



Field Report

December 18, 2014 / KHRG #14-4-F1

Doooplaya Field Report: January to December 2013

This Field Report includes information submitted by Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) researchers describing events occurring in Doooplaya District between January and December 2013. It describes different human rights violations and other issues important to the local community, including land confiscation, arbitrary taxation and demands, forced labour, theft of villagers' livestock and access to education and healthcare.

- *On February 18th 2013, villagers in M--- village reported to KHRG that their lands next to a vehicle road were confiscated by the nearby R--- village administrator, in order for him to establish a rubber plantation.*
 - *In July 2013, Tatmadaw Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) #356 stopped Saw T---, a S--- villager, while he was travelling back to his village and seized his cows. The company commander of LIB #356 demanded 15,000 kyat (US \$14.52) for the release of all of Saw T---'s cows.*
 - *On September 9th 2013, L--- villagers, including one tractor owner, were ordered to transport ammunition and soldiers' luggage for Tatmadaw Artillery Battalion #313. The tractor owner, Saw K---, was compensated below market price for his labour, as well as provided with food and petrol.*
 - *On three separate occasions, villagers in D--- village report that Light Infantry Division (LID) #231 were responsible for killing and eating villagers' buffalo.*
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Land confiscation

During 2013, KHRG continued to receive reports from rural villagers concerning new and ongoing land issues. Local villagers reported that land confiscation was still occurring and that they had not received compensation for land that had been appropriated prior to 2013. As a consequence, villagers experienced problems earning their livelihoods and KHRG has received several reports of villagers losing their homes. Furthermore, some villagers have raised their concerns that they may have to migrate to refugee camps or live in the forest with no land to work or build a home on.

In February 2013, villagers in M--- village reported to KHRG that they were told by a R--- village administrator that their lands beside the vehicle road should be cleared and that he, the administrator, who is from a neighbouring village, was going to use that land to establish a rubber plantation. The villagers reported their concerns to KHRG as they are now unable to earn their livelihoods, as their lands were confiscated by the village administrator.¹

¹ This information was included in an unpublished incident report from Doooplaya District received by KHRG in September 2013.



The above photos were taken on February 18th 2013 in M--- village, Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District. The two top photos and bottom-right photo show the villagers' lands beside the vehicle road which have been confiscated in order to establish a rubber plantation. The villagers were told this by the R--- village administrator. The villagers highlighted their concerns as they no longer have any land to work on to earn their livelihoods. The bottom-left photo depicts the nearby Tatmadaw Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) #355 and #356's base. [Photos: KHRG]

The villagers also reported that beside M--- village, which is close to Light Infantry Battalion (LIB)² #355 and #356's base, road construction machines have been set up at the crossroad of M--- village in order to build the Asian Highway.³ A local villager and rubber plantation owner named Saw Z--- said that villagers would be compensated 3,000 kyat (US \$2.90)⁴ for each rubber tree which had to be cut down for the Asian Highway, however KHRG was unable to confirm whether the villagers had received compensation prior to the publication of this report.

² Light Infantry Battalion (Tatmadaw) comprised of 500 soldiers. However, most Light Infantry Battalions in the Tatmadaw are under-strength with less than 200 soldiers. Primarily for offensive operations but sometimes used for garrison duties.

³ The Asian Highway Network is a United Nations Economic and Social Council for Asia and the Pacific-supported project that aims to link 32 countries in Asia across 141,000 kilometres of roadway. In Burma/Myanmar the project has involved land confiscation and forced labour. For more information about the Asian Highway Network, see "[Hpa-an Situation Update: Paingkyon Township, July 2014](#)," KHRG, October 2014; "[Tollgates upon tollgates: En route with extortion along the Asian Highway](#)," KHRG, October 2009; and "[Development by Decree: The politics of poverty and control in Karen State](#)," KHRG, April 2007.

⁴ All conversion estimates for the Kyat in this report are based on the December 3, 2014 official market rate of 1033 kyat to the US \$1.



The above photos were taken on February 18th 2013 in M--- village, Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District. The first two photos show the villagers' rubber plantations which would be destroyed during the Asian Highway's construction. The bottom two photos show construction equipment and material for the project. Local villagers raised their concerns to KHRG that construction of the Asian Highway would damage portions of their lands. [Photos: KHRG]

In D--- village, a 27-year-old villager named Naw Eh--- also mentioned that she had lost her plantation lands and house. This was due to the building of school and hospital buildings in her village by the Burma/Myanmar government. On her plantation she planted palm trees, mango trees, jack fruit trees, and coconut trees, but all of those were cut down and damaged after the school construction started. She was told that she would receive compensation for what she had lost or would be provided with a place to live, but she said no one has come and discussed anything about that with her. She also raised her concern that it is already time for villagers to repair or build their houses in order to prepare for the monsoon season, but she still has not been provided with land to build shelter on. She also mentioned that not only was her house and plantation lands destroyed, but other villagers who live near her had their lands destroyed as well.⁵

Likewise, 44-year-old Ma La---, another D--- villager, reported that her lands were destroyed due to Burma/Myanmar government construction and she was told she would be given a place to stay, but she has still not received any land to stay on. All of her plantation fields were destroyed, without her being paid compensation. She also mentioned that she heard from other villagers that the Tatmadaw had said that they had bought the land from her at a total cost of 100,000 kyat (US \$96.80). Ma La--- reported that she was very angry when she heard about that, as she has not been paid any money for the loss of her land and that instead, the Tatmadaw were creating rumours

⁵ This information was included in previously published KHRG report "[Dooplaya Interview: Naw A---, July 2013](#)," KHRG, October 2014.

that they had bought the lands from her. She also said that the village head told her that she would be compensated 100,000 kyat, but she has not received any money yet. She also mentioned that she will be satisfied with whatever compensation she will be given.⁶

“I do not have any place [to live right now]. My parents also do not have any other children to live with so I have already asked them to come and live with me. However, as my plot has been destroyed, we have to live in other people’s houses. If I have more children and if they [the owner of the house where she is temporarily living] does not provide me with any place to live [in the future], I will have no place to live and I might have to go and live in the forest. And if we do not dare to live in the forest, there is only one other option: I need to go to live in a refugee camp.”

Naw Eh---, (Female, 27), D--- village, Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District
(Received in July 2013)⁷

Moreover, the D--- villagers also raised the issue that they do not know where to submit complaints regarding what they have lost, as they have not met with anyone involved in the project. They know that it is the Tatmadaw, but they do not know which battalion or group exactly.

Arbitrary taxation and demands

In Dooplaya District, arbitrary taxation and demands were still being committed by the Tatmadaw in 2013. In July 2013, in L--- village, Kawkareik Township, a 55-year-old male S--- villager, named Saw T---, was arrested by Tatmadaw LIB #356. Saw T--- had been on his way back to S--- village after buying 15 cows in another village. Upon encountering LIB #356, they seized his cows. The company commander told him that they would release the cows if he paid them 15,000 kyat (US \$14.45) for all the cows. Saw T--- was allowed to meet with the L--- village head and the next morning gave money to the soldiers and asked them to release his cows. The 15 cows were released after the owner, Saw T---, paid the money.⁸

Generally, the villagers in Dooplaya District also reported that since the 2012 ceasefire,⁹ the only improvement is that there is no fighting, but the villagers still have to provide items, such as rations, petrol fees for cars and motorbikes to many groups [armed actors], which costs more money for them. However, they reported that the manner in which armed groups ordered items had changed. For instance, previously armed groups would order villagers to bring chickens to their army camp without compensation. Now, however, although the villagers are still ordered to provide chickens, they are compensated for it.¹⁰

Forced labour

⁶ This information was included in an unpublished interview report from Dooplaya District received by KHRG in July 2013.

⁷ This information was included in previously published KHRG report “[Dooplaya Interview: Naw A---, July 2013](#),” KHRG, October 2014.

⁸ This information was included in an unpublished incident report from Dooplaya District received by KHRG in October 2013 and was also included in previously published KHRG report “[Dooplaya Interview: A---, September 2013](#)” KHRG, July 2014.

⁹ On January 12th 2012, a preliminary ceasefire agreement was signed between the KNU and Burma/Myanmar government in Hpa-an. Negotiations for a longer-term peace plan are still under way. For updates on the peace process, see the KNU Stakeholder webpage on the Myanmar Peace Monitor website. For KHRG’s analysis of changes in human rights conditions since the ceasefire, see [Truce or Transition? Trends in human rights abuse and local response since the 2012 ceasefire](#), KHRG, May 2014.

¹⁰ This information was included in previously published KHRG report “[Dooplaya Situation Update: Kyonedoe Township, January to August 2013](#)” KHRG, July 2014.

Villagers in Dooplaya District reported that forced labour had decreased in 2013. However, KHRG received reports of armed groups occasionally ordering villagers to transport their materials or food for them, although villagers would be compensated for it at below market prices. For instance, on September 9th 2013, L--- villagers were ordered to transport ammunition and soldiers' luggage for Tatmadaw Artillery Battalion #313, including the use of one villager's tractor. The villagers reported that the tractor owner, Saw K---, received payment after transporting for the soldiers, however, the payment that they provided was very little. They also provided food and petrol. The villagers also reported that there were times when they denied the request of the soldiers. In that case, they would be scolded by the Tatmadaw for not respecting their request.

When villagers were asked about whether they have to provide thatch shingles or build fences for armed groups or not, a villager replied that:

"There were not things like [villagers] having to build fences for the military, but regarding the thatch shingles, they [soldiers] come and buy them if they need them... Sometimes they [soldiers] come by themselves and sometimes they [villagers] receive orders from the army base... Last time it was 150 thatch shingles from each village in the whole [village tract]. Both G--- and C--- had to provide 150 thatch shingles. H--- [village had to provide] 150 thatch shingles. [They had to provide them] in the beginning of the rainy season. They paid [each village] for 150 thatch shingles."

Saw Ma---, (male, 42), L--- village, Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District
(September 2013)¹¹

Theft of villagers' livestock

On May 10th 2013, soldiers from Light Infantry Division (LID)¹² #231 based at Choo K'Lee army camp, shot a buffalo owned by 27-year-old D--- villager named Saw Ha---. When Saw Ha--- could not find his buffalo, he went to look for it and found soldiers' footsteps leading to the place where they had killed and ate his buffalo. He also saw the remains of Tatmadaw soldiers' clothes and footprints from their boots on the ground, however, he did not see the Tatmadaw soldiers in person.

Likewise, on July 20th 2013, the same Tatmadaw LID #231 killed and ate two buffalos belonging to Saw H---, a 44-year-old D--- villager. He also only saw the place where the Tatmadaw soldiers killed and ate his buffalo. Saw H--- said, *"When I went there, I saw that my buffalos were already killed. One of my buffalos was torn into two parts while the other was already completely eaten and only the intestines and bones were left."* He has been grazing his buffalo in the same place for many years, but never had problems with anyone stealing his buffalo before this incident. Only when the Tatmadaw started to operate in the area, have many villagers lost or had their livestock eaten.

Again on August 5th 2013, the Tatmadaw LID #231 killed and ate a buffalo belonging to a 40-year-old D--- villager called Saw B---. When he was looking for his buffalos, he was informed that LID #231 soldiers already killed and ate them. Saw B--- said, *"I didn't see it with my own eyes, but my friends witnessed it. They saw seven soldiers with their guns kill my buffalo and grill its meat. If they asked me about it, I would have considered giving it to them, but now they just stole it. I do not need to get back the full*

¹¹ This information was included in previously published KHRG report "[Dooplaya Interview: A---, September 2013](#)" KHRG, July 2014.

¹² Light Infantry Division (Tatmadaw); commanded by a brigadier general, each with ten light infantry battalions specially trained in counter-insurgency, jungle warfare, "search and destroy" operations against ethnic insurgents and narcotics-based armies. LIDs are organised under three Tactical Operations Commands, commanded by a colonel, (three battalions each and one reserve), one field artillery battalion, one armoured squadron and other support units.

compensation, but at least I want them to compensate me for half of the cost.” Saw B--- informed the village head about the incident, who in turn met with the LID #231 Commander Zaw Min. The division commander denied that it was his soldiers who stole and ate the villager’s buffalo. He also told Saw B--- to show him which one of his soldiers did it, but Saw B--- could not identify the offending soldier.¹³

Education

Regarding education, the majority of village tracts in Dooplaya District have schools, while a minority do not. However, compared with the past, there are more school buildings now and more children are attending school. For example, in Meh Tha Raw Hta village, in the past there were 20-25 students who went to school, but then there was no teacher who could teach anymore. However, there are two teachers for the school now and around 40-45 children are attending the school. Also, the school is run every day, as opposed to when the teacher did not come to school regularly in the past. They have kindergarten and classes and up to fourth standard. The villagers also reported that they feel like the education system has developed for the better in their village.

On the other hand, the villagers in Lay Poh village reported there was still no school in their village. The nun in the village had planned to build a school in 2013, but the plan had not been carried out yet. In order to obtain education, some children have to travel very far to Doh Choh Tay village for school. If there was a school in the village then the villagers think that it will be a lot easier for their children to attend.¹⁴

Health

The villagers reported that there is no major development in Dooplaya district regarding healthcare. Most of the areas in the district still do not have a clinic for the villagers. Moreover, in some villages, especially, in Kwee Hkler village, there was previously a clinic but it was destroyed by the Tatmadaw. The villagers’ reported that the Tatmadaw has plans to rebuild this clinic and have already measured the area of the clinic that they are going to rebuild. The villagers also reported their confusion as the Tatmadaw destroyed this clinic in the past but now they want to rebuild it again.¹⁵



The photo was taken on September 28th 2013 in Kwee Hkler village in Dooplaya District, showing the clinic that was demolished by the Tatmadaw and is planned to rebuilt by them. [Photo: KHRG]

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

¹³ This information was included in previously published KHRG report “[Tatmadaw soldiers pilfer villagers’ livestock in Dooplaya District, May to August 2013](#)” KHRG, November 2014.

¹⁴ This information was included in an unpublished Photo Note report from Dooplaya District received by KHRG in October 2013.

¹⁵ This information was included in an unpublished Photo Note report from Dooplaya District received by KHRG in October 2013.

- “Doooplaya Situation Update: Kawkareik Township, September 2014,” (November 2014)
- “Doooplaya Interview: Naw A--, July 2013,” (October 2014)
- “Doooplaya Situation Update: Kyainseikgyi, Kawkareik and Win Yay Townships, December 2013 to February 2014,” (September 2014)
- “Doooplaya Situation Update: Kyonedoe Township, September to December 2013,” (September 2014)
- “Doooplaya Situation Update: Kyonedoe Township, January to June 2014,” (September 2014)

Dooطلا District



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