitalised in Mae Sot.

**Was it when burning his fields?**

Yes.

**Why wasn't he sent to Mae La?**

There is a hospital but I think there is not enough medicine for the injury. Not only Mae La, he was sent to Mae Sot hospital.

**Do you think the UXOs are risky? How are they risky?**

Yes, it is risky. When the pieces of UXOs hit you, they will enter into your body. It will be poison when it hits the nerves. You can die when a lot of blood comes out.

**Do you think there is the risk of UXOs in this area?**

We have to be careful of it for ourselves. We may not see them with our eyes. This place was the major place of fighting in the past. There were trenches dug for hiding when the fighting happened.

**What do people do when they see the UXOs?**

We do not dare to touch them. I think people who understand and know about them will do something to them.

**Do you keep them in the right place or do you put the sign not to go or touch that area?**

Yes, the person who sees it [UXO] will mark it and keep it somewhere, for example on a log, and will let other people know not to go and touch it. When we burn the farms, it will explode by itself.

**What do you do when you are burning and not to hit you when it explodes?**

We start the fire and go very far to protect ourselves and avoid being hit [by the explosion].

**Do you dare to stay close?**

How could we dare to stay?

**Do you bury them under the ground?**

No, we don't.

**Do you think it is dangerous for the new returnees as they don't know the situation yet?**

Before we returned, we got to attend the MRE [Mine Risk Education] so I think they will know how to protect themselves.

**For example, when they burn the farms, they should not stay close to it. Do they know that? Is it dangerous for them?**

Yes, it is dangerous. There should be training for them.

**Do they receive any training [here]?**

No.

**Are there any organizations providing the training?**

No.

**Are there any organizations that will collect the UXOs?**

No.

**What do you think people should do with these UXOs?**

It will be good if there is training of what people should do with the UXOs and keep them at the right place.

**What are your concerns for your lands? Do you think you should sell it or not?**

I am not sure. Two people from Js--- sold their land but I think the new people who bought the land do not know about the road construction yet. I think they will also lose their land when the project is expanded. Where do we have to stay if we sell our land? We do not have other land to stay on so we just have to stay like this.

**Do you have any concerns?**

I don't know. The Tatmadaw soldiers are staying nearby and we can see them. They are always alarmed. When I get up in the morning to cook and make snacks and when they see the light, they ring their bamboo bell nonstop. When they see anything strange and whenever they see the light, they hit the bamboo bell. They never fall asleep.

**Do they stay close to this area?**



Yes, we can see them around here and we can see their fence.

**Do you feel safe because the Tatmadaw army camp is close to here?**

I don't feel safe and I don't know what will happen in the future. I am not sure if it will be more dangerous for us.

**How do you feel when you go to work, especially for women?**

I don't know at the moment. The last set of Tatmadaw soldiers who rotated to another army camp always came here for buying the chickens or other things.

**Did they always come?**

Yes, they came to pick the vegetables from the villagers' farms so the villagers complained about that. But I told them I use chemicals on my vegetables. You have to ask before you pick them. Otherwise, I don't know what will happen after you eat them. I didn't see them from the time I told them that.

**Did they go around the public area?**

Yes, some groups of soldiers do go around but some don't. Some came to buy the chickens but they did not pay the fair price. Therefore, I told them and they dared not to come. I think because there are not a lot of their soldiers coming to stay there yet. If there are a lot of soldiers, they will dare to come. Anyway I know they dare to do anything.

**What else do you have concern for?**

I don't know but if they just throw one hand grenade, we will all be gone.

**What are your concerns because their army camp is close to here?**

If the political situation gets bad, they can easily shoot us here. We are just worried about that because we cannot see through their hearts.

**How about for women? Do you dare to travel alone?**

No, I would not dare. We are afraid as well.

**What do you worry for?**

We are just worried of accidentally stumbling upon them when we travel alone on the way. Maybe they will kill us.

**What else do you worry?**

Maybe if they rape or kill you, what can we do?

**Do you worry for that?**

Yes.

**What will you advise the leaders to do for you to be able to work safely?**

I would like to say that if the leaders can arrange one plot of land for us to be able work on independently. We have cleared the area and live here so if they can give us one plot for each family. We cannot do anything if they confiscate all the lands. We will not be able to work at anything.

**What do you want to suggest to them about safety?**

I don't know what to say because the fish itself has the bacteria to destroy itself. They fight against each other, even the Tatmadaw doesn't need to fight against them. They are just doing

these activities and we have to suffer whatever.

**What do you want to suggest because the Tatmadaw army camp is close by here?**

They are constructing the road and it doesn't connect with the old road. They are not going to connect this road with the Tatmadaw road; Kd--- is the old road. They do the new road in Ke---. They do not have a conflict with the Tatmadaw so they construct a new road. Therefore, they construct the new road. They do not connect the road with the Tatmadaw road going to the Tatmadaw army camp. They just make a new way.

**It means the Tatmadaw soldiers and their army camp will be here?**

Yes, they will be here and never retreat.

**What do you want them to do?**

They can stay if they don't make any trouble. We cannot do anything if there will be more soldiers after the road is getting better.

**Do you want them to retreat?**

I don't know, we cannot drive them out.

**What do you want?**

They can go back and stay at their place. Why do they come and stay here? We do not do anything to them. We are staying in PC areas and there is no fighting as well. Therefore, they can go back to their own places.

**How about if they say they are here to protect the local people, will you accept it? Do they support you with anything?**

They do not support us with anything.

**Did you receive a house?**

No, we built it ourselves.

**How about the toilet?**

We built it ourselves.

**How about the water?**

We do it ourselves to have access to water as well.

**Do you get enough water?**

We can get it from the river because we are close to it.

**Do you have income?**

We are just selling vegetables and doing husbandry.

**How about the youths? Do they have any job opportunities here?**

They are working as day labourers.

**What else?**

There is nothing else.

**Are there any job opportunities for the family to get regular income?**

No.

**Does anyone have to go to other places for a job?**

Yes, they go.

**Where do they go and what do they work on?**

They go to the other side of the river and work on the yam farms.

**Where is the other side of the river?**

It is in Thailand.

**So they get daily payment.**

Yes.

**Are there any conflicts or human right violations since you came back?**

There was nothing before but now it is the new road construction.

**How about the landmine explosions?**

Yes.

**Did it explode before or after you came back?**

After we came back here, it was last month.

**There is land confiscation as well.**

Yes.

**Do you worry for your future?**

We are getting old but we worry and have to think for our children. We have to worry for their future.

**How?**

We have to worry for their future lives and jobs. Will the situation be sustainable? We do not know.

**Which soldiers do you have concerns about yourself?**

The Tatmadaw soldiers.

**How about other soldiers?**

No.

**Is there a school here?**

No school here.

**How about other places?**

Yes.

**How far do you have to go?**

It will be 15 minutes or 30 minutes by foot. It is in Ju---. There is another new road in Kf--- and that road is constructed through the local people's farms.

**Do you think it is safe for the students to travel to school alone? Can they go?**

They cannot go in rainy season because of mud and floods.

**How about the safety?**

It is not safe.

**Why?**

There is a Tatmadaw army camp on the way. It is not safe for the girls to travel alone.

**How many grades are at the school?**

It is up to grade 10.

**Is there a clinic?**

Yes.

**Is it far?**

It is just close to here, you have to walk 30 minutes.

**Do you have to pay for the treatment?**

No, but there are not enough medicines.

**How about the nurses' skills?**

It is not that much.

**What do you want to request from the leaders if they can do anything for you, such as the UN?**

If they can do anything for health, we want qualified nurses or doctors and enough medicines. If something happens or we are sick, we do not have money to get treatment in Thailand. If we have to go, we will need money.

**Which leaders do you mean?**

We mean to the UN and the leaders.

**Which group of leaders?**

The leaders who belong here for example, PC who are here.

**How about the Myanmar government? Do they need to take care of you?**

Yes, they promised to do it so they have to do it. They made ID cards for us so we became their citizens.

**When did they make it?**

Last month in March.

**Do they come and support anything?**

They just came and did ID cards and gave us household registration documents, Form 10.

**What is that?**

It is a household registration document.

**What else do you want to add?**

It will be good if they can support us as we are here.

**What kind of support?**

If they give us animals such as one goat or pig to raise. It will be a way to work for our livelihood.

**How about the lands?**

We want one plot of land to work for our livelihood.

**You already have it, right?**

Yes, but we do not want them to confiscate it, as we are growing old and need to be able to work on it.

**Do you want to add anything?**

No.

We worry for our security as well.

There is no safety here because we are close to the Tatmadaw soldiers and their army camp. There will be more soldiers after the road and the transportation is getting better.

**Thank you so much.**

**Source #41**

Source doc #	Source # 41
Log #	19-21-A2-11
Interview date	March 3th 2019
Location	Lu Pleh (Hlaingbwe) Township, Hpa-an District
Full Text	

**Hpa-an District Interview | Saw Am--- (male), Mae La Way Ler Moo repatriation site, Lu Pleh Township**

**Status:** Refugee (spontaneous return)  
**Temporary shelter or IDP camp:** Mae La Camp  
**Return date(s):** 5 Years ago (2015)

**Ethnicity:** Karen  
**Religion:** Buddhist  
**Marital status:** Married  
**Occupation:** Farmer  
**Position:** Villager

**How many children do you have?**

I have three children.

**Why did you return?**

When I came back to live here, our names were removed from the camp registration. That's why I returned.

**How long have you been out of the camp?**

It'd been five years.

**After you left the camp, did you return for in-person check-up?**

Sometimes, I went back and sometimes not.

**So your name was removed in the refugee camp, right?**

Yes.

**If your name was not removed, you think you would have stayed in the camp, right?**

Yes.

**How long had you been living in the refugee camp?**

I had been living in the refugee camp for over 20 years.

**Do you have UNHCR registration?**

Yes, I do.

**Do you think of going to foreign countries?**

No, I am not going.

**What about your children?**

None of my children were going to foreign countries.

**Were you all moving here [Mae La Way Ler Moo]?**

Yes.

**Why have other refugees not returned to live here?**

Other refugees would like to come back if they were provided with good support.

**Are ration provisions in the camp decreasing?**

Yes, supports provided in the camp is decreasing. Rations provided to refugees are not enough.

**So you go out from the camp to work. If you were not able to go back into the camp, you would not be provided rations, right?**

Yes.

**After you were not receiving rations in the camp, you applied for the repatriation, right?**

Yes.

**It's been a year since you returned. Were you supported when you returned to live here?**

We were not supported. But we can work independently. We do not have to afraid.

**Were you not given anything?**

Everyone in a family received a steel box of rice once every month.

**Who provided rice to you guys?**

He is Pu La---

**Were you told by the UN agencies and Myanmar government agencies anything about receiving support when you applied for the repatriation?**

No, we were not told anything.

**Was your repatriation voluntarily?**

Yes. It was.

**Returning here, you are not supported and you have to work by yourself. Why did you return?**

I returned because I enjoy living in our place of origin. We can travel independently.

**Were you allocated a place to live when you returned? Or did you have your land already?**

We were given an allocated place to live. We can live as long as we can. But we are not allowed to sell it when we leave from that allocated place. We can sell the house but not the land.

**Were you given lands to farm?**

We were allowed lands to work on. Our children were given a letter of recommendation if they want to continue higher education such as college in Myanmar government's schools. If we cannot afford school fees to provide for their further education, we can take that letter of recommendation so that our children will be funded.

**Is healthcare good in here?**

We have healthcare workers here.

**Do healthcare services require payments?**

Sometimes we had to pay and sometimes not. We do not have to pay for medicines, but we have to pay for injections.

**Is that a clinic that provides medicines?**

Yes, it is.

**What about the security condition of living here?**

Living here, we don't have to be afraid of the military.

**What are the situations with landmines and unexploded ordnance?**

Since I returned to live here, I have never heard or saw an explosion of them.

**What do you do for living?**

I do farming [rice farming] and plant corn in my land.

**How many baskets of rice you receive in a year?**

We receive between 10 to 20 baskets of rice in a year.

**Are they enough for you to survive for your livelihood?**

No, we had to buy more rice with the money we received after the corn had been sold.

**Were you sometimes going out to work in daily paid jobs?**

No, I worked on my farm.

**How much are daily labourers being paid in a day?**

Daily labourers are paid 150 baht in a day.

**Were you told to receive a Myanmar ID card when you returned?**

I was told that people who help in the process of obtaining Myanmar ID cards for returnees would come and register Myanmar IDs for us.

**How many returnees returned with you when you came back?**

There were five households from Beh Klaw [Mae La refugee camp]. Some households were from Noh Poe refugee camp.

**Were they returning together with you?**

Yes, they were returning together with us in the same day.

**Do children and disabled person receive support?**

No. There is no support for these people.

**Were you guys told to receive support when you returned?**

Yes, we were told to receive support. Then, we were later told that support is just one time and we will not get support anymore. But, when we applied for the voluntarily repatriation, we were told we would receive support.

**Are they Karen people who work on the repatriation process?**

Yes, they are Karen people.

**How did you do after they told you no support would be given to you guys anymore?**

What can we do? For me, it is okay if we can just work independently in our lands.

**What is your feeling about returning to live in your country?**

I enjoy living in my country.

**In the very beginning of your return, were there any difficulties facing you?**

No.

**What were beneficial things for you since your return and until now?**

We can work independently in our lands. We have freedom of movement.

**Were you warmly welcomed and allocated housing?**

Yes.

**Did you have to buy the house?**

No, we did not have to buy.

**Were you discriminated when you returned here?**

No, people did not discriminate against us.

**Why did Karen people become refugee?**

Karen people became refugee because of fighting. We could not stay in our homes. That's why we went to stay in refugee camps.

**What message would you deliver to refugees who do not return?**

It is depending on the whether they would like to come back or not. They are welcomed.

**Do you know the conditions in the refugee camp now?**

I have no idea about the conditions in the refugee camp. I never went back after I left.



**Can we use the information you provided us and a photo of you for publication?**

Yes, you can.

**Thank you so much.**

**Source #42**

Source doc #	Source # 42
Log #	20-20-A2-I1
Interview date	February 6th 2020
Location	Daw Hpa Hkoh (Thandaunggyi) Township, Taw Oo (Toungoo) District
Full Text	

**Taw Oo District Interview | Saw Ai--- (male), Lb--- village, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township**

**Status:** IDP returnee

**Temporary shelter or IDP camp:** Klay Wa Mu Htaw area

**Return date(s):** 2012

**Ethnicity:** Karen

**Religion:** Christian

**Marital status:** Married

**Occupation:** Farmer

**Position:** Villager

**Are you married?**

Yes, I have five family members.

**What is the name of the village you are living in?**

Shoh Hkoh village.

**In which Township is it located?**

Thandaunggyi Township.

**What is it in Karen?**

Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, Taw Oo [Toungoo] District.

**How many households do you have in your village?**

We had 70 households in the past.

**What about now?**

We only have over 30 households now.

**As the houses are decreasing, could you please tell us what the challenges are?**

At the time of the State Law and Order Restoration Council [SLORC] and State Peace and Development Council [SPDC], they were very active and entered the villages with their columns and killed the villagers. The villagers didn't dare living in the village anymore so some people fled to towns and some went to refugee camps.

**There are now over 30 households that have repatriated to the village. How long ago did they return?**

The people first came back in 2012 when the preliminary ceasefire was signed [between KNU and Myanmar government].

**Are some people still in the refugee camp?**

No. They have all returned.

**Did they come on their own or with the support of the organisations?**

I think that they came back on their own. I am not sure about the support of the organisations.

**Did you experience the Tatmadaw burning your house?**

Yes.

**When did it happen?**

It was around 1996 or 1997.

**How did it happen?**

The fighting happened and they burned all the houses. They only left a church. They burned the rest of the houses in the village.

**Did they kill any villager?**

Yes, they killed Saw Lc---

**When?**

In 1997.

**Do you still remember the battalion number of the Tatmadaw who killed Saw Lc---?**

No. I cannot remember that.

**How did they kill him?**

They shot him but it did not hit Saw Lc--- so they tried to catch him and I think they killed him in Day Lo Place because they brought him there.

**Did people find where they buried his body?**

No.

**Did you know the leader of that Tatmadaw group?**

No.

**How did they catch that villager?**

They caught him in a hut.

**What did he do there?**

He went there to plant the rice on the hill farm.

**They caught him and what did they say about him?**

They accused him that he was affiliated with KNLA so they killed him.

**Before they killed him, how many days did they bring him around with them?**

I think it took three to four days because they went back to Day Lo Place to kill him.

**Were there any killings that they committed?**

Yeah. But we do not exactly know the names of whom they killed but we knew the village of the victims they killed.

**Do you still remember when it was?**

It was in 1995.

**What about the month?**

It was in November.

**What about the perpetrators' battalion number?**

I do not remember it.

**Did anyone take action against the human rights violations Tatmadaw committed at that time? Like, charge them or something?**

At that time, how would we dare to take action or accuse them? No one dared to take action.

**After 2011, were there any human rights violations such as sexual abuses or other abuses that were committed by the Tatmadaw? Like, road construction?**

Yeah, I see that they are constructing the road in Baw G'Li [Kler La] Town.

**Do you know where they have already constructed the road?**

It reached to Bu Hsar Hkee village already.

**Do you know why they construct the road there?**

I think they aim to construct the road until it reaches to Moe Hkee and to Mu Sel and Hpapun towns.

**Are their soldiers also there?**

Oh, their soldiers are very strong. In Bu Hsar Hkee village, they even built their army camp with concrete and they also have a helicopter pad.

**Did you happen to see it?**

Yes, when I went around in the past, I saw that.

**Are the villagers who returned to stay here doing well with their livelihood and everything? Is it different from the past?**

Yes, in the past, we could not travel but now we can travel easier than the past. But young people these days are not like the people in the past. They do not want to work. I think it is because the situation is changing and it is more modernized. Since our children live this way, we are very worried about them.

**Why do you think like that?**

For example, they only travel with motorbike these days and do whatever they want. They are not like us anymore.

**What do you think the reason is? Is that because of the development of the community or because of drugs?**

We do not have drugs in our area here. I think it is because they are teenagers and are still

childish so they want to do whatever comes to their mind. They do not have enough experiences or are not mature yet.

**What about for older people? Are they still worried for their livelihood like in the past?**

Yes, we have a lot of concerns now. We heard that Tatmadaw will come and construct the dam so they transport more soldiers along the way to Kler La town, Klay Hso Hkee and Bu Hsar Hkee villages. They said they are doing the peace process but they send more soldiers to our mountain places here. Therefore, the "peace process" thing is now our biggest concern and the biggest disturbing thing for us. So, we, the civilians should know ourselves that even though we say we are doing peace with the Myanmar government, it is not easy for us. The conflict the Tatmadaw has created has been going on for over 70 years now. When they signed a ceasefire with the Karen, they went and attacked the Kachin. And when they signed a ceasefire with the Kachin, they attacked the Karen. They have been doing this for many years already. They are not doing it with an honest heart. They will keep doing the same to the ethnic groups in the future as well. Therefore, there is no way for civilians not to worry about it. Everyone worries about it.

**You mean to say that the peace process between KNU and Myanmar government is not sustainable. Is that right?**

Yes. That is right. That is my personal opinion.

**You said that there are over 30 households from which the villagers came back to build their houses and stay. Are there any other places or outside of this village that the villagers are relocating?**

There are over 30 households in the village but some stay in their garden. They build their houses in their garden because they are afraid of Tatmadaw attack if they build the house in the village. We do not trust Tatmadaw and Myanmar government yet.

**After 2010 to the present, the Myanmar government practices the rule of the people system [the interview is referring to the 2010 general elections]. Like, they are practicing democracy and not the Tatmadaw anymore. So do you think the situation remains the same with the past or do you see any change?**

I do not see any change because they do not make the amendment to the 2008 constitution so there is no change.

**What do you think we should do to that?**

I think we should do our best. In my opinion, I think KNU and Myanmar governments, including the United Nations, have to settle this together. It should involve the pressure of foreign countries.

**How do you think the foreign countries should help to improve the situation in Myanmar?**

They should help us with development and settle down the situation.

**What do you think we need the most if they help?**

We need Karen one kyat and Bamar one kyat [equality between Karen and Bamar]. The Myanmar government should give us the chance to rule over ourselves. [...]

**Does Myanmar government give any guarantee to the villagers in the mountain area?**

We do everything by ourselves. We do not get any support from anyone.

**If you go to town or something, do you have any check point on health assurance on the**

**way?**

No, we do not have that.

**What about the children who want to study?**

If they want to study then we just send them to school. We send them to Karen Education and Culture Department [KECD] School.

**Up to how many standards do they have?**

Hsa Thoo Lei school has until 8 standards.

**Where is the Hsa Thoo Lei School located?**

It is in Thandaunggyi Township.

**So it is a middle school, right?**

Yes.

**Why do you not send your children to Myanmar government school?**

As we live in the mountain area, we are not reassured of everything about them if we send them to Myanmar government school. We feel more confident to send them to KECD school.

**What is the reason you cannot trust sending your children to Myanmar government school?**

Because it is very far from us. We cannot look after or take care of our children closely. We worry that they will be in the wrong path.

**What is the situation of Hsa Thoo Lei school?**

It is good.

**How many students are there?**

There are 40 students.

**How about the teachers? How many of them?**

There are 4 female teachers and 4 male teachers, altogether 8 teachers.

**Is there any clinic?**

Yes, there is a Township clinic.

**Do the villagers go to get treatment there?**

Yes.

**Do they have enough medicine?**

Sometimes they have enough but sometimes not.

**Do they ask for medical fees?**

No. They do not ask for that but they keep a donation box so if you are willing to put it then you can.

**What do you think KNU government should do to keep this National Ceasefire Agreement [NCA] or the peace process sustainable?**

I think KNU authorities should trust each other, be true to one another, love each other and have to work together within themselves. If you cannot trust each other, you cannot build peace.

**Since KNU signed NCA, do you think they trust the Myanmar government or not?**

As you know, Karen people love peace and they are humble so when something bad happens, we usually avoid facing it because we do not want troubles or conflict. We keep avoiding things like that even though we have to face it. We usually said, "let them do what they want to do. When the time comes, they will realize themselves their wrongdoings." Therefore, there is no development.

**How do you see the Tatmadaw activities?**

I think they are doing things that they are supposed to do.

**What exactly do you see they are doing?**

Yes, they keep sending their rations, soldiers and ammunitions to their frontline army camps. They keep coming to the mountain area here. They do not decrease it; instead they increase and strengthen their army camps more. Now they come and construct the signal post here. We did not have that kind of thing in Kler La town and Klay So Hkee village in the past. They come to construct things like that now.

**How is it a benefit to the villagers? Or does it benefit only them?**

Whether it is a benefit to the civilians or to them, trust is the most important thing. They do not work well together so it is very hard for Karen people because they are always oppressed by Burmese people.

**Is there anything you want to tell me?**

As we live here, it is not easy for us even though they are doing the peace process. It is even getting worse. So, as civilians, we have to be alert all the time. This is my personal opinion. I do not have anything else to say.

**Thank you. Can we use the information you provide us to write a report or for publication?**

Yes, you can use it.

**Thank you.**

Thank you.

**Source #43**

Source doc #	Source # 43
Log #	19-33-A1-I1
Interview date	March 2th 2020
Location	Noh T'Kaw (Kyainseikkyi) Township, Dooplaya District
Full Text	

**Dooplaya District Interview | Naw Ax--- (female), Lay Hpa Htaw repatriation site, Lay Wa Ploh village tract, Noh T'Kaw Township**

**Status:** UNHCR-repatriated refugee

**Temporary shelter or IDP camp:** Ban Don Yang Camp

**Return date(s):** February 2019

**Ethnicity:** Karen  
**Religion:** Christian  
**Marital status:** Married  
**Occupation:** No work  
**Position:** Villager

**Where do you live?**

Before, I lived in LI--- village, which is in Mergui- Davoy District. Then, I went to live in Ban Don Yang [refugee camp].

**Is it your village of origin?**

Before I came here, I lived in Thaw Pa [also known as Ban Don Yang] refugee camp. After that, I applied for the voluntarily repatriation. UNHCR sent us to an allocated place.

**When did you come back here?**

I left from Ban Don Yang Camp on February 21<sup>st</sup> 2019.

**Was it your voluntarily repatriation or did UN ask you to apply for it?**

We were told that we could apply for repatriation process if we want to. They did not force us. We were enthusiastic to come back. That's why we applied for it.

**What did you do when you were living in Ban Don Yang?**

I had a Kway Teow [Thai noodles] shop.

**Were you provided enough rations when you were in the camp?**

TBC [The Border Consortium] provided us rations card which had 289 baht per person to spend for a month. We have three people in our family. So we received over 800 baht.

**Was it enough for you?**

No, it was not enough for us.

**Do you know if returnees are being provided with anything in their return?**

On our way back, UNHCR gave 9300 baht to adults and children received 7500 baht each.

**Did you face any problem on the way to [Myawaddy]?**

No. The UN prepared food for us. Food arrived before we arrived to a place. However, when we were in Myanmar, rotten food was provided to us. Even water was not provided to us. We were told that people would come to pick up us 8 O'clock in the morning. We were not picked up until 10 in the morning. Then, we phoned the UN's staff about what's going on our way back to the allocated place. Later, they provided food to eat. After that, we returned.

**You said you had to sleep on the way, right?**

Yes, we had to.

**Can you tell us what did you do with the money you were provided by the UNHCR?**

We had so many needs. Even water for drinking we had to buy when we came back here. I hope the situation will get better in the future.

**What is the security concern here?**

I don't know as it has been just three days since my arrival here. I will have to get familiar with the situation going on here. Now, I don't even know where to buy food here.

**What problem do you have living here?**

We have problems with access to water.

**How many days did you have to sleep on the way by the time you returned?**

I had to sleep two days on the way. I had to sleep one day at Mae Sot City.

**Were you enthusiastic to return?**

Yes.

**Do you want to add more?**

In the past, we suffered a lot. That's why we fled to Ban Don yang Camp.

**How many years had you lived in Ban Don Yang?**

I arrived at Ban Don Yang in 2006. I lived in Ban Don Yang for 13 years. After that, there was a voluntarily repatriation process that we could apply to if we wanted to. I applied for it.

**Do you have anything else to say?**

The repatriation from the Thailand side is good. But, it is really difficult when we arrived in Myanmar. On our return, we had to sleep on the way.

**What about housing here?**

I want it to be repaired. It is really bad now.

**Will you allow us to use the information and your photo you provided to us?**

Yes.