



Karen Human Rights Group  
Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

# **Doooplaya Field Report: Military conflict, violent abuse, and destruction caused by development projects, January to December 2015**

October 7, 2016



*This field report describes events which occurred in Dooplaya District, southeast Burma/Myanmar, between January and December 2015. It includes information submitted by KHRG community members on a range of human rights violations and other issues important to the local community including ceasefire concerns, the military situation, rape, violent abuse and killing cases, development projects, land confiscation, health and education, natural resource extraction and land mines.*

- *The military situation in Dooplaya District is ongoing following the preliminary ceasefire. Based on one report, military target practice conducted by Tatmadaw in Win Yin (Win Yay) Township affected local civilian's rubber plantations, as well as their livelihoods.*
- *Over one thousand villagers from five different villages in Kawkareik Township fled their homes and sought shelter at monasteries because of the outbreak of fighting on the Asian Highway between DKBA and Tatmadaw. Local schools in these villages were consequently affected, and were forced to close temporarily due to fears for the safety of the students.*
- *Four sensitive incidents such as rape, violent threats, violent abuse and killing occurred in Kawkareik and Kyainseikgyi townships, committed by ethnic armed groups and neighbouring villagers. Two women were raped, one of whom became pregnant, and the other woman was physically harmed as a consequence of the rape. One villager was arrested and violently abused by a Karen ethnic armed group and one villager was killed by neighbouring villagers who accused him of practicing black magic.*
- *Regarding development projects, Burma/Myanmar government, private companies, and wealthy individuals implemented infrastructure, particularly roads and bridges, in Win Yin, Kyainseikgyi, Kyonedoe and Kawkareik townships. A regional project for the Asian Highway was implemented in Kawkareik Township in 2014 and completed in 2015. It crossed through 17 villages and destroyed villagers' plantations, paddy fields, shops and houses along the route. Only a few local residents were consulted by project developers in advance; the remaining residents were neither consulted nor compensated for the destruction and loss of their land.*

*"The government of the country is targeting the Karen villages in the way that they [government] are just ignoring [our concerns] even though they know the situation".*

*KHRG community member, Win Yin Township, February 17<sup>th</sup> 2015*

Front cover photo: This photo was taken by a KHRG community member on October 24<sup>th</sup> 2015, on the Asian Highway in Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District *[Photo: KHRG]*.

## Ceasefire Concerns and Military Situation

Although the preliminary ceasefire between Burma/Myanmar government and Karen National Union (KNU) was signed on January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2012,<sup>1</sup> villagers still hold concerns about ongoing militarisation. Through analysis of reports concerning the ceasefire and military situation, KHRG found that although the political situation has changed since heading into the peace process and towards democracy, military activities are ongoing. According to information submitted from the field, KHRG received 11 cases of military activity conducted by the Tatmadaw and ethnic armed groups in Kyainseikgyi [Noh T'kaw] Township, Kyonedoe [Kruh Tu] Township, Win Yin [Waw Raw] Township and Kawkareik [Kaw T'Ree] Township in Dooplaya District.

Ongoing militarisation is evidenced by the continued movements of the Burma/Myanmar military government (Tatmadaw); its activities have contributed to destruction and local villager concerns in M--- and N--- villages in Win Yin Township, Dooplaya District, particularly over the military target practices on January 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015. These activities cause villagers to feel that the Burma/Myanmar government is unwilling to improve the needs of local communities, and the peace and stability of the country. The villagers' strongest concerns are that their rubber plantations were co-opted for use as a military target practice area; they face big livelihood problems because of this. Moreover, unexploded mortar shells are present where villagers graze their cows, and remain in the military training area, where children play with them. Local people hope that reporting this to KHRG will allow them to receive help with this risk, and access support in any possible way. The local villagers said,

*"The government of the country is targeting the Karen villages in the way that they [government] are just ignoring [our concerns] even though they know the situation".*

Situation Update written by KHRG community member in Win Yin Township  
(Received in February 17<sup>th</sup> 2015)<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> On January 12<sup>th</sup> 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 Burma/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. In March 2015, the seventh round of the negotiations for a national ceasefire between the Burma/Myanmar government and various ethnic armed actors began in Yangon, see ["Seventh Round of Nationwide Ceasefire Negotiations," Karen National Union Headquarters](#), March 18<sup>th</sup> 2015. Following the negotiations, the KNU held a central standing committee emergency, see ["KNU: Emergency Meeting Called To Discuss Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement And Ethnic Leaders' Summit," Karen News](#), April 22<sup>nd</sup> 2015.

<sup>2</sup> This information is taken from an unpublished report from Win Yin Township received in February 2015.





The first photo was taken on January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015 in Dooplaya District, Win Yin Township, which is outside Wel Taw village. It shows the notice board warning villagers about the military target practice that will be conducted on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of January 2015. The second photo was taken on January 19<sup>th</sup> 2015 in Z--- Kyay Ywar Gone<sup>3</sup> village, Win Yin Township, Dooplaya District and it shows Light Infantry Battalion (LIB)<sup>4</sup> #310 engaging in heavy weapons target training

The third photo was taken on January 19, 2015 in Dooplaya District, Win Yin Township, Wel Taw Kyay Ywa Gon village. It shows LIB #310's heavy weapons that missed the target and hit the civilian's rubber trees in the plantation. The last photo was taken on January 20<sup>th</sup> 2015 and it shows military shells in the packaging left by LIB #310 near U P---'s farm in Wel Taw village. A villager said *"It is not just now that they are leaving [the shells in their packaging] carelessly, in the past in 2014 they also did it [military heavy weapon target practice] the same way as they are doing now"*. [Photos: KHRG]

The KHRG community member reported additional Tatmadaw military activity in Kyainseikgyi Township, Dooplaya District. While travelling to document the community situation on January 16<sup>th</sup> 2015, a KHRG community member saw the Tatmadaw transporting their food on nine cars, with an unknown number of Tatmadaw members [in the cars]. The battalion number of the troops is unknown; all is known is that the cars were transporting food and weapons. In addition, the KHRG community member reported that over the last two months, the Tatmadaw based on the Ka Lee Hkee Mountain have cut down trees or bamboo from village reserve forests. They used cars, many of which were full, for transporting the bamboo or trees. It was used to repair their camp on Ka Lee Hkee Mountain, which they are gradually repairing.<sup>5</sup> The villagers are not willing to tell them to stop logging, as they are afraid.

<sup>3</sup> 'Kyay Ywar Gone' means 'village hill' in Burmese.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> This information is taken from ["Dooplaya Situation Update: Kyainseikgyi Township, December 2014 to February 2015,"](#) KHRG, June 2015.



The above photos were taken on January 16<sup>th</sup> 2015 in G--- village, Kyainseikgyi Township, Dooplaya District. The Tatmadaw trucks were travelling on the road to resupply an army camp. In total, 11 trucks passed carrying rations and ammunition. The battalion number of the troops is unknown. [Photos: KHRG]

Despite Burma/Myanmar government and Karen National Union (KNU) signing the preliminary ceasefire in January 2012, it has not stopped the fighting on the ground, and there is also ongoing militarisation in Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District. The Tatmadaw's Border Guard Force (BGF) Battalion #1022, led by Battalion Commander Mote Thone, extended two small camps nearby Myawaddy Town, Kawkareik Township, controlled by the commander of Brigade 6 (Dooplaya District) KNLA Headquarters Special Command, Captain Hla Min.

On January 30<sup>th</sup> 2015, Special Command Captain Hla Min ordered BGF Battalion #1022 to withdraw their new camps and after the BGF left, the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) soldiers burnt down the camps. On February 27<sup>th</sup> 2015, a villager reported to Special Command Captain Hla Min that the BGF had returned and were rebuilding their camp. Afterwards, Special Command Captain Hla Min again ordered his soldiers to tell the BGF to withdraw. On that day, at around 6 PM, a group of KNLA soldiers went to the BGF camp to tell them to withdraw. On their way they were ambushed by BGF soldiers, before they could reach the camp. One KNLA soldier was shot and killed at the scene, another was injured by BGF soldiers; one BGF soldier was injured in return.<sup>6</sup>

Six months later that year, fighting between Tatmadaw and Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA)<sup>7</sup> soldiers erupted on the Asian Highway<sup>8</sup> between Myawaddy and Kawkareik Town on

<sup>6</sup> This information is taken from "[Two separate clashes between armed actors in Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District](#)" KHRG, February 2015.

<sup>7</sup> The Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA) was formed in 2010 as a breakaway group following the transformation of the majority of the original Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (1994 – 2010) into the BGF. This group was originally called the Democratic Karen *Buddhist* Army until it changed its name to the Democratic Karen *Benevolent* Army in April 2012 in order to reflect its secularity. This group is comprised of different divisions, including Kloo Htoo Baw Battalion and DKBA-5, and was led for many years by General Saw Lah Pwe aka Na Khan Mway who died in March 2016 and was replaced by General Saw Mo Shay in April 2016. The DKBA signed a preliminary ceasefire with the Burma/Myanmar Government on November 3<sup>rd</sup> 2011 and then [signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement \(NCA\)](#) on October 15<sup>th</sup> 2015. The group is based in Son Si Myaing area, Myawaddy/Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District, southern Kayah State. This DKBA (Benevolent) (2010 – present) should not be confused with, either the original DKBA (Buddhist) (1994-2010) which was transformed into the BGF in 2010, or with the DKBA (Buddhist) (2016 – present) which was formed in 2016 as a splinter group of the DKBA (Benevolent) (2010 – present). Importantly, the DKBA (Benevolent) has signed both the preliminary and nationwide ceasefire agreements with the Burma/Myanmar government, whereas the DKBA (Buddhist) has not signed either agreement. For more information on the DKBA and its relationship with other armed actors, see "Milicias in Burma/Myanmar," John Buchanan, The Asia Foundation, July 2016.

<sup>8</sup> 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

July 2<sup>nd</sup> 2015, after Tatmadaw soldiers attempted to secure that section of the Asian Highway ahead of the newly built road's opening ceremony. Tensions between the Tatmadaw and DKBA escalated into conflict when Tatmadaw soldiers ordered the DKBA to remove their base from the Highway. In doing so, the front line military troops (DKBA and Tatmadaw) did not practice the ceasefire Code of Conduct. The ceasefire therefore has not brought peace to the local villagers; instead, the villagers from surrounding areas affected by the fighting were forced to leave their homes. Overall, as a result of the fighting more than 1,000 villagers from more than five different villages in Kawkaireik Township temporarily fled their homes and sought shelter at monasteries in Kawkaireik Town. Villages were also unable to tend to their paddy fields, and some of their properties were destroyed. Furthermore, schools in these villages were forced to close temporarily out of fears for the safety of the students, who were consequently unable to attend their lessons. On July 7<sup>th</sup> 2015, a primary school building in Kawkaireik Town was hit and damaged by a grenade reportedly fired by two DKBA soldiers. No students or teachers were harmed, as the incident took place at 7 AM, before the school had opened for the day.<sup>9</sup>



The first two photos were taken by a KHRG community member on July 11<sup>th</sup> 2015, in Kawkaireik Town, Kawkaireik Township, Dooplaya District. These photos show a section of roof that was damaged when a grenade fired by DKBA soldiers from a M79 grenade launcher that hit the primary school building in Chaung Taung

has involved land confiscation and forced labour. For more information about the Asian Highway Network, see [“The Asia Highway: Planned Eindu to Kawkaireik Town road construction threatens villagers’ livelihoods,”](#) KHRG, March 2015; [“With only our voices, what can we do?: Land confiscation and local response in southeast Burma/Myanmar,”](#) KHRG, June 2015; [“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. In addition, fighting continues erupting between the Tatmadaw and the DKBA along the highway, with the latest clash erupting in early July 2015, resulting in the highway between Myawaddy and Kawkaireik shutting down for several days, [“DKBA, Tatmadaw fight over illegal highway tolls,”](#) *Burma/Myanmar Times*, July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2015.

<sup>9</sup> This information can be found in a previously published KHRG report: [“Fighting between Tatmadaw and DKBA soldiers along the Asian Highway displaces villagers in Dooplaya District,”](#) KHRG, July 2015.



section and G--- monastery, where the displaced villagers were staying, having fled the fighting between the Tatmadaw and DKBA soldiers.

The second two photos were taken by a KHRG community member on July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2015, between Myawaddy and Kawkareik Town, Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District and show a section of the Asian Highway. An opening ceremony for the Highway was planned by the Thai and Burma/Myanmar governments, scheduled to take place on July 20<sup>th</sup> 2015, but the plans were cancelled due to the fighting that took place between the DKBA and Tatmadaw soldiers. The fighting erupted after Tatmadaw soldiers tried to take control of the Highway ahead of the planned ceremony. [Photos: KHRG]<sup>10</sup>

Based on the received information, KHRG found that although the peace process was conducted between Burma/Myanmar military government and ethnic armed groups, the military situation in each Township in Dooplaya District remained as it was in the past, before the ceasefire. For example, there was a military target practice launched by the Tatmadaw Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) #310 on January 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> 2015 in Kone Myint Thar Yar village, Kone Myint Thar Yar village tract, Win Yin Township. And in Kyainseikyi Township an unknown Tatmadaw battalion transported rations and ammunition to their front line camps on January 16<sup>th</sup> 2015. In Kawkareik Township the fighting between Tatmadaw and DKBA broke out on the Asian Highway between Kawkareik and Myawaddy Town.

Considering these incidences of ongoing militarisation during the ceasefire period, it is apparent that the military situation in Dooplaya District has not been wholly resolved. Nevertheless, local villagers hope that the ceasefire may bring real peace to them, although they are still suffering the negative impacts of the unstable ceasefire and military situations.

### **Rape, violent abuse and killing cases**

In terms of human rights violations and violent abuse such as rape, violent abuse, and killing, cases in Dooplaya District were not very prevalent in either the 2014 or 2015 reporting period. Nevertheless, KHRG did receive reports concerning four cases of violent abuse that happened in Dooplaya District in 2015. KHRG received information on two rape cases involving violent threats, one violent abuse case in Kawkareik and Kyainseikgyi townships, and one killing incident, which occurred in Kyainseikgyi Township.

One rape case, which occurred in B--- village, Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District in 2014, was perpetrated against Naw A---, who was only 16 years old at the time of the incident. Naw A--- reported that on April 17<sup>th</sup> 2014 she was raped, and subsequently fell pregnant, by a 26 year old man named Saw Hpah Kyaw Eh who is a father of two children. Saw Hpah Kyaw Eh did not take responsibility for the rape and repeatedly denied his complicity. Naw A--- claimed that she was raped by Saw Hpah Kyaw Eh three times, however, she initially kept silent and did not disclose it to anybody, as she was embarrassed. After finding out she was pregnant, Naw A--- reported the rape to the village leaders, who dismissed the case as they believed Naw A--- to have a mental health condition. The victim's adoptive family therefore asked the local Karen Women's Organisation (KWO) to conduct an investigation into the case. As of the end of May 2015, the case has been re-opened, investigations have begun by the KWO, and the village tract leaders have transferred the case to the Karen National Police Force (KNPF) for further investigation. Naw A--- was 17 years old when the case was reported and had by this time given birth to a child. She is currently receiving medical treatment to treat her rape injuries as well as postnatal care in a refugee camp on the Thai-Burma border.

According to Naw A---'s adoptive mother, who adopted Naw A--- when she was two years old,

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<sup>10</sup> These photos were taken from a previously published KHRG news bulletin, "[Fighting between Tatmadaw and DKBA soldiers along the Asian Highway displaces villagers in Dooplaya District](#)," KHRG, July 2015.

*“Her real mother passed away and her real father is in Thailand... Her upbringing was not good. She was bullied, hung up and thrown into water when she was young before I adopted her. She smelled when I took her. She had a [bloated] stomach. Her real mother told me that evil spirits had taken over her [Naw A---] body. She [Naw A---] would go out looking for food during night time. When I took her home and fed her a big meal she just slept, I did not see any evil spiritual action. I [have] raised her since she was young [and] in [a] difficult situation and now when she has grown up she has been raped. I [do not] feel good about it.”*

Interviewed by KHRG community member in Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District  
(Received in May 2015)<sup>11</sup>

Naw A---’s mother also said that following the rape, nobody is supporting her daughter other than the KWO office in a refugee camp on Thai-Burma border, which provided assistance when Naw A--- and her daughter went to the camp.



This photo shows Naw A--- who was reportedly raped repeatedly by Saw Hpah Kyaw Eh. Naw A--- has been described as a teenage girl with a mental health condition by some of her fellow villagers, and the village head. The KHRG researcher who met with her does not believe Naw A--- to have a mental health condition. She was 16 years old when the incident occurred. In the end of May 2015, the case has been re-opened, investigations have begun by the KWO, and the village tract leaders have transferred the case to the Karen National Police Force (KNPF) for further investigation. She lives in Dooplaya District, Kawkareik Township in B--- village. [Photo: KHRG]<sup>12</sup>

In another incident of rape, in C--- village, Kyainseikgyi Township, a 45 year-old woman named Naw B--- was raped by DKBA Sergeant Hpa Ta Roh from Battalion #902 on June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015 at around midnight in her house. She tried to scream while she was raped but the DKBA Sergeant shut her mouth and threatened her by putting a gun beside her and said, “*If you dare to scream, do it*”. Following the rape, Hpa Ta Roh told her not to report the case, threatening to kill her if she did. Because of this intimidation, she did not dare to disclose the case. However, a few days later she tried looking for someone to help; she went to O--- village and explained the incident to Major Kay Poe and Section leader Q---. Unfortunately, three days later Hpa Ta Roh found that she reported the case, and he summoned her for a meeting with him at Naw D--’s house in E--- village. As ordered, she met with Hpa Ta Roh on July 13<sup>th</sup> 2015. When she arrived, he kicked her and fired a gun shot, which hit the floor close to her head where she had fallen down from the kick. Hpa Ta Roh asked her, “*Did you report that I raped you?*” and she replied

‘yes’ by nodding her head. Hpa Ta Roh kicked her again and shot one more bullet, which again hit close to her head. As a result of Hpa Ta Roh’s abuse, Naw B--- did not dare to stay at her house due to feeling insecure; she was afraid that Hpa Ta Roh would physically harm her as a consequence of her reporting the rape case.<sup>13</sup>

A violent abuse case occurred in Kawkareik Township on March 11<sup>th</sup> 2015 due to the closure of the previously mentioned Asian Highway in Kawkariek to Myawaddy Town. On the night of March 10<sup>th</sup> 2015, prior to the incident, a clash broke out between the DKBA group that calls

<sup>11</sup> This information is taken from “[Rape and violent threats in Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District, April 2014 to May](#)” KHRG, July 2015.

<sup>12</sup> This photo is taken from “[Rape and violent threats in Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District, April 2014 to May 2015](#)” KHRG, July 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Further information can be found in “[Dooplaya Interview: Naw A---, July 2015](#)” KHRG, February 2016



itself Na Ma Kya<sup>14</sup> group, or “Deaf Ear”, and an unknown armed group. One soldier from Na Ma Kya was killed in the attack. Na Ma Kya is a formal DKBA group with checkpoints based on both sides of the Asian Highway, and which operates in the surrounding area. Because of the fighting, Na Ma Kya temporarily closed down a portion of the Asian Highway on March 11<sup>th</sup> 2015. Villager Saw F---, unaware of the closure, was detained and violently abused by two Na Ma Kya soldiers as he was stopped at the checkpoint in H---area.<sup>15</sup>

Of concern, a killing case occurred on March 15<sup>th</sup> 2015 in G--- village, Kyainseikgyi Township, Dooplaya District. A 47 year old villager named Saw H--- was shot and killed. Although he was known as a quiet and lawful person with no criminal record, he was killed by other villagers, originally from Plaw Hpa Htaung village, who accused Saw H--- of being able to practice witchcraft, and killing a child with the power of black magic. Five perpetrators were involved in the case. Among those who killed Saw H--- was Saw Maung Kya, whose child was sick for five to six years and had died in the hospital from blood cancer, which could not be cured. Saw Maung Kya did not know the root cause of his child's death; instead he believed that his child died from black magic, as he (Saw Maung Kya) asked a fortune teller. At that time, Saw Maung Kya was neighbours with Saw H---, and so he accused Saw H--- of killing his child with black magic. To carry out the murder, Saw Maung Kya and his friends asked for a gun from a Karen ethnic armed group to kill Saw H---. Finally, due to Saw Maung Kya's anger, and despite not knowing the root cause, Saw H--- was murdered.<sup>16</sup>

Despite the trend of human rights violations in KHRG research areas decreasing, if compared to the past reporting period, sensitive issues such as rape cases, violent abuse cases and killing cases are still occurring in some townships in Dooplaya District, based on the information received by the KHRG community members during the reporting period in 2015.

### Development Projects

In the 2015 reporting period in Dooplaya District, KHRG received information regarding development projects implemented by Burma/Myanmar government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and private companies. The development projects being implemented are related to infrastructure, such as bridge and road construction, schools and clinics, and distribution of basic household products. These projects do not simply bring benefits to the local community; they also bring negative impacts, particularly those projects related to road construction. As the political situation changes following the preliminary ceasefire, the initiation of development projects has increased, and is ongoing.

A large portion of the Asian Highway was implemented initiatively since 2014, and completed in 2015. The section of the Highway under consideration in southeast Burma/Myanmar will connect Eindu to Kawkaik Town and will cross through 17 villages and one town in Hpa-an, Kyonedoe Township, and Kawkaik townships, in Dooplaya and Hpa-an districts. As previously mentioned, road construction has affected many villagers' plantations, paddy fields, shops and houses along the route, resulting in a number of possible negative impacts. Only a few villages, in one particular community, were consulted before the project was implemented, but mostly there was no advanced consultation and villagers did not receive any compensation for their

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<sup>14</sup> Na Ma Kya is a Burmese phrase which directly translates as ‘Deaf Ear’. Na Ma Kya in this context refers to the name of a Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA) splinter group based in Kawkaik Township, Dooplaya District. According to local villagers, this group often acts with impunity, ignoring both the local people's input as well as the higher DKBA authorities' orders. Commander Kyaw Moh, well known as Na Ma Kya, who was leading this splinter group, was killed by one of BGF Commander Bo Tin Win's mahouts on August 29<sup>th</sup> 2016. For more information see [“DKBA Splinter Group Confirms Leader's Death”](#) The Irrawaddy, August 31<sup>st</sup> 2016; [ဗိုလ်နားမကြားက ဆင်ထိန်းများကို ပြန်လေးဆွဲခြင်းမဟုတ်ဟု ဒီကောဘီအေငြင်းဆို](#), Democratic Voice of Burma, September 2<sup>nd</sup> 2016. According to unpublished KHRG information from Kawkaik Township in Dooplaya District the circumstances surrounding his death remained unconfirmed.

<sup>15</sup> This information is taken from [“Dooplaya Interview: Naw A---, March 2015”](#) KHRG, February 2016.

<sup>16</sup> This information is taken from an unpublished report, May 2015.

losses or the destruction of lands en-route. The conflict resulting from the project leads local people to believe the Burma/Myanmar government undertakes development projects without respecting their rights. Villagers believe the government only considers the benefits the government may gain from the project. In addition to the direct effects of the road construction itself, the completion of this particular road will have spill-over effects, as it will grant greater access to the area for foreign direct investment (FDI) and additional development projects may occur.<sup>17</sup> Likewise, the road construction under the purpose of the development project being implemented in other townships, such as Kyainseikgyi and Win Yin, negatively impacts the local community. It especially compromises the local people's livelihoods and causes vexations for them. In 2016 KHRG produced a report on the Asian Highway in partnership with Thwee Community Development Network (TCDN) and Karen Peace and Support Network (KPSN). For more information see "[Beautiful Words, Ugly Actions: The Asian Highway in Karen State, Burma](#)," KHRG, August 2016.



The first photo was taken on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2015 on the Asian Highway in Kawkaik Township, Dooplaya District. This is a photo of the Asia Highway, the construction of which resulted in the confiscation of many local people's lands without proper compensation. The Asian Highway was funded by Neighboring Countries Economic Development Cooperation Agency (NEDA) and the Thai company Seesaeng Kanyotha Company Ltd. was hired in conjunction with Thailand's Department of Highways to complete construction.

The Last photo was taken in Htee Hpah Htaung village tract, Win Yin Township, Dooplaya District. The Nippon Foundation distributed a bag of rice to each house. It is said that they [Nippon Foundation] deducted three bowls of rice [from a bag of rice] from each house. It was said that they contributed [supplies] to 14 houses in the Township. The civilians were happy since they were supported [through the rice]. [Photos: KHRG]

As the political situation changes more opportunities have opened for NGOs and INGOs to access the local community and launch distribution for the purpose of community development. KHRG community members reported that the Nippon Foundation,<sup>18</sup> a Japanese NGO, entered Dooplaya District and distributed basic household products such as rice and solar panels. However, when the KHRG community member reached Kawkaik Town in Dooplaya District on January 29<sup>th</sup> 2015 to report on the regional situation, the support had not accurately been distributed to the local people. A villager reported that as part of the aid of rice, one person received a bag of rice, but in Kyauk Ki Village in Kawkaik Town a villager said that two bags of rice arrived to one house. In villages in Win Yin Township, only one bag of rice arrived to one house. Moreover, some villages that do not have household registration were not distributed a complete bag of rice, and some villages did not receive the rice distribution at all. In the villages

<sup>17</sup> This information is taken from "[The Asia Highway: Planned Eindu to Kawkaik Town road construction threatens villagers' livelihoods](#)" KHRG, August 2016.

<sup>18</sup> [The Nippon Foundation](#) is a Japanese NGO currently implementing social innovation and development projects in Burma/Myanmar. KHRG has received several reports from community members on The Nippon Foundation's recent activities in Thaton and Hpa-an Districts, see more at "[Hpa-an Situation Update: Hlaingbwe and Nabu townships, December 2014 to January 2015](#)," KHRG, July 2015; and "[Thaton Situation Update Bilin and Hpa-an townships, June to November 2014](#)," KHRG, February 2015.

in the west of the mountain, in Win Yin Township, solar panels [all around one cubit] and light bulbs were distributed by the Japanese organisation, to 96 villages in total.<sup>19</sup>

Therefore, in Dooplaya District, although the development project was conducted with the potential to help villagers, local villagers still suffer negative impacts of the project due to unethical and ineffective implementation by Burma/Myanmar government and private companies. In the case of this development project, local villagers lost some of their properties due to road construction, and in some areas villagers did not receive equal distribution of products provided by the community development program.

### **Land confiscation**

Land confiscation is a widespread issue in southeast Burma/Myanmar inclusive of KHRG research areas. In 2015, KHRG published ["With only our voice, what can we do"](#), a thematic report regarding land issues, to highlight that land confiscation is ongoing and extensive. Based on the submitted information from the field, KHRG continues to receive information regarding land confiscation during the 2015 reporting period in Dooplaya District.

According to a land confiscation case that occurred in the end of 2014 and beginning of 2015 in T---Village, Win Yin Township, a villager named Daw J---, a 32 year old Karen Buddhist woman, claimed that New Mon State Party (NMSP) came and measured her land without consultation with village leaders. Instead, they said that the country government of their state supported them for a hundred acres of land. NMSP is one of the ethnic armed groups in Burma/Myanmar; they confiscated the villager's land without paying any compensation. The land owner originally owned the land through inheritance from her ancestors, and she kept the land as a wild area (uncultivated land), in order to graze her cows, build a house, and do plantation work on it. The victim said that the extent of the land was about 50 to 60 acres, and each member of NMSP who confiscated the land shared 10 acres of the land between themselves. No one helped the victim to protect the land from being confiscated, nor to get back the land. As a result, Daw J--- had to go to the relevant court and report the case by herself; in the end she was not successful. Since the confiscation of her land, Daw J--- has faced many problems, as she must support her children's education, especially her daughter who is a third year college student.<sup>20</sup> The NMSP also confiscated other villagers' lands from the surrounding areas in Win Yin Township, Dooplaya District.

Land in Dooplaya District was confiscated for various purposes and by various actors, and the victims continue to face huge consequences, especially for their livelihoods. Before the ceasefire was agreed upon a few years ago, Burma/Myanmar government, Tatmadaw, ethnic armed groups, and companies confiscated villagers' lands in southeast Burma/Myanmar, including KHRG research areas, for militarisation, business, development projects, and personal profit. Following the ceasefire, land confiscation is ongoing, and according to the 2015 reporting period, it does seem to have decreased slightly in Dooplaya District. However, it is also still one of the major issues ongoing in the other six districts in KHRG research areas.

### **Health and Education**

Regarding health issues, KHRG found that the situation has moderately improved in each township in Dooplaya District. According to the 2015 reporting period, villagers reported to KHRG community members that small clinics have emerged in some villages close to the Thailand-Burma/Burma/Myanmar border in Kawkaik Township. Moreover, malaria health workers from health organisations conducted basic health awareness and healthcare education, and provided mosquito nets to the local communities.

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<sup>19</sup> This information is taken from an unpublished report from Dooplaya District received in February 2015.

<sup>20</sup> This information is taken from an unpublished report from Dooplaya District received in September 2015.



Other healthcare groups, whether from Burma/Myanmar government, KNU or NGOs, also accessed the remote areas of Dooplaya District as much as possible and provided healthcare services. Some hospitals and clinics were built and funded by the Burma/Myanmar government in some villages in Kruh Tu [Kyonedoe] Township, but in some villages the clinics were built by the villagers themselves, because neither Burma/Myanmar government nor the KNU provided these villages with any health-related support.<sup>21</sup> In villages in Kaw T'Ree [Kawkareik], Waw Raw [Win Yin] and Kruh Tu [Kyonedoe] townships, which are situated in remote areas far from hospitals or in places where health services are inaccessible, villagers are using herbal plants available from the jungle for medical treatment. These villagers claimed that natural resource extraction projects were implemented, which caused environmental destruction, and as a result they were unable to access those plants as they did before.<sup>22</sup>

In terms of education, although there is less improvement in Win Yin Township, the situation has somewhat improved in Kawkareik and Kyainseikgyi townships, Dooplaya District. Since the (preliminary) ceasefire the civil war situation is stabilising, and as a result more schools have been built in more stable villages. Villagers reported to KHRG community members that leaders from KNU arranged to include EIP (English Immersion Program) in the schools that were built, and the villagers expected that it would be the highest-level school (education) in 2015 in Kawkareik Township. Overall, the schools that were built in Dooplaya District in 2015 were built by Burma/Myanmar government, some were built independently by villagers, and some were built with support from KNU.<sup>23</sup>

However, as previously mentioned, in Win Yin Township education is not properly accessible, especially for the Karen people from Win Ka Na village. The highest level of education that they can access is eighth standard,<sup>24</sup> as there is only one high school in Pa Pya village in Win Yin Township, Dooplaya District. A teacher from Win Ka Na village, Win Yin Township told a KHRG Community member that some students are prevented from continuing education after completing eighth standard, either due to financial problems or reluctance to live far from their parents to access the high school in Pa Pya village. Regarding this, one KHRG community member reported that,

*“As long as the regional communities are developing, Burma/Myanmar government should put more support into education. The slogan [is] “Higher education uplifts the nation” [but] is that only for the Burmese ethnicity? And why not for other ethnicities? Moreover, Karen people can access education effectively only 50 percent [of the time]. With incomplete education, they [Karen students] have to go to Thailand and look for work, and some are tapping rubber trees because their parents are not getting along [well] with their livelihood”.*

Situation update written by KHRG community member in Winyay Township, Dooplaya District  
(Received in February, 2015)<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> This information is taken from an unpublished report from Dooplaya District in July 2015.

<sup>22</sup> This information was included previously published in “[Dooplaya Situation Update: Kyainseikgyi, Kawkareik and Kyonedoe townships, January to February 2015](#),” KHRG, August 2015.

<sup>23</sup> This information is taken from unpublished reports from Dooplaya District received in July and August 2015.

<sup>24</sup> A Standard refers to a grade in the Burmese education system. Primary school runs from Standard 1 to Standard 4, middle school is Standards 5-8 and high school is Standards 9-10.

<sup>25</sup> This information is taken from an unpublished report from Dooplaya District received in February 2015.



The first photo is from Maw Theh Village in Noh T’Kaw Township, Dooplaya District, and was taken on February 7<sup>th</sup> 2015. It shows a nurse offering healthcare services to a pregnant woman. Nurses from Burma/Myanmar government travel from one village to another and offer vaccinations for children under the age of two years old, and also provide protection for pregnant women.

The last photo was taken on June 23, 2015 in Myine Tharya Village, Me Zali village tract, Winyin Township, Dooplaya District. This is a photo of a school locally funded by the villagers, and it is located close to a vehicle road. As it is newly built, school materials such as pens, books, and other school needs are still very limited.

[Photos: KHRG]

### Natural Resource Extraction

Natural resource extraction is a major concern for local villagers, particularly stone mining, as the profits and advantages directly go to the implementers, but the negative impacts remain with the local villagers. A few years ago, stone mining, gold mining and logging were prevalent in Dooplaya District. However, in the 2015 reporting period, rather than logging and gold mining, KHRG received a few reports that predominantly mentioned stone mining conducted in Noh T’Kaw [Kyainseikgyi] Township, Dooplaya District. Based on incidents that occurred over the past years, Burma/Myanmar government, private companies, and wealthy individuals are the main conductors of the natural resource extraction. As a result, local people, properties, and lands were harmed and the projects resulted in negative consequences for the villagers.

Regarding stone mining, a villager from I--- village, Kyainseikgyi Township, Dooplaya District, reported to a KHRG community member on February 7<sup>th</sup> 2015 that a Chinese company and wealthy individuals have been conducting stone mining on his land for four years [which began in 2005]. When I--- villager found out the stone mining was being conducted on his land he wanted to sell the stone, but the wealthy individual did not let him sell it, instead claiming that his company would pay him the money for each year, as they had already conducted the stone mining. However, I--- villager did not receive the money in accordance with the wealthy individual’s promises, so he was not happy. Moreover, the stone mining destroyed his mango plantation. Furthermore, because of the consequences of this stone mining, a neighbouring villager from K--- village raised a concern to KHRG community members that the villagers would no longer receive fresh drinking water if the company continues mining, as it will pollute the whole Ya Moo Hta River. The stone mining negatively impacted the villagers, and due to their reliance on fresh water from the river, the villagers are worried about a shortage of fresh water resources in the future.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> This information was taken from “[Dooplaya Situation Update: Kyainseikgyi Township, December 2014 to February 2015](#)” KHRG, June 2015.



These photos were taken on February 19<sup>th</sup> 2015, in Noh T’Kaw [Kyainseikgyi] Township Dooplaya District, in a region named Maw Aye Aye Thay Kee. It shows the beginning of the new stone mining, which will be led by companies including one Chinese company. The Chinese company erected the building and set up the factory, but at the time the photographs were taken they had not yet properly began the mining. Villagers expect there will be impacts to their livelihoods in the future. [Photos: KHRG]

Likewise, a KHRG community member from Kaw T’Ree [Kawkareik] Township reported that although there is no special commercial project in the region, there was mining of antimony in Tha Waw Thaw village by cooperating Thai and Chinese companies. They initiatively conducted antimony mining in early 2015, but they paused for wet season and will continue in the summer. This project has destroyed local villagers’ corn plantations, but the company paid compensation. Logging projects have been decreasing in Kawkareik Township due to the diminishing log trees. However, villagers are concerned that if many logging trees remain, the companies will come and conduct logging projects in the region in the future.<sup>27</sup> Based on the received information, although logging and stone mining became minority projects in some townships in Dooplaya District during 2015 reporting period, other common natural resource extraction projects such as gold mining and stone mining still remain in the other six districts in KHRG’s research area.

### Land Mines

In the past, prior to the ceasefire, land mines were a serious issue in Burma/Myanmar, particularly in the conflict zones of KHRG research areas. As land mines were typically planted and used by military actors, many innocent local people, especially Karen villagers, were victims during the civil war (conflict) period. Since the Burma/Myanmar government military (Tatmadaw) and ethnic armed groups signed the ceasefire agreement, land mine issues in KHRG research areas decreased noticeably. Nevertheless, in this 2015 reporting period, KHRG received two reports regarding land mines in Dooplaya District, while three other districts in KHRG’s research areas received a few reports about land mines.

Due to the lack of improvement regarding the military situation, the fighting has not absolutely stopped since the ceasefire. In the present day, the negative consequences of military activity, including land mine issues, are ongoing. A 31 year old villager from L--- village in Kaw T’Ree [Kawkareik] Township stepped on a land mine in the evening at around 5pm on April 17<sup>th</sup> 2015 on his way back from his plantation; his left leg was injured.<sup>28</sup> In addition, as previously mentioned in the ceasefire concerns and military situation section, DKBA planted land mines along the Asian Highway after fighting erupted in July 2015 between DKBA and Tatmadaw.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> This information is taken from an unpublished report, July 2015.

<sup>28</sup> This information was taken from “[Dooplaya Situation Update: Kyainseikgyi Township, March to May 2015](#)” KHRG, November 2015.

<sup>29</sup> KHRG cannot independently verify whether this landmine was indeed planted by the DKBA or by another armed group active in Dooplaya District.



However, they have since removed the land mines.<sup>30</sup> Land mines are one of the biggest threats to the local villagers; as victims they face huge consequences for their livelihoods. In this 2015 reporting period, KHRG has concluded that land mine issues in Dooplaya District are decreasing in the post-ceasefire period, but are ongoing in KHRG's remaining research areas in southeast Burma/Myanmar.

This Field Report covered information from 15 raw data reports received by KHRG in 2015 from community members in Dooplaya District. Based on the information collected from these reports, KHRG perceived that the political situation is still unstable in the post-ceasefire period due to the ongoing military activities in Dooplaya District. With this concern, local villagers in Dooplaya District have lost their confidence in the ceasefire and they doubt they can obtain real peace, as they face the negative impacts of the ceasefire, such as military target practice and the sporadic eruption of fighting. Moreover, according to the testimonies of the local villagers demonstrated in collected reports, human rights violations are an ongoing concern, and serious sensitive abuse such as rape cases and killing cases affected the wellbeing of their lives. Therefore, it can be concluded that in the 2015 reporting period the general situation in Dooplaya District highlights a continued lack of improvement in the political situation. In this regard, KHRG emphasises the ongoing tricky nature of the political situation currently playing out in Burma/Myanmar.

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

- "Dooplaya Interview: Naw A---, February 2016," (August 2016)
- "Hidden Strengths, Hidden Struggles: Women's testimonies from southeast Burma/Myanmar," (August 2016)
- "Dooplaya Situation Update: Kawkareik Township, August to October 2015," (July 2016)
- "Growing drug use and its consequences in Dooplaya and Hpa-an districts, between February and December 2015," (May 2016)
- "Dooplaya Photo Set: Road construction and expansion results in destruction of villagers' plantations in Kyonedoe and Kyainseikgyi townships, December 2014 to July 2015," (March 2016)

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<sup>30</sup> This information is taken from an unpublished report, August 2015.

## Dooطلا District



## Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)