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Interview | Saw A--- (male, 34), Waw Lay village, Kawkareik Township (November 13th 2010)

How many people and households are in your village?

There are over 3,000 people and over 400 households in our village.

Can you tell us what happened to villagers before they fled here?

At the beginning we waited to see the situation as the DKBA soldiers told us. Then, Saw Z--- called us to follow him and collect vegetables and lard from Ad--- [location censored for security]. We took a motorbike and went there. For the villagers, they were already afraid for a long time. We encountered the Burmese Army [Tatmadaw soldiers] when we went there. My friend told me not to go when we saw the Burmese Army, but I thought about going because we'd already encountered them. Then, we turned around to come back. Even though we hadn't turned around [yet], a gun was fired at us, so we fled. The gunshot almost hit us. In Waw Lay, there are two areas: the place where villagers stay and the place where the DKBA army stays. The place where the soldiers stay is called Htee Nyah Lee. The Burmese Army had come in front of Naw Ab---'s shop and for us, we had reached in front of Saw Ac---'s house. Then, they saw us there. It seemed that Burmese Army soldiers was already staying there when we saw them pointing guns at us. They shelled the village with mortars after they fired on us. They shelled us with two mortars and fired on us ten times [with guns]. Then, they continued shelling the place where the DKBA army was with mortars, and then continued shelling Thee Ma Nee Gone where the [DKBA] soldiers stay, too. After that, the villagers fled. They shot about eight or nine mortars. For the gunfire, we couldn't count it.

How many SPDC [Tatmadaw] soldiers were there?

There were 50 to 60 soldiers who came to Htee Nyah Lee, and their total number was 150 soldiers.

When did this happen?

It happened after 8 am.

What is the displaced villagers' situation now?

For the villagers, they wanted to carry their things to the Thai side [of the Moei River] before the fighting happened, but the Thai [Army] didn't allow them to. They fled when they heard the guns fired and the Thai [Army] allowed them to flee when the guns were fired.

Why did the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw soldiers] shoot at you?

They shot at us for two reasons, we think. The first reason is they might have thought that we went to see their situation, and the second reason is that we both have beards and they might have thought that we were sentries who went to monitor the situation.

How did the villagers flee to here?

Some crossed the bridge, and because the bridge is narrow some crossed [in] the river. Some villagers couldn't bring anything when they fled and some could bring only some of their belongings even though they prepare beforehand.

Why did they prepare in advance to flee?

They prepared to flee after fighting happened in Ra Ma Tee.

What support did they get on the Thai side?

When we arrived on the Thailand side, there were a lot of other people fleeing there, too. So, the Thai Army asked us to stay in a pasture the cow shit was very smelly and hot. After we'd stayed there for one or two hours, we saw that they had brought water and food. Some got them [water and food], but some hadn't got them yet.

How many villagers came to stay there?

There were over 3, 000 villagers who fled to stay there. Not everyone went to stay there. There were other people who fled to other places.

How long did you flee here?

We fled here after 9 am and stayed on the Thailand side for seven or eight hours. Because we saw the situation didn't change, we left to another area. Some remained and slept at the pasture.

Are there any villagers who went back?

Yes, they started going back at 3 pm because Thai [Army] said there was no gunfire, and asked them to go back.

Did the villagers want to go back?

Some villagers didn't understand Thai and went back when they were told to go back. Some went back because their property was left at home, such as those people who sell things. For me, I just wanted to check on my things secretly.

Did villagers lose any of their property?

Yes, some lost their property. We don't know whether the soldiers or people took them. Some houses had been searched and dismissed by the Burmese Army [Tatmadaw soldiers], especially houses belonging to the DKBA soldiers and even big houses that don't belong to the DKBA soldiers.

What's your opinion on the SPDC army [Tatmadaw] doing this?

In my opinion since they started doing the election, they wanted to win the election so they oppressed villagers.

What did you arrange for your family before the fighting occurred?

For me, I sent my family [to Thailand] in advance before the fighting occurred.

What do you think will happen in the future?

Based on the current situation, there won't likely be peace in the future because the KNU also informed us about what happened. Now, the KNU [KNLA] went to stay at the same place to wait and shoot at the Burmese Army [Tatmadaw].

What will happen to villagers if there will be more fighting?

The villagers will face many problems when more fighting happens because when the villagers fled to the Thailand side for even one hour, things become more expensive. For example, if the original price of something is 10 baht, it becomes 15 baht. Before, one block of ice that children use to eat was 2 baht but when we arrived here it became 4 baht.

How about villagers' livelihoods?

For livelihoods, we have to leave bean plantations that we haven't harvested and corns plantations that we haven't harvested, or have only partly harvested. There are many [unharvested] plantations left.

Have you heard anything about the Burmese Army [Tatmadaw soldiers] arresting people and killing them?

No, but I heard the Burmese Army arrested and raped two girls and shot them dead when they were coming back from their workplaces.¹ It happened on Wednesday, the day after we fled. They were ethnic Myaw [Hmong]. They went to work inside [Burma], far away from Karen villages and didn't know what had happened and were coming back to the Thailand side. Villagers weren't allowed to talk about this case, and they told it when they reached Maw Gker village.

Who gave you this information?

My friend told me this because people from Maw Gker phoned [him].

What do you think the relationship between the DKBA and SPDC?

I think there is no relationship between the DKBA and SPDC now.

How do villagers prepare themselves according to the current situation?

Most villagers will flee. For those building doors, they finished their building and they save their money, pack their things and don't stay separately as before.

¹ See Displacement Monitoring Update No. 48: "Tatmadaw deserters confirm earlier reported incidents of abuse and general threats to civilians," KHRG, January 2011

Is there anything else that you want to say?

Another thing that I want to say is that security is needed for those fleeing into Thailand because even if villagers want to go and carry water from a well on the Thailand side, the Thai [Army] doesn't allow them to go. So, they have to use water from the river and later the consequences for them will be that they'll get diseases.

Why doesn't the Thai [Army] allow them to do that?

The Thai [Army] doesn't allow them to do that because the Thais said that although there is no shooting in those villagers' country, they don't go back. It disturbs travelling when these villagers come to stay in their country because they have to block the path where they usually travel. Thai citizens blocked it. For Thai Army, they don't allow people who want to come and see villagers who faced problems and fled to here. Yesterday I saw an organization which brought medicines, milk, water, and other things wasn't allowed to enter by the Thai Army and had to go back.

Interview | Naw Af--- (female, 45), Waw Lay village, Kawkareik Township (November 13th 2010)

How many people and households are there in your village?

There are over 300-400 households. For the population, I cannot say. When we came to stay in ---, not everyone is here but it is estimated around 3,000 people came [from Waw Lay].

What is your village name?

People call my village Waw Lay and it is called Win Win Myaing in Burmese.

Can you tell us a little bit about why you came here?

We fled because we are afraid of bullets. People were shooting mindlessly. The Burmese [Tatmadaw] were shooting. On that day, they heard that KNLA was coming to Oh Poe Htar and the Burmese shot mindlessly. They shelled five mortars into the village [Waw Lay] as other people said. So, we fled. The Thais did not allow us to flee before the guns fired. The Thais allowed us to flee when the gun fired. So, we could not bring anything. For me, I wanted to flee to Kyin Pone, but your uncle [referencing her husband] did not want me to go and told me that it would not be safe to flee there.

Where is Kyin Pone?

It is the place where my cousin's house is.

Is the place inside Burma?

Yes, it is inside Burma.

Can you tell us a little bit about what happened, as we heard there was shelling to your village?

For the shelling, we didn't dare not to watch. They shot at your uncle [her husband] and that teacher when they went there. They shot at them three times, but did not hit them. Then, they shelled a mortar at them one time. The distance is not very far from the place where they [the Tatmadaw] fired to the place where they [the uncle and the teacher] were going.

Why do you think the Tatmadaw soldiers shot at them?

They wanted to shoot them dead because they thought that they were DKBA soldiers, as that teacher has beard and your uncle has it, too. They [the Tatmadaw soldiers] thought that they were DKBA soldiers wearing ordinary clothes. It [the incident] happened near Pu Na Kah Mway's house. Naw Ab---'s shop is here [pointing at the ground] and here [pointing at the ground] is Pu Na Kah Mway's house. My son's father saw the Burmese Army from far away and that teacher saw the Burmese Army at Naw Ab---'s shop. Then, they talked to each other about how there were Burmese Army soldiers [nearby] and turned around their motorbike to come back. While they were turning around their motorbike, the Burmese Army shot at them.

Where did it happen?

It happened in Htee Nyah Lee.

When did it happen?

It happened on Tuesday, 9th November 2010 around 8 or 9 am after we woke up and ate breakfast.

What kind of teacher is the teacher that you mentioned?

He is --- [details censored for security].

Where were they going?

They were going to take things from my aunt's house. They went to collect things as my aunt could not collect their things. They also went to take pigs because we stay a little bit far from each other. They wanted to keep the pigs with us. For me, I dare not to keep other's people things.

Can you tell us a little bit about why the Burmese Army shelled mortars into your village before they entered it?

The reason is they shot your uncle [her husband] and the teacher at the beginning and then they came and shot us when they saw us. We do not know whether they shot us in order to threaten us or not. They fired their guns for the first time at your uncle and your teacher. When they first came, they do not fire anything.

Can you tell us why villagers fled?

It is not the case that villagers had not heard any gun fire but ran away. They had already heard the gunfire. For the Burmese Army, they shot at people when they saw them while they were entering the village. For the villagers, they fled when they heard the gunfire. If this is not the case, the Thais would not allow us to flee [to Thailand]. The Thais also heard the guns firing so they allowed villagers to flee here. After we heard the guns firing, we all run away and did not have time to look after each other. We were informed in advance by those who get along with the Burmese Army closely, that the Burmese Army would shell our village. Therefore, we ran away. They came and shot at us at the same time [we were fleeing], but they did not shoot continually. They shot when they saw people. They did not shoot when they did not see the people.

What is the Burmese Army's purpose coming there?

Their purpose is to fight the DKBA army and they also heard that there was KNLA army there.

Did they inform villagers that they would do shelling?

No, they did not inform us. That's why your uncle and teacher did not know and went there. If they knew about it [that the Tatmadaw was there], they would not dare to go. When we heard the gun fire, we knew that the Burmese Army had started their work. For your uncle, he told us to run away when he came back home.

How did villagers start to flee?

They did not cross the river when they fled because there was a bridge. The Thai Army also told us before that they would not let us die. When the attack happened, you could flee to here. So, when the attack happened, the Thai Army called us to come, too. When we came, they kept us at the cows' place and the cows' shit is very smelly.

How did Thai Army help the villagers?

They wanted us to stay at the same place and quietly. Some people did not eat anything, yet in the morning so they wanted to go outside and buy something to eat. But, we are not allowed to go anywhere and just had to stay there.

Where did they keep villagers?

They kept villagers at the grazing ground [pasture] at the side of Waw Lay River. The grazing ground is very large.

Could villagers bring all their belongings?

No, they could not.

Who gave them support and helped them with food?

For the food, I cannot say. I saw people brought a car of water. But, I did not see any rice and food, yet. I saw one or two Thai teachers went there and brought with two iceboxes and a refrigerator. I do not know what it is in the boxes. But, I saw children drank bottles of baby milk. It is not enough for every child.

Did the Thai soldiers block support that was coming?

We heard they do not want the support coming. Yesterday, they took rice in Waw Lay. The Thais did not allow the rice that people brought to support us. Also, they [the Thais] asked villagers who fled to here [Thailand] to go back [to Waw Lay] and burnt the property that some villagers went back to take when the attack was quiet yesterday. They want villagers to stay in the same place. They said if you are villagers, you can come back and stay. If you are relatives of DKBA soldiers, don't come back and stay. They would probably give trouble to the relatives of the DKBA soldiers when they see these people. If they do not see, they cannot do anything.

When did villagers start to flee?

The villagers started to flee on November 9th 2010 at 9:30 am. Since then, we continued fleeing to stay in Thai corn plantations, sugar corn plantations and beside farms. Some do not stay in the temporary sites. We dare not to stay there because the Thais do not want us to stay there.

Why did villagers return to their village?

They went back to take their properties because they fled and did not have time to bring anything. When it became quiet, the Thais asked them to go back and so they had to go back. Even though they went back, they dare not stay there so they took their things and came back here again.

Are they willing to go back or Thai ask them to go back?

The Thai asked them to go back, but they dare not to stay there [in Waw Lay] although they went back.

Are there any villagers lost their properties? What kind of properties that they lost?

We cannot count things that we lost. Some lost materials such as axes, knives. Some lost rice, some lost clothes and some lost household properties. For our house, we think there is nothing left because we dare not to go back and take them. I think the Burmese Army and some villagers will take this property.

Are there any villagers who went back to take their things left in the village?

There are none of them left in the village. Some came back and stay in field huts.

Why didn't some villagers return?

They did not return because they are not allowed to go back. The DKBA army didn't want them to go back.

What do you think will happen in the future?

In my opinion, we have to wait for our leaders' plan. If the leaders can plan and solve it, we can go back. If they cannot solve it, we cannot go back.

Who are the leaders?

We will be happy if the Burmese leaders can solve. But, we hope our ethnic and other siblings will solve it.

Do you think there will be more fighting in the future?

We heard from BBC or other people also told us that the Burmese Army are now sending more troops from Gkay Doh and from this side to attack Na Kah Mway.

What will the consequences be for the villagers?

We cannot say the problems that villagers will face. They will probably face food and health problems. Some work for a day and eat for a day and have with their family including their small kids. But, the day when I went back, these women said, "That Pu [grandfather, Na Kah Mway] never shoots [back at the Tatmadaw]. For us, we do not want to stay anymore." They asked [Na Kha Mway] to fight the Burmese Army.

Has the Burmese Army gone back to their army base?

No, they did not go back, yet. They just wait and see the situation there. Even my cousin who is a haircutter and does not have any connection with the DKBA army is afraid. So, for us, we dare not to go back.

Are there any villagers who had been torture by the army?

Yes, some villagers would probably have been tortured but I do not know. I heard people say there was a villager who had been beaten by the Burmese Army and died. He was assigned to be a section leader to arrange things and talk to villagers [in Waw Lay]. According to other people, he was asked to go and see the situation of the Burmese Army. The next day, we heard that he was dead. His name is Maung Win, over 40 years old. He is a Pwo Karen. His position was to arrange things and look after people in the village.

What problems do you think other villagers face? Can you tell us more about it?

I think they are not different from us. Some villagers dare to go back and some dare not to go back. Some villagers dare to go back and take things but dare not to stay there. Some villagers' animals such as chickens, pigs etc are eaten. It was in Waw Lay village. Our village has many sections. More DKBA soldiers stay in Htee Nyah Lee and villagers stay in the lower part of that village.

What do you think the relationship is between DKBA and SPDC army?

I think they do not have any relationship now because even though the DKBA army makes relationship with them, they only have to suffer. So, they now decided not to make any relationship with the Burmese. However, if the Burmese Army makes relationship with them honestly, they will do. If not, they will not make any relationship with the Burmese Army.

What did villagers prepare anything ahead for future?

They went back to take their properties and came back to stay here. They wait and see the situation. If the fighting becomes quiet or stops, they would go back and stay at their village. If the fighting does not become quiet, they have to move from their place and for the future, they

will have to find new places to stay. For the livelihoods, they have not harvest their farms, corn, beans yet. For the current situation, we just have to wait and see the situation. We will go back when we dare to go back. If we dare not to go back, we have to stay like this. We worked for the whole year and now we cannot harvest any more. We would just have to wait and see the situation.

Do you have anything else to say?

I cannot say any other things. Even though we want to go back and pray, we dare not to go back. They [Tatmadaw] do not distinguish between anyone, even one who is Christian or Buddhist. So we dare not to go back. They [Tatmadaw] might say that we are relatives of DKBA army.

Interview | Saw B--- (male, 25), Waw Lay village, Kawkareik Township (November 13th 2010)

Could you please tell me why did you come here and what is the current situation?

I heard that the Burmese military [Tatmadaw] came and fought with the DKBA, and then the DKBA withdrew from the fighting, so all of the villagers were fleeing to the border and to the Thai side [of the Moei River]. The Burmese [Tatmadaw] soldiers fired into the village and, on the road, they stopped the villagers that were running from the fighting and told them not to flee as they were targeting the DKBA troops not the villagers. But a lot of the villagers were afraid so they ran away from the fighting and came to stay here. I don't know what has happened in village [since I fled] as I've come to stay here for five or six days already.

So when did you escape from the fighting?

We started to come here on Thursday,

What has happened between Thai security [soldiers] and the village?

They, the Thai security, opened the gate to let us enter their territory and they recorded people's names as they will hand [that information] to the foreigners [UNHCR and humanitarian agencies]. There are about 2,000 people [here] who are from --- [village name censored for security]. They record all of the people who come to stay here then they hand it to the foreigners. Then the NGO workers are trying to bring food, mosquito nets, blankets and pillows to give to us. But when NGO workers reach this place, by that time some of the villagers had gone back to their villages and only a few hundred [villagers] were left, so they told the Thai security that they [the refugees] were lying as the number of people wasn't the same as in the [Thai authorities'] record. So the Thai security got angry and started to close the bridge and stop people from coming to the Thai side, but the NGO workers apologized [and asked] them not to close the bridge, so they kept the bridge open.

When did that happen?

That happened on Thursday as well. We also have to be afraid of the Thai security when we come to stay here because they don't want more people to come to stay here.

Do they give you any trouble?

No, they don't give us any trouble because they see all of the people [here] are Karen villagers.

We heard that some villagers are staying but some have gone back to their homes, so do you know why they had to go back?

Some villagers heard that the situation was getting better and that there was no more fighting, so that's why they went back. But some people have been coming back again, as they feel it's unsafe for them to stay in their villages.

Why do you think these villagers aren't going back to their villages?

They're afraid that the DKBA troops will come back again to attack the Burmese [Tatmadaw] soldiers, so that's why they don't want to go back yet.

Has the fighting happened again afterward [since Thursday]?

No, it hasn't happened yet.

They [the villagers who fled] just worry that that the DKBA might return to attack the Burmese troops?

Yes, they're worried that the DKBA might come back to attack the Burmese [Tatmadaw] troops that are based in their village. But some villagers have gone back as the Burmese troops asked them to go back to stay in their village. But still some villagers are afraid to go back as they expect the fighting might happen again.

[Another speaker] People who believe in what the Burmese [Tatmadaw] told them, they went back.

What will happen in the future?

I don't know if there will be more fighting or not. I can't guess.

Have there been any problems for those who are returning from their village?

Yes.

Can you tell us what kind of problems they face?

They're still afraid that fighting might happen in the village again. I think if the Burmese [Tatmadaw] troops become active there'll be fighting again. Now we've heard that the Karen army [DKBA] ordered the Burmese troops to withdraw their soldiers from that area within 15

days. If the Burmese troops don't withdraw their soldiers then the DKBA will return to attack them.

[By 'Karen army'] Do you mean DKBA or KNLA troops?

The DKBA in collaboration with the KNLA troops. Now the Burmese Army [Tatmadaw] hasn't withdrawn their troops and remain in that area. So we heard that the Karen army will wait until November 13th. if the Burmese army doesn't withdraw from that area the fighting will break out again.

What other problems have happened to the villagers who are returning from their village?

No... I haven't heard anything right now.

What do the villagers do to prepare themselves due to the conflict?

The villagers prepare themselves to flee if any fighting breaks out. So now some of us have come to stay on the Thai side [of the Moei River] to escape from the fighting, but the Thai security [soldiers] also don't allow us to stay in their place, because there are a lot of people who have come here. So some of them [the villagers who fled] stay in the corn fields; however some of them didn't know where to stay or get food, so they move back to their village.

Is the Burmese Army [Tatmadaw] carrying out any activity in this area?

No, I don't know about that.

After the DKBA withdraw their troops, we heard that the SPDC [Tatmadaw] troops came into the village and took photos. Can you explain more about that?

I heard from my cousin, who told me that this morning the SPDC troops came into the village and took photos of the DKBA houses.

Did he see that?

Yes, he saw that.

Did he stay there when the fighting happened?

Yes, he always stays there and he saw the SPDC troops taking photos of the DKBA houses and taking away their cars. I didn't know because I haven't gone back since I came to stay here but I just heard it from my cousin.

Did they [Tatmadaw soldiers] take away their [DKBA] cars?

Yes.

How many cars did they take?

They took only one car in Section 3 [of Waw Lay].

What else would you like to say?

No, nothing.

Interview | Saw C--- (male, 31), Waw Lay village, Kawkareik Township (November 13th 2010)

Can you tell me why the villagers had to flee and come to stay here?

Our villages' leaders went to meet with the Burmese Army [Tatmadaw] to request that the villagers needed to go back to their villages to finish up their work, to harvest their rice and bean crops. The SPDC [Tatmadaw] commander told them that villagers could come back to harvest their fields, but that they couldn't provide security for the villagers. The villages' leaders needed to negotiate with the DKBA troops to not come and attack them as well. The Burmese Army [Tatmadaw] commander also told them that they don't expect that fighting will break out in between [when the villagers return and finish their harvests] but it has already happened, so they can't do anything.

The first disagreement between the SPDC [Tatmadaw] and DKBA started in Myawaddy on the Election Day. On that day, Bo Shwe Wat captured one of the Burmese [Tatmadaw] commanders, so the Burmese troops felt sad about that and asked the DKBA troops to release the commander that they had captured. We don't know if he was released or not, but we heard the Burmese side said if the DKBA didn't release the commander, they'd launch an offensive against the DKBA troops. Then they started to prepare for their troop.

Who are 'they', the Burmese Army [Tatmadaw]?

Yes, the Burmese Army [Tatmadaw].

Do you mean that the DKBA and SPDC [Tatmadaw] had a meeting as you mentioned and they talked?

No, they didn't meet. I meant the leaders from the village; they went to meet with the SPDC [Tatmadaw]. Some of the villagers couldn't do anything [any work] while they came to stay on the Thai side so they wanted to go back to work on their corn fields to be able to sell it [their corn] and buy food. After working [harvesting their crops] then if they have to move out then they'll move out again. We can't do anything if any fighting occurs in the village; we can only flee to escape.

As you know, we distrust the Burmese Army [Tatmadaw] as we have a lot of experience [with the Tatmadaw] already. If any fighting breaks out in the village, they don't fire at their enemy;

they will use and rely on the villagers. As you know, in last two or three days while the fighting was happening in Three Pagodas [Pass] the villagers had to suffer the most.

Why don't you go back to your village?

The situation isn't stable yet so I'm afraid to go back. Some people said the DKBA will come back to attack the Burmese [Tatmadaw] troops again, but some said the situation is stable now so they moved back to their villages. Some people went back as they think they feel safe, they trusted what the Burmese [Tatmadaw soldiers] told them. But I don't trust the Burmese [Tatmadaw] troops so I haven't gone back and will stay here and find daily paid work to earn my living.

What do you do [for a living] when you stay here?

I do all [any] work that's available to me. I work at a corn or rice field. You have to do all work, as you are staying in a difficult situation.

What was your occupation before?

Before, I worked as a carpenter.

How much did you earn per day?

I earned a percentage; for example, if one door costs about 1000 baht, then we got 200 baht and our [business] owner got 800 baht.

How much do you earn per day in here?

I earn by the basket: one basket is 2 baht. If you carry more, you get more.

How many baskets can you carry in one day?

I can carry between 100 to 200 baskets per day, then come back and stay in our place [temporary site], and stay in worry of the possible threats. We can't go out to find work in the far away places. So we have to stay like this.

Do you want to say anything else?

I want to, but I don't know much information so I can't tell you more.

Interview | Saw D--- (male, 24), Waw Lay village, Kawkareik Township (November 13th 2010)

Can you tell me how long have you been coming to stay here?

Many years, almost ten years already.

Now [this time], when did you come to stay here?

I came to stay here two months ago.

Where is your village?

I live in Waw Lay village [in Burma].

Do you think you'll go back to Waw Lay?

Our home is there, so when the situation is stable then we'll go back again.

Did you come to stay here when you heard that the DKBA and the Burmese [Tatmadaw] troops would attack each other?

When I came here, nothing was happening in Waw Lay yet. I came here to work with my boss.

Didn't you stay in Waw Lay in Burma?

Before, I stayed there on the Burma side, but now I've come here as more work is available. So I came here to work at my boss' plantation.

Weren't you staying there when the fighting broke out in Waw Lay?

No, I wasn't staying there, but my parents were staying there and when the fighting broke out, they couldn't go anywhere so they came here to stay with us.

Do your parents [usually] stay over there [in Waw Lay in Burma]?

Yes, my parents stay over there, and our house is located just opposite one of the teachers' house.

Do you face any problems when your parents come to stay with you here?

No, the Thai security [soldiers] haven't said anything because my boss understands me as I work for him; but for the other people, he said they can stay but [they have to] be quiet.

What do you do [for work] here?

I work in the corn or bean fields as a daily wage labourer.

How much do you get in one day?

If I work a full day, then I get 100 baht per day, but if I have to work only a half day then my boss gives me 50 to 60 baht per day.

What are villagers most concerned about?

They're afraid of the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] the most. They aren't much afraid of the KNLA or DKBA soldiers because they're all the same Karen. They're afraid of the Burmese Army [Tatmadaw] the most because the Burmese Army does things mindlessly sometimes.

What's the villagers' situation here now?

Some villagers have hill fields or farms that they can't leave behind. So, they go back to do their [agricultural] work in the daytime and flee [back to Thailand] at night. Some raise chickens or pigs, and go back [to Burma] to feed their chickens or pigs. Then, they go to sleep in another place.

Have you heard anything about villagers losing their property?

I've heard about it, but we don't know whether it's true or not. Some have lost their property and animals, but we don't know who ate the animals, whether [it was] villagers or soldiers. They were probably lost because there are no house owners [staying in the village].

Have all villagers in --- [temporary hiding site censored for security] gone back?

Only a few villagers have gone back to the village. Some have fled to stay in Phop Phra [Thailand]. Some have fled to stay in AI--- and some have gone to stay in Am---. They've fled to [different places to] stay separately. More villagers are staying on the border. But, they don't stay in the same place. They stay in different places.

Have there been many people that have come to stay with you? What problems do you face when they come to stay with you?

We feel pity on them when they come to stay here because they can't go anywhere and [just] came to stay here. So, I called them to stay here and sleep here.

How many villagers are staying here?

There are between 20 and 30 people that came to stay here.

Do they have any food to eat?

Now, they go back and take their own food to eat [from their villages]. When they first came here, they didn't bring their own food so we helped them and provided them with food.

Can you tell us more about why these villagers don't dare to go back?

The reason why they don't dare to go back is that some are afraid of [further] fighting and some are afraid of the Burmese Army [Tatmadaw].

Why are they afraid of the Burmese Army [Tatmadaw]?

They worry that the soldiers will call them when they see them. In the past, the Burmese Army [Tatmadaw] sometimes called villagers to follow them at night and asked them to guide and show them the way. They're afraid of this as they've seen this happen before and since they're villagers. Even we are afraid of this. So, they don't dare to go back.

Interview | Saw E--- (male, 50), Waw Lay village, Kawkareik Township (November 13th 2010)

Why did you have to flee to here?

We fled at the same time that I heard mortar shelling. Some [villagers] fled here and went back to collect their children they'd left in the village, and encountered the Burmese Army [Tatmadaw soldiers]. I also fled here alone and left my family [in the village] so I went back and encountered them [Tatmadaw soldiers]. They told me not to run away, but I left my motorbike and ran away. They didn't shoot me when I ran away. People said they wouldn't do anything to us, but we're just afraid them.

Did you return again after that?

Yes, I returned back home the day before yesterday.

Did you see them [Tatmadaw soldiers]?

No, I went back to the lower part of the village and they're staying in the upper part.

How is the SPDC army's operation there?

They don't do anything to the people, as we've heard from what others said. They asked us to go back, but we don't dare to go back yet. We're afraid that they'll arrest us and that fighting will happen.

Do the SPDC [Tatmadaw soldiers] just stay in the village [Waw Lay] now?

Yes, they do.

Do you know what they're doing there?

No, I don't know, because I haven't gone back to the village in two days.

What do you think will happen in the future?

We aren't sure what will happen in the future. They've called us to go back and do our livelihoods as before, and farm our lands as before. They've asked those travelling here to tell us. For us, we don't dare to go back yet.

How are your livelihoods now?

We just had to leave them behind like that and our houses, too. We don't know whether we've lost our property or not. We closed the doors and had to leave [our property] behind like this and run away because we're afraid. We couldn't bring many things with us when we fled. We left it all behind at home. We could bring only some rice. When the rice is gone, we'll have to find more by ourselves in order to eat. We brought a sack of rice and shared it with our children, one

or two bowls of rice for them and it's all gone. Now, one of my sons goes to work as a day labourer and earns 100-120 baht per day to help us.

What is the situation of school in Waw Lay?

For the school, we don't know when it'll open again. I have two children attending school there, in 6th Standard and 7th standard. They don't dare to go back and attend the school yet. The teachers also haven't reopened it yet. The teachers will reopen the school when the fighting calms down. Even if they opened it now there's no one left in the village, no students. Everyone has run away. Two of the teachers also went back to their villages.

What do you do with your plantations you leave behind when fighting happens like this?

We can't do anything when this happens. We'll just have to pay back our boss later, because our boss on the Thai side [of the Moei River] invested the money for us to do the plantations and then sell [the harvest] back to them. Now, we don't dare to go back and work the plantations anymore, so the boss will record how much we have to pay them. Therefore, when we dare to do our plantations [again], we'll have to pay them back.

Interview | Saw F--- (male, 38), Waw Lay village, Kawkareik Township (November 13th 2010)

How many villagers, households and sections are there in your village?

I don't know exactly how many villagers are in my village and I've never made notes about how many households there are. But there are five sections in Waw Lay village, section one to five.

Tell me what happened to you and why you fled to Thailand?

The Burmese Army [Tatmadaw] which is based in Tee Nyat Lih camp shelled [Waw Lay village] with mortars: about four or five mortars. After that, when the soldiers were about to enter the village, they fired small weapons. Villagers felt afraid when they heard the gunshots, so they fled to the other side of the river [to Thailand].

Can you tell any information about the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] unit, battalion [number] or base [location]?

I don't know their unit and I never asked them about their unit.

When did the event happen and how did the villagers flee from the village?

I don't exactly remember the time because I forgot to look at my watch. But the event happened in the morning on November 9th 2010. The villagers fled in different directions without looking to each other when this event happened. I ran in a different direction from my wife and children to the other side of the river [Thailand]. My wife was able to bring with some clothes when she ran but no other things. Villagers crossed the bridge and came to Thailand. When the villagers arrived, Thai soldiers were waiting for them on the bridge, and picked up the villagers with

vehicles. The villagers didn't dare to get into the vehicles because they didn't know where the Thai army would send them. Even though they didn't date to go, they had to go and they were sent to a cowshed in Waw Lay village [in Thailand].

Was there any warning given before the mortars were shelled? Why did they shell the village? Did the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] soldiers arrest or torture any villagers when they entered the village?

We didn't hear and weren't given any warning. As soon as we heard the shelling, the villagers were afraid and fled from the village. Some villagers had already started running when the guns were shooting. But one villager told me, not all villagers had fled when the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] reached the village entrance. They saw villagers fleeing when they entered the village but they didn't do anything. We don't know why they shelled the mortars. Did they shell [because they thought] there were DKBA here? But they didn't see any DKBA soldiers when they entered the village.

Where did villagers go and stay when they came to Thailand? What support did villagers get?

Villagers fled and stayed in several places. Some people stayed in other people's houses and some people stayed outside the village [Waw Lay village in Thailand]. The Thai soldiers gathered them at a cowshed. People gave us water when we arrived. No food was provided; because some villagers went back [before food was provided]. But one villager told me that people came and gave them Mama (instant noodles) and other food and snacks for the children.

Why did other villagers get food but you just got water to drink, how [did this happen]? Who came and provided food to the villagers?

After I fled to Thailand, in the afternoon around 2 or 3 pm some villagers went back so I also went back to my village. I heard that for villagers who remained; people came and provided them with food like Mama (instant noodles) and other food. I don't know about other support, but I heard that this support came from the Thais [it was not clear whether the interviewee was referring to the Thai army or Thai civilians].

Why did the villagers go back?

We heard that the Burmese Army [Tatmadaw] was not in our village anymore so some villagers went back. Some went back around 2 or 3 pm. but some went back in the evening and at night time. Some villagers didn't dare to sleep at their homes after they went back. They went and slept on the other side of the river. My wife and children went back and slept on other side of river after they went back to our village.

Did the villagers go back by themselves or were they forced to go by Thai soldiers?

I heard that the Thai soldiers said [to villagers] *'If you go back, go back and stay there [in your villages]. Don't travel [back and forth]. You can stay here for one or two days. But you can go back and stay there [in your villages], and come back when the fighting happens again.'*

Was any of your property lost?

I didn't lose anything, but some villagers' chickens were gone. We don't know whether the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] soldiers or villagers took them.

Why haven't other villagers come back?

They heard that the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] will attack the DKBA and DKBA will attack the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw]. They're afraid that the fighting will happen [again] so they don't dare to go back.

What you think the situation will be in the future?

Villagers have heard that the Burmese Army [Tatmadaw] at Tee Nyat Lih Hta will send their injured soldiers [to another location]. The DKBA soldiers will attack them if they send [their injured to another location]. So villagers are afraid that fighting will happen and they will get injured. Some villagers who remained in Thailand are working [for wages]. If they [Tatmadaw and DKBA leaders] can negotiate, maybe fighting won't happen. I don't dare to try to find out the information even though I've come back and stayed in my village. I worry that people will misunderstand me and kill me.

What problems will villagers have to face if fighting happens?

There are many problems that would be caused for villagers. Now, villagers are poor. It isn't easy to work when fighting happens. Villagers can't work on their [flat] farms or hill fields. Now, some of the villagers' paddy and corn fields are not [yet] ready to harvest. They'll have to leave their plantations [without harvesting them] if fighting happens.

When you meet with DKBA, SPDC [Tatmadaw] and KNLA soldiers, do they ever cause any problems for villagers?

Currently the situation is the same as before. It seems like they [DKBA and KNLA soldiers] trust each other. We villagers don't dare to go and make a relationship with Burmese [Tatmadaw] soldiers. The Burmese soldiers told a villager who was going to his farm and met with Burmese soldiers and with Burmese Army sentries on the road, that if villagers go to their farms or corn plantations, they have to go in the morning and come back before dark. The villagers might be mistakenly shot if they go and work at night time.

Are there any problems if villagers from other villages meet with these armed groups?

I don't know if other villagers have to face problems. But one village located close to our village, called An---, has seven or eight households. Now, no villagers are staying in that village. They're afraid and they've all fled to the other side of the river [Thailand].

What is the relationship between the DKBA and SPDC [Tatmadaw]?

Now, no DKBA soldiers are staying in our village [Waw Lay]. I don't know exactly about the [Tatmadaw's] relationship with the DKBA. But the Burmese Army [Tatmadaw] activities are patrolling, guarding the road and staying close to the village. I haven't seen them come into the village during the daytime. But I think they've come during the night-time because we saw their space in the morning.

When they are afraid, how do villagers prepare themselves [to flee]?

All the villagers make preparations. All villagers pack up their things. For me, I put things in my basket so it will be easy to carry when fighting happens. Some villagers already keep packages on the other side of the river [in Thailand] and some people put packages by the riverside [in Burma] to be ready for them to carry.

Do villagers plan and discuss about what will happen in the future?

The village head hasn't told us anything about what we have to do if something happens. But I've told my family that we won't flee to the riverside if the situation [fighting] happens far from us. We'll stay in our village or stay in the hole that we've dug under our house [a shelter]. We'll flee to the riverside if [fighting] happens in our village.

Interview | Naw H--- (female), I--- village, Kawkareik Township (November 13th 2010)

When did you come here?

We came here on the 8th of this month [November] after voting. People said Burmese [Tatmadaw] soldiers were coming to attack us and we were afraid. We heard gunshots going "Tu-tu-ta-ta". We were afraid of the Burmese [Tatmadaw] and we ran away.

Did Burmese [Tatmadaw] soldiers often come to attack your village?

When the DKBA weren't present in our village [in the past], Burmese [Tatmadaw] soldiers came and attacked and we had to flee. Since the DKBA has been in our village no Burmese [Tatmadaw] soldiers have come and [there's been] no need to flee.

What's the situation in your village?

On the election day, on Sunday, we had to go to vote in the Burmese village. We wrote down our name on paper and chose the flag [the logo of the Phalon-Sawaw Democratic Party, a political party with ethnic Karen members] or *twee pah gklee* [a Karen word usually meaning 'dog' but used by the speaker in this context to describe the lion that is one of the logos of the Union Solidarity Development Party]. Most Karen casted votes for the flag, our own flag. Ordinary Burmese also casted votes for the flag. [There were] less votes for *twee pah gklee*.

Has someone told you about the result of the vote?

No one has told us. We fled here and we've heard nothing about it. We know nothing. When they said we had to cast a vote, they gave us each a piece of paper. We wrote down our name [on the paper] and we signed on the flag.

Why did you flee here?

We're scared of Burmese [Tatmadaw] soldiers. People said the Burmese soldiers went to Myawaddy. We heard shelling but we didn't see them. We heard gunshots; then in the morning, we fled.

Why did the DKBA and the Burmese [Tatmadaw] soldiers fight?

We don't know anything [about that]. Other people fled and we also fled. We were afraid that we'd be hit by the bullets.

Do you think there was a reason that they shot at each other?

I don't know. We only wanted to prevent ourselves from being arrested to become porters, and we ran away.

Who was recruiting porters?

We heard that in Myawaddy, the SPDC [Tatmadaw] was recruiting porters. I'm worried about if my husband [has] to be a porter. So we fled here.

Where's your husband now?

He's sleeping here, he's sick. That's why we fled ahead of the fighting.

Do you plan to go back?

Yes, if it's getting peaceful in my village, I'll go home and reap my paddy. I left my children at home to look after our things. If it's peaceful they'll call me on the phone.

Do you have a phone?

Yes, we can contact them. Our paddy field is getting ripe and we have to go back and reap it.

Interview | Saw J--- (male, 20), I--- village, Kawkareik Township (November 13th 2010)

Where are you from?

I'm from Ak--- village, Bassein Township in the [Irrawaddy] Delta. Before [Cyclone] Nargis I left Pauktaw to come to I--- village to look for a Job.

What happened to your current village?

The Burmese [Tatmadaw] soldiers weren't coming into our village, but we heard that they were in the forest. We heard that there was fighting in Myawaddy.

Why did you come here?

I heard that in Myawaddy the Burmese [Tatmadaw] soldiers are arresting people to be porters. I heard that there was fighting in Myawaddy. My wife asked me to flee because she worried that I'd be arrested to be a porter.

Where's your wife?

In my village, in I---.

Why didn't your wife come with you?

She has to look after the house and the animals.

Who were involved in the fighting?

The DKBA and the SPDC [Tatmadaw].

Why did the fighting happen?

I think it was because of the election. Only Burmese [representatives or parties] won in the election, and not the Karen groups.

What is the situation in your village?

The DKBA and the [KNU/KNLA] Peace Council aren't far from our village. I heard that 100 or 200 people will flee from I--- village. We think that fighting will happen again near our village.

Have you had any support here?

I came to my brother-in-law's house and he has helped and supported me. I just arrived at --- [hiding site in Thailand censored for security] this morning at 7 o'clock. My wife is worried that if the Burmese [Tatmadaw] soldiers come to our village, they'll arrest villagers to be porters and I'd be arrested. That's why I left I--- village.

Do you feel safe here?

Yes, I feel safe staying with my brother-in-law's family

Do you plan to go back to your village?

Yes, when the situation is better.

How far is I--- village?

By motorcycle it's twenty minutes, and on foot it's more than one hour.

Interview | Naw Ag--- (female, 46), I--- village, Kawkareik Township (November 13th 2010)

Can you tell us about the situation in your village?

In my village, people had to go and vote. They asked a person from each household to go. They will make trouble for us if we do not go. For me, I was sick and did not go and vote. We do not know about voting and we did not go. Due to the Burmese Army's [Tatmadaw] attack, we did not stay and had to come here.

Who told you to go and vote?

The Burmese told us. They ordered the village head and the village head had to inform us. For me, I was sick and I did not go. The morning when they went there [to vote], my elder sister went.

Who is your elder sister?

[My elder sister is] Naw Ah---.

Two of my children went to attend school in Aj--- and some went [there] for treatment. There are only small children left with me. We are not rich. We do not own a farm and we do not have any money. We had to flee here and do not have any food.

Is there anyone helping you when you arrived here?

I returned home on the day when people came and recorded people's names so my name was not included [in records kept by a relief group]. When people distribute food, we do not receive anything because our names are not included [in the record].

What were you doing when they came to record people's names?

I went back to see my farm and children who were left in the village.

Why did you flee?

The SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] has a problem with the DKBA army so we fled.

How did the problem happen?

The problem happened the same as what happened in Ma Ner Bplaw [Ma Ner Bplaw was the former headquarters of the KNU, which fell after heavy fighting in 1995]. The SPDC Army takes villagers away so our villagers have to fear and we fled in concern for our safety and in advance.

Can you tell us a little more details of the incident?

In I---, nothing has happened. The incident happened in Myawaddy. They shelled mortars and we were afraid that it would reach us so we fled.

How far is it between Myawaddy and I---?

It takes one hour to walk [from I--- to Myawaddy]. When they shelled mortars at night, it did not reach to us. It reached to a vehicle road.

How many mortars reached the vehicle road when they shelled?

Three mortars [reached the road]. In the morning, we fled here. I brought money, Thai baht when I came.

Before you came here, were you be able to pack your things?

I didn't dare to stay because I have a small child. I didn't have time to pack things and I had to come like this. My elder brother told me to stay together, eat together, and go together. I didn't know anyone when I came to stay here. I worry that the incident will happen as before, when the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] tormented us. They abused villagers and oppressed women when we could not flee to sleep [in a hiding place]. That is why we are afraid and we fled.

Why did the incident happen?

We heard people say that the day after we had to go and vote, people [the Tatmadaw and DKBA] fought each other at night at 8 pm. We couldn't flee, couldn't work, and we stayed at home and didn't know what happened. We heard when others told us. We trusted them when the others told us that at night. We worried that the Burmese Army, the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] would come and attack. We cannot escape when they come so that we fled in advance.

How did it happen?

The incident [conflict] occurred between the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] and the group in the DKBA army which did not sign [agree to become a Border Guard Force]. The DKBA group which did not sign, is based in the upper part [on high ground] in the place where we stay and the DKBA group that signed is based at the upper part [on high ground] near the vehicle road. The group that signed told us that the Burmese Army [Tatmadaw] would attack and that we wouldn't be able to flee and escape when the Burmese Army attacked, so we fled in advance.

Are there any people who died when the attack happened in Myawaddy?

We saw on TV. We saw people fled to cross Myawaddy River [the Moei River, east of Myawaddy Town] to Thailand. People said there were 3,000 people [who fled].

Do you think this [kind of] incident will happen again?

I have no idea. We have no communication with anyone when we stay here. We don't know the situation. We stay and wait to see the situation. We also don't feel well. If we stay in our village, we can't flee when the incident [attack] happens.

Did you come along with your husband?

My husband is living in Bangkok and working in order to find money. We have a corn plantation and didn't make a profit so we have to pay [back] a debt of 200,000 baht to our boss. We can't

pay it so my husband has to go and work in Bangkok. We can't work in Burma so we have to go [to work] in Bangkok.

How much did you lose doing the corn plantation in a year?

200,000 baht.

Do you want to tell us anything else?

I can't say any more. We do our livelihoods, but [get] no profit. You only have to be afraid. In the village, older and young people all have to stay aware of the situation. We can't speak Burmese so that we have to worry that they'll torture us. We hear that the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] tortures people, including women, so we're afraid that. Even though people blocked the road, we found a way to come. Now, the price [of things] has become a little higher and the road has reopened. Even though the road has reopened, they didn't want to reopen it. [The reason] They opened it is related to the corn [trade].

How much tax do they take from corn?

I don't know.

We don't want fighting anymore. We face problems when we have to flee from place to place. Since we were children, until now, we [have had to] flee and it's a little bit ok if we're healthy. When we're not healthy and don't have any money, we face big problems.

Interview | Saw K--- (male, 30), Myawaddy Town, T’Nay Hsa Township (November 13th 2010)

Where do you live now?

Now I live in Myawaddy. I live at my friend's house. [My own house] is in --- [location censored for security]. I came and rented a house from my friend [in Myawaddy]. My friend is a house renter . I came to find a job.

Did you flee here when the fighting happened last week?

I didn't flee. I stayed at home and looked [at the situation].

What did you see when you stayed and watched what was happening?

When they first fired [guns], there was shooting in the whole city. When the guns were shot, the villagers ran and called to each other, closed their houses and fled to Thailand. They fled to Gate 17 [an unofficial trade and migration gate on the Thailand side of the Moei River, south of the Thai-Burma Friendship Bridge between Mae Sot and Myawaddy]. We, the men, went and helped them by carrying their packages to the other side of the [Moei] river. After they went, just the men were still left. I went back and stayed at home. After a while, a shell fell beside me but didn't explode. It didn't explode, so I got up and came back. I was afraid but I'm a man and I tried to make myself brave, and I came back and stayed at home.

Did they [villagers] walk around during the fighting?

Mostly they were at the monastery.

When did the fighting occur?

At 8:30 am. They started [fighting] on the 7th [of November] at 8:30 am.

Which group started shooting first?

[DKBA Battalion #902 commander Lieutenant Colonel] Kyaw Thet's soldiers shot first. The DKBA shot first. They shot at the Burmese [Tatmadaw soldiers]. It started at the [Thailand Burma Friendship] bridge.

Do you think many civilians were injured or killed? How many people died?

As I know three civilians died, two men and one pregnant woman, under the bridge. For the trishaw [driver], a mortar fell on his trishaw. It was during the day when the event happened.

Who shot [the mortar]?

We don't know which group shot it because the mortars come from there [far away] and fall down here, so it could've been the DKBA. The DKBA stayed on that side, the 6th Brigade side

[south of Myawaddy town, in the direction of Dooplaya District]. They shot [the mortar] and it fell down in the middle of the road.

Did the DKBA stay under the bridge also?

At first the DKBA stayed there.

When did those people die, was it on the first day or later?

They died on the first day [on November 7th]. They fought and [the fighting] finished after 10 am.

Did they [the people who died] walk around during the fighting?

They were carrying their packages. They were fleeing.

How many people do you think fled to Thailand?

There were about 70 to 80, or 100 villagers who fled.

How did they flee and how did they come to Thailand?

In front of my house, I saw people went and picked them [villagers who were fleeing] up. We sent them with a car. The first time we sent them, people didn't block us. The second time, the Burmese [Tatmadaw soldiers] surrounded our car and shot guns in front of us. They asked us to go back. We turned back and came back. We couldn't cross [the Moei River to Thailand].

Who shot at the car?

The Burmese [Tatmadaw soldiers]. They didn't let us cross. On the way to Gate 17, before we arrived at Gate 17 they surrounded us. They shot in front of us so we turned our car back. It was on the same day [November 7th].

When did you go?

At 11 am.

Whose car did you drive?

The car was my friend's car. He's a civilian.

Did people order them to run [flee] or did they run by themselves?

People ordered them to run. People gave them warning.

Who gave them warning?

The Burmese [Tatmadaw soldiers] said '*Protect yourselves.*' They gave 45 minutes [for civilians to escape].

But they didn't let some people escape?

45 minutes had passed. It was during the fighting, so they didn't let us go. We came back [home] but the sound became bigger [the gunfire was louder], so we went to another gate. ...[audio recording not clear]... People sent the pregnant woman to Mae Tao Clinic. The pregnant woman was dead. Her stomach fell down [was severely wounded by a mortar].

So you saw two people die?

Two people died in the trishaw. Their heads and eyes were blown up.

And one [person] was injured?

The pregnant woman died in a different place. Three people died. The one who was injured is different from them [the three civilians who were killed].

Did you know them?

I didn't know them, but they're villagers.

How many hours did the fighting last?

It was [only] *kyeh bpreh* [a skirmish] until evening. [audio recording not clear]... They just shelled with heavy arms. A few small arms were fired. Mostly they used bombs and hand grenades. Mostly I heard heavy arms.

Did the DKBA or SPDC [Tatmadaw] take security for civilians?

They said nothing about security. They gave us the time and [said] '*The situation isn't good. You can escape within 45 minutes.*' After a while the fighting happened. Then they told villagers if they wanted to go down [to Kawkaeik town or other cities], they could go. But they let cars come up [to Myawaddy]. [Civilians] could to go Pa'an but [people from Pa'an] weren't allowed to come up here.

Was anything damaged in Myawaddy town, like shops, houses or other buildings?

I haven't gone around in all areas, so I don't know, but as I know they [Tatmadaw soldiers] are walking around and checking at night. They're checking where DKBA houses are. 'They' means Burmese [Tatmadaw soldiers] and Border Guard Forces. They surround [DKBA] houses and check them at night. They surround [the houses] and point their guns [at the houses].

We heard they were going around and checking people, and arresting people.

Yesterday, they arrested one group. They said they were arresting porters.

How many people did you see?

Four cars [of people]. The cars were Border Guard Force's cars, big cars like Vigos and some were military coloured. Yesterday, I saw four people in a car. They went to people's houses and ask for men. People told them there were no men and people fled into the jungle.

Were there any problems when civilians crossed the border and fled to Thailand?

There weren't any problems.

Were there any groups that assisted them when they arrived to Thailand?

Thai people helped and assisted them. They said that the Thai people took care of them carefully. They provided food.

Have those people come back?

They've come back. Almost all of them have come back.

Is there anything that they have to be afraid of after they came back?

Some people are still afraid because they aren't sure about the situation. They [have to] stay with awareness of when they'll have to flee and when people will fight. They worry about this. The situation is still dangerous. They've heard that fighting will still happen. People said there'd be fighting if Daw Aung San Suu Kyi isn't released. Different people say different words. Some people came back, closed their houses and ran away.

What about you? Won't you run?

I won't run. I'll stay at there.

Why?

There's no benefit even if I run. I don't want to flee from here. That's one reason. And staying in other people's country isn't the same as staying in your own country. I'll dig a hole and stay in there.

Did you dig a hole?

There's a hole under my house.

Were any houses burned down?

I haven't gone to the market. I did go around [there] but people didn't let us in. People are selling now [in the market].

Has the situation become normal as before?

Some things have become normal. I can say it's become 70% normal. Even though it isn't normal, it's become better.

Were there any problems for donors to go and help villagers who fled to Thailand?

I don't know about that.

Which day did most of the civilians come back?

Most of them came back the day before yesterday.

Did the SPDC [Tatmadaw soldiers] help villagers when the villagers went back?

The SPDC provided no support. They have to help themselves.

Did SPDC [Tatmadaw soldiers] question them when they went back?

No, they didn't check [the people returning]. There was no checking yesterday.

How did they go across the river?

Some people went across with *seh lay* [motorboats] and *baw* [inner tubes].

Did they have to pay, and how much did they have to pay?

I don't know about that.

What about you? How did you travel?

I travelled by boat. I had to pay because I travelled alone.

Did they check you when you went back?

I came today. I haven't gone back yet. I came yesterday.

Did the Thai soldiers force villagers to go back, or did the villagers go back by themselves?

They wanted to go back because they worried about their homes, so they went back. People didn't send them back. They wanted to go back because they worried about their property and they wanted to go back. No one forced them to go back.

How did they keep [leave] their property when they ran?

They just put [their property] in their homes and closed the doors and windows quickly, and run away, like a tiger trying to catch a deer. They were worried and afraid and ran away.

Had they lost their property when they went back?

Yes, they did.

Who do you think took their property?

They thought it was *wah kee* [literally 'white bones', a derogatory term used by some Karenn villagers for Burmese soldiers] because they didn't run when the people ran. They just sent their wives and children, but they stayed and found things [from people's houses]. They were Burmese [Tatmadaw soldiers], not Karen.

What [kind of] property did villagers lose?

Most property that villagers lost was food and animals. As I know and have heard, one of my neighbours and several people in the market [lost property]. He [my neighbour] lost two of his chickens.

Do you think the place where they stay now is secure?

No, it's not secure. It's *gkoh gkoh ler ler* [a Karen expression literally meaning 'hot and warm'; used by the speaker to explain that the situation is unstable, changing from dangerous to less dangerous] .

What do you mean by *gkoh gkoh ler ler*?

You have to worry that they'll continue fighting, and that we'll have to flee again and stay [outside our village].

Has there been any clue that the fighting will continue?

I think [more] fighting will happen. People talk about that, so I think the fighting will continue. You can see now, they aren't looking to each other. They're trying to catch each other. The SPDC [Tatmadaw] looks at the BGF's movements, and the BGF looks at the DKBA's movements, and the SPDC [Tatmadaw] looks at the DKBA's movements. If you stay as a villager, what will you do if you don't worry?

As you said, it seems like there are several [armed] groups. How many groups are there?

There are several.

Are the BGF and SPDC [Tatmadaw] working together?

Even though they're working together, they aren't satisfied with each other. Some people [BGF soldiers] were forced to do things they weren't willing to do. Many people aren't satisfied.

Is this [the situation] between the SPDC [Tatmadaw] and BGF?

Yes.

What about the DKBA and BGF?

They're close and they know each other. [The BGF] are going around and checking [DKBA] houses. The Burmese [Tatmadaw] soldiers don't know all of the DKBA houses. The BGF knows [the houses], so they were ordered to do that.

We heard that they [some BGF troops] deserted here and the Thai Army arrested them sent them back. Have you heard anything about that?

No, I haven't heard.

Can you explain to me the current situation?

It's not normal and hasn't become normal as before. It's like you have stay and wait and with sadness. [The situation] is not peaceful and not the same as before. We could stay peacefully

and happily before they caused the problems. But now if you stay you have to be afraid, step by step. Will the fighting happen again, and how will the situation be?

Did villagers go back to their house or to other places?

Some people went back to their homes, some people picked up their packages and went down to lower land [lowlands areas of Pa'an and Doooplaya Districts]. And some people escaped to other places. They went down to Pa'an. They went to stay in cities.

Why did they go?

It's isn't so sure if there'll be fighting or not. They didn't dare to stay. They fled to save their lives.

Are there people who haven't come back?

There are some people who haven't come back [to Burma] but most people have come back.

Why haven't they come back?

They have their families there [in Burma]. So they stayed there.

I meant people who fled to Thailand and haven't gone back [to Burma].

I don't know about that.

For people who went back [to Burma], did they all go back or not?

Yes, their whole families went back. [Those who went down to lowland areas], they went with their families. They closed their houses and fled down.

Before, you said they arrested people. Were those people civilians?

I don't know exactly. People said they were arresting people to be porters. We came back on a motorbike and we saw that they were called down [asked to climb into a car], [I saw] four people.

Do you know where they were sent?

I don't know.

Are there any problems that the DKBA or SPDC [Tatmadaw] cause for villagers?

I haven't seen [any].

Do you stay with your family?

No, I stay alone. My family lives in 1st Brigade [Thaton District].

Are you married?

No, I'm single.

What will the situation be for villagers in the future?

I don't know.

Can you say what the situation will be in next month?

As I think, it'll get hot [worse]. There'll be a problem and villagers will have to flee.

Do villagers help each other when they flee?

The villagers help each other. People who have cars carry [things] for other people. Some people who have no one to carry [things] for them, we went and carried [things] for them. They didn't ask for money for [using] the car. They helped each other.

Do villagers know that the situation will become worse?

Most villagers know about that.

Have they made any preparations?

They have prepared to flee. They've packed up [their belongings] in bags. Some people have sent their property to other places. Some people have closed their shops. Some people sold their goods but they haven't bought more.

Do you think more people will move to lower land [lowland areas of Pa'an and Dooplaya Districts]?

People are moving down little by little every day. More cars go down but less cars are coming up. Yesterday, some cars came up [here] because they were allowed to come up.

Did they come up for business or to pick up their families?

They came up for business.

Do they allow DKBA and KNU-KNLA Peace Council cars to run?

No, they don't allow those groups' cars to run. They just give a chance for BGF [cars]. No other cars were allowed to run. But cars which have licenses can travel. They didn't allow [KNU/KNLA Peace Council Commander] Pu Htein Maung's or the DKBA's cars to run.

Has the school re-opened?

The lower grade school [primary or elementary school] re-opened yesterday but not the high school. I don't know when the high school will open.

Is there anything else that you want to say?

I want them to be united and not fighting anymore. [Then] Villagers could do their work [livelihoods] as before. If there's fighting between brother and brother, it won't be good. If possible, it'll be good if they can do this until [we] get freedom. No Karen people have any

rights. They were beaten up, kicked and oppressed when they stood up. I hope people organise in a correct way and become united, but I can't give a suggestion about how to organise them.

Do villagers do anything for these two groups to be united again?

We don't dare to organise and can't organise for these two groups. They'll say we persuaded them and we'd be killed without reason.

Which group do you think is correct?

I can't say about that.

Interview | Daw L--- (female, 52), Myawaddy Town, T'Nay Hsa Township (November 13th 2010)

In which section of Myawaddy do you live?

I live in Section 5 of Myawaddy which is a bit far from downtown and close to Gate 10.

Why did you flee here?

We didn't dare to stay because of the attack.

Did an attack happen near your house?

Yes. There's an army gate in front of my house.

What kind of gate? An SPDC [Tatmadaw] gate or DKBA gate?

Both DKBA and SPDC [Tatmadaw] soldiers stay together there.

Did they still mix [stay together] during the attack?

I don't know, because I fled here during the attack.

Did you flee here before the attack or after it?

After the attack [started].

How did you flee here?

There were some boats to carry people from M---, about 1000 [people], to this side. I came here by that boat and when we got to this side, the Thai soldiers asked us where we'd go and we responded that we'd go to work at N---. Then they only said 'Go'.

So could you still hear the sound of fighting while you were fleeing?

Yes. I fled here during the attack but my husband had to stay at home to prepare some of our household things and keep them in a safe place. Because it wasn't our own [place] and we couldn't leave our things there. If we did, we'd have to pay fees for that. Then all of us arrived here.

So you didn't bring anything when you fled here?

No, we didn't.

Did the boat drivers ask for boat fees?

No, they didn't.

So now have you got any help from anywhere since you arrived here?

No. We have to look for a way on our own, like collecting beans from the fields [work as daily labourers picking beans on plantations].

Does anyone send provisions to you?

We only got rice yesterday, but no rations for now.

Do you know the name of the organization that provided you with rations?

No, but they sent us rice packages by asking someone yesterday. We didn't know the name [of the organisation].

Have you been helped with any clothes?

No. Just rice packages only.

Have you heard about if anyone has tried to support people like you but the Thai authorities didn't give them permission?

No, we haven't.

Did you see if anyone died during the attack?

We heard that one pregnant woman and one trader's nephew were killed by a mortar. But we don't know about that side [the Burma side of the river] and haven't seen [anything] either. But, we heard there were [people who] died.

How was the situation when you went back to Myawaddy to take your property?

The situation there was pretty quiet and most people from my place [already] arrived to the Thai side [of the Moei River]. Only people who have their own houses and orchards are still staying there in fear of an attack.

Did you go back yesterday?

Yes, I had to go and take back our household things with my husband, and came back here again by boat on the same day.

Did your husband flee during the attack?

No. he didn't. He just came here yesterday.

Where is he now?

He's going to --- [location censored for security] to charge his phone battery.

How did you go back to Myawaddy?

We went back there by [hired] motorcycle.

Were you checked on your way back there?

No. we weren't checked by either side [by the Thai Army or Tatmadaw soldiers]. They said nothing but just asked '*Are you one of those people who fled yesterday?*' Nothing else.

Did they ask for money?

No, they didn't.

Do you dare to go back and stay on the Myawaddy side [of the river] now?

We have to wait and see the situation for now, and work here. We aren't sure whether to go back and stay there yet, or later as well. In our family there are only adults so maybe we'll go back. Or we'll stay here. Because [in Myawaddy] we have to rent an apartment, and as soon as you move in you have to pay 30,000 kyat per month for rent.

What did you do when you stayed there?

We didn't have a stable job there, but just sifted sand from the river.

How much did you get per day?

It depended on how much we could sift. We sometimes got 2000 or 3000 kyat per day. But in the cold season, like now, we only get 1500 kyat per day, which only is enough for our daily meals.

Do you have any fear to stay here?

As you know, we just stay here like this.

Were you still afraid after you arrived here?

No. I wasn't afraid after I arrived here.

Are you afraid that the Thai authorities will send you back to Myawaddy?

[Audio recording not clear]

When you went and took back your property from Myawaddy, had some of your property been lost?

No, because we didn't have too much property. But I'm not sure for those who have a lot of property.

Had your house been destroyed or damaged by gunfire or fires?

No, nothing was destroyed on that side [of town]. But we heard there was only [damage] on the outside of Myawaddy not inside Myawaddy.

Since you fled here, have you faced any trouble from the Burmese Army [Tatmadaw]?

No, we didn't see any soldiers since that time, the soldier are just inside Myawaddy at the market. There are no soldiers at the riverside. Most people ran to the riverside and just a few men are still inside Myawaddy.

How many people do you think ran to the riverside?

About 1,000. A lot of people arrived at the riverbank and fled [across] at different places.

Did you hear some gunfire or mortar explosions when you d here?

We heard one mortar and two or three gunshots on that day. We ran to this side as soon as we heard those sounds

Do you dare to go back and stay?

No.

Why? Have you heard something?

No. We don't dare to go back for now. This has been a sudden case, and some people are shocked about this. And there [in Burma], it's not so easy to escape suddenly from the outside of Myawaddy because there are so many gates along the riverside to go the Thai side [of the river].

Have you heard something about if attacks will happen again?

No, but some are going to listen to the situation at the riverside.

Interview | Naw O--- (female, 28), P--- village, Tak Province (November 13th 2010)

How do you help those [villagers] who have arrived here?

When they fled they phoned us and said they were facing problems and we went and picked them up. Then we came back and put them into Thai huts in different places. And when they arrived, we provided them with some food and if there was work to do, they could go and do a little wage labour.

Do you take security for them all?

For security problems, we informed the [village] section leaders that people were coming to stay. If they stay longer, they'll have to get a permit to stay; and if they don't [stay] long, if they can go back, then they'll go back and if they can't they'll stay here.

How long have you been here?

I've been here for ten years already.

When you help them [villagers who fled] with food, how do you arrange to get food for them?

We share what we have here.

Do you contact aid groups about them?

I have no contact with other [groups], only with Saw Q---

Do you also look for jobs for them?

Yes, if we know that someone needs workers, then I go and ask them to do the work.

Do they have other problems that they have to face, for example [being] arrested by the police?

There's no problem in the houses, but we have to be worried if they go outside.

Do they go outside?

When they have work to do, they go outside and if they don't have work, they stay in their places [houses].

As you have been looking after them, do you say anything to them concerning security?

I have to tell them to understand the situation, because we have come to stay in another country, and we have to stay wisely. If they go somewhere, they have to take care not to be arrested by the police.

When you tell them that are there any problems and do they listen to you?

There's no problem. They listen.

What about if they have health problems?

When they have health problems, we just contact Saw Q---. If Saw Q--- can help, that's good. If he can't, we have to look for another way but I hope he can help us.

Did you have to send them [for health services] already?

I haven't sent people but now there's one man and I think I'll send him to Mae Tao Clinic.

When they go around for work, how do you deal with the section leaders?

Until now, I haven't had to deal with them especially [about the villagers who fled]. But if something happens, we'll have to go and discuss it with section leaders. The section leaders said they [the villagers who fled] can stay. But if they have to stay longer, they'll have to do get a permit to stay like we do once every year.

What about other support like clothes?

Yes, we have support and Saw Q--- is arranging it for us. We don't know about other people, we only know Saw Q---. He tries to help us.

Do you want to say something more?

I didn't have other things to say but for them, to be able to stay and be able go here and there, we'll look for way for them [to stay and move around freely].

Do you want to say something for them?

For them and for their healthcare I would like to request that they be provided with good health services if they have health problems. For me, it's not easy to travel.

What kind of diseases are they mostly suffering from?

They mostly suffer from fever [malaria]. They don't suffer from other kinds of diseases.

Where did you stay in the past?

I stayed in R--- village, Kyauk Ta Ka Township, Bago Division.

Since they have come to stay here, can their children go to school?

No, they can't go to school yet. When they were in Myawaddy they went to school, but when the fighting happened, the children couldn't go to school anymore. Now they are just arriving and they can't think about what to do. They'll have some difficulties.

There's one school here. Do the children's parents have to pay for this school?

No, they don't need to pay school fees for this school.

Interview | Saw S--- (male, 56), Myawaddy Town, T’Nay Hsah Township (November 13th 2010)

Do you currently live in T--- village [hiding site censored for security]?

Yes, I live in T---.

How many family members do you have?

Currently there are six family members in my village, seven if you include a young boy who got married.

Why did you flee here?

There it was *bone-die*, *wone-die* [an unexpected and frightening situation]. People fled and we also had to flee. We didn’t dare to stay because it was *bone-die*, *wone-die*. First, I listened to the gunshots but [later] there was the sound of mortars here and there. That wasn’t good so I fled to here.

What were you afraid of, the attack or another thing?

Yes, I was afraid because of the attack. I wasn’t afraid anything of else. They [villagers] said they [soldiers] were calling porters [arresting people to be porters]. I was afraid of that also.

How did you hear about that?

When I arrived at the riverbank, a large group ran after us and shouted ‘*They’re arresting people to be porters.*’ I don’t know how many people were arrested. My children and I had arrived on the other side of the [Moei] river.

Did you see mortars falling?

I didn’t see that with my eyes, but I heard the sound. I didn’t dare to go and look.

How did you flee here?

I packed up things at home and fled here. I thought it’d be safe here. The mortars were falling here and there and I was afraid of this. So I called my whole family and fled here.

Could you bring all your property?

There isn’t too much [I don’t own much property]. I put pots, place and other things in the bags and fled here.

Did you leave any other property in your home?

Just water containers and old clothes are still left.

How did you cross the river?

We crossed the river by boat and by tractor when we arrived on this side.

When did you flee?

On the day when the attack was happening. I don't remember the date...

When did the fighting start?

It happened in the morning around 9 or 10 am.

Did all your family [members] accompany you?

Yes, they all did.

Did you go back after you arrived here?

No. I just listen [to the situation] from here. I don't dare to go back.

How many mortars were shelled or did you hear before you ran?

I ran when I heard three mortars. First, we ran here and there and stayed [in Myawaddy] but later this wasn't good. I didn't dare to stay so I fled here.

Was the place where mortars fell close to your house?

It wasn't too far. Just *t'aw tha* [a Karen expression literally meaning 'one shout,' similar to the English expression 'within shouting distance']. It [a mortar] fell in the market where we go and buy food. It's a five-minute walk.

Did you get any support when you arrived here?

We don't get [regular] support, but yesterday we were called. Yesterday they gave us rice. They only gave rice yesterday.

Who gave the rice?

The *saya gyi* [a term meaning 'teacher' often used to describe a respected person] here. They called us and gave us [the rice]. They gave it to us here.

What's your opinion on this attack?

I don't know exactly about the attack. Earlier [before the fighting happened], people were saying the situation wasn't good. I was easy-going, but later it [fighting] really happened and I didn't dare to stay.

Did you prepare anything when they first attacked?

When the first [mortar] fell, it was ok but when two fell, [I started] to prepare and pack [my things into bags]. I didn't dare to stay [anymore] when three fell.

Did you hear small arms firing?

Yes I heard them.

Will you go back when the attack is finished?

I will go back when the situation becomes normal. I don't dare to go back now.

How long will you stay here?

It'll take time, maybe a month this summer season. It depends on the situation.

Have you heard people talking about if the fighting will continue or not?

I heard that the fighting will go on.

How do you organize your family when you heard that?

After I heard that, I told my family not to go back yet. Here it's safe for us. We don't need to be afraid staying here. It's fine.

How is your family's current situation?

Now we're harvesting groundnut [peanuts] and paddy in this period.

Where do you stay?

We stay with our boss.

What has your boss told you?

He hasn't told us anything and he can't speak [Burmese] very well. My daughter is here. She came earlier than [me]. So he hasn't told us anything.

Have you ever had problems with armed groups?

No.

Can you guess what will happen in the next week?

I can guess that the situation will not be normal, because we've heard that they're having conflict. We've heard about this, and most people have heard that they [DKBA soldiers] surrounded the police station and [the police] arrested DKBA cars. They aren't satisfied about that issue. Civilians are also shocked about this issue.

How did you come to here?

We just came like this. There were no people to help us. We crossed river by boat. I had to pay 2000 kyat for my family. They asked for the boat fee because we paid money when we crossed the river before. When a large group tried to get in the boat my wife told the boat driver that we wouldn't let anyone come in. [Audio translation unclear] ... Someone was drowning when he tried to catch the boat. My son-in-law had to help. He tried to catch the boat but he couldn't

reach and fell in the river and [started to] drown. He [my son-in-law] had to jump down and help him. That man would have died if he didn't help.

Did you see people die?

No, I didn't see that. I heard that three or four died when a mortar fell, but I didn't see it with my eyes.

Do you think you'll have to run again if you go back?

I don't dare to go back to Myawaddy yet.

Do you know anything?

I don't know anything. I've just heard people saying the situation is not fine. [More] Fighting can happen, some people guess. So I don't dare to go back.

What other things do you want to say?

As you see now, we'll stay here until the situation becomes normal. It'll be fine if we stay here. Staying here is better.

Who takes care of you when you stay here?

Yesterday, they provided rice.

Did they collect a list of names?

Yesterday, they collected [names]. The teacher who's sitting there at the moment collected the name list.

Didn't they give you any warning?

They didn't say anything like '*Run*' or '*Don't run*' because it [the fighting] happened on the other side [of Myawaddy] and we live beside the river.

Have you heard how many people were arrested to be porters?

I haven't heard. Just a large group ran after us [when we were fleeing] and were saying '*Chaw sweh deh*' [they're grabbing people].

How many people fled at that time?

There were more than 100 people. Both men and women ran down [to the river].

Do you see people who were in trouble?

Yes, we had to call children when we saw them because even a strong man was drowning [in the river]. We had to save him. If we didn't save him, he could've and would've died. He drowned one, two and three times [he was pulled under the water three times] so my son-in-law went and asked people to hold bamboo poles and people held [bamboo poles] and saved him.

Do you have anything else that you want to say?

Nothing else, just that one thing, that people ran when the bombs were being shelled.

Did you have to walk when you arrived to this side?

Yes, we had to walk for five minutes.

Are the place [where you crossed the river] and your house close?

Yes, they're close.

Interview | Naw U--- (female, 35), Myawaddy Town, T'Nay Hsah Township (November 13th 2010)

How's the situation now in Myawaddy?

Now we stay like this [in our homes]. People are going around [where they have to go].

Can people go into the city [the centre of Myawaddy town]?

Yes, people go but there are some sentries. They [the Tatmadaw] have soldiers at the important places. Now people are going around as normal.

Have you gone to the town?

I myself haven't gone, but I asked a man from V--- [location censored for security] to go to the market to buy food.

Have people started selling things?

Yes, people have started selling things and shops have reopened now. The school started to open again on Friday but not many students went, and I think the school will reopen better on Monday. But we still need to look at the situation.

Can you tell me about the situation that you mentioned to me last time, that they were gathering people in front of V--- , because I couldn't hear you well at that time?

There's one DKBA family's house in front of V---. They [Tatmadaw soldiers] came and arrested the groundskeeper. They handcuffed him and took him with them. But I've heard that it has happened at every DKBA house. They [Tatmadaw soldiers] surround the houses and search the houses. If they see documents they take them with them, and called the groundskeepers with them. They also took DKBA uniforms that were left behind and burnt them. A villager who stays close to another DKBA house said that, he saw them [Tatmadaw soldiers] put members of DKBA families into trucks and take them away; we don't know [if they took them] to the military office or not.

Did you see [witness] that, when they came and arrested [the groundskeeper] in front of V---?

Saw W---, who's a driver from Pa'an stayed near that place [where people were arrested] and saw that they [Tatmadaw soldiers] placed guards on the road and arrested people with handcuffs and took them away. We were afraid when that problem occurred in front of V---. They took those people [in the truck] for investigation. They also did the same thing at houses in other places.

How many people did you see on the truck?

There were four or five people on the truck. The soldiers were around them and we didn't clearly see if they were handcuffed or not. But the [people in the] house next door saw that they arrested the [DKBA] officer's groundskeeper. I'm not sure of the officer's name— X--- or Y---.

At that time was the officer present in the house?

No, they left two weeks before the attack happened. None of the officer's family members were there at that time. They left one groundskeeper. So they [Tatmadaw soldiers] took away that groundskeeper.

Do other people also live in their houses [now]?

Yes, others have come back and stayed; now only that [DKBA] officer's house is empty. The other households are just ordinary villagers and they've all come to stay in their homes now and, during the night-time, they lock all their doors and stay inside their houses.

When you saw them [Tatmadaw soldiers] arresting people, were those people who were arrested wearing uniforms or just normal clothes?

Of the four or five that we've seen, they were all in civilian clothes. At first we thought they were trying to grab people as porters in the daytime. Then one of the students' parents came and told us that they weren't grabbing people for portering, [rather] they were trying to raid all of the DKBA households.

Were they DKBA soldiers, those people who were arrested in the truck wearing the civilian clothes?

They weren't DKBA [soldiers] because there weren't any DKBA [soldiers in the trucks], only some of their family members. But the officer's house that I was talking about, there were no DKBA soldiers there. There was only one groundskeeper and I don't know if he's DKBA or an ordinary man, but he was wearing ordinary clothes.

Did they arrest DKBA [soldiers] or DKBA family members or relatives?

They arrested DKBA relatives. But we didn't see any women and children. I thought they'd only arrest people who they could investigate. I thought their families were left behind.

In the group that they took way [in the truck], did you also see women and children?

There were no women and children. Only men were arrested.

Have you also heard about they [Tatmadaw soldiers] grabbing people for portering?

Yes, we heard that during the night-time but we weren't sure, and I thought it might only be people who have a connection with the DKBA.

Were there trucks running during the night especially military trucks?

We heard cars running during the night but I don't know what kind of car.

Did you hear if they used sirens?

No, if they were [using trucks at night], they wouldn't use sirens.

Do you still hear the guns shooting?

We don't hear that now.

During the fighting where did people in front of V--- go?

The households in front of V---, I don't know where they all went and we didn't heard any sound. All of the doors were closed. I didn't see anyone going around. They came back during the night and in the day-time; all of the houses' doors were locked. I don't know if they stayed on the bottom floor [of their houses]. It was a little bit strange. On the day of the fighting, the day when people were running, I saw a lot of motorbikes and cars carrying things and [people] fleeing.

Interview | Naw Ap--- (female, *age censored at interviewee's request*), Aq--- village, T'Nay Hsah Township (November 14th 2010)

How is the situation now in Myawaddy?

We haven't heard anything, only less people were loitering in the town in the evening time. During night time, there are less people who go outside of their house.

Last time when I [talked to] you, you told me something about going back to Myawaddy? Can you tell me about that again?

Yes, when I came back, I came back at Ar--- Gate and when we crossed over to the other side of the river, the SPDC [Tatmadaw] soldiers demanded gate fees from us. They said, we had to give gate fees. We could go after we gave gate fees. Then we told them, '*We are refugees, do we need to give gate fees?*' and they said, '*You have to give [fees].*' And we told them, '*We are refugees and we don't have money to give.*' They said, '*No, you have to give [fees].*' And then we told them '*How can we give [fees]? We have nothing to give.*' And they continued, '*If that's the case, we'll register when you fled, all your names and addresses.*' We said '*You can register us.*' They'd like to get the gate fees. We were in trouble, how could we give gate fees?

Then did they register your name or not?

I don't know if they did it or not. We just came back. They were just thinking to demand money from us. How can we give them [money], when we have no money?

How many people were included in your group when you went back?

There weren't many people at the gate. About 10 to 15 people. Because there were less people they demanded money both at the entrance and exit of the gate.

Did your whole family go back together with you?

Yes, I came back with all my family members. Nothing strange happened but only during the night time it's very quiet. Not many people go outside at night.

Did you see soldiers loitering around?

We see there are a lot of soldiers loitering around during the night time. Yes, they're going back and forth on the main road.

Are people still afraid?

Yes, people are still afraid of what will happen. Even though we stay [in our homes], we're very concerned about what will be going on.

Are you afraid?

Yes, very afraid.

Do you think fighting will happen again?

We still hear that the fighting will continue and last night people said some fighting happened, but it happened far away and we couldn't hear the explosions. We're staying with fear.

When you went back and forth from Burma to Thailand, did they check you at the gate?

No, we had to get travel documents. I use to go at As--- Gate.

So, the current situation is quite alright?

Yes, people are going on the road during daytime. At night time no people are walking on the road. There are a lot of soldiers on the road.

Have you heard of soldiers taking people for portering?

I heard that happened but I didn't see it with my eyes that they were taking people for portering. Because of this reason, people don't dare to go outside. It hasn't happened to the people I know.

When did you go back to Burma?

I came back and have stayed here for three days already. So that would be Thursday November 11th 2010.

Do they have a curfew?

I didn't hear that but I know that they search the houses that they suspect or which they think might have contact with or be related to an organization.

When you said 'the houses that they suspect,' what do you mean by that? Did you mean for example, DKBA [houses] or ...?

No, any organization.

Now, did you reopen your shop already?

Now, I've reopened it but not many buyers have come because there aren't people going outside at night.

Do you sell during the night time?

Uh, yes, we sell things in the evening time.

When you came back, did you bring all your belongings with you?

There weren't many belongings that we brought to the Thai side [of the Moei River]. We brought everything [we took to the Thai side back] with us.

Did you see, they [Tatmadaw soldiers] come and distribute help to the people whose things were destroyed during the attack?

No, we didn't see that. Even though we went to the river bank, they asked us to take a motorbike taxi. They said '*Take the taxi and if you do not take a taxi, you'll be searched or checked at the checkpoint entrance.*' But we told them '*We have no money to take a motorbike taxi.*' They said '*No, you have to take one.*' I asked if they'd also check refugees, and they said yes, they'd ask '*Where are you coming back from?*' I don't [know if] they were creating a way for taxi drivers to get money. They didn't let us to walk.

Was that on the Thai side or Burma side?

It was on the Burma side. But when we got up [above the river bank], they did check us. They demanded money. They asked '*Where are you from? Which section [of town] are you from, we'll do registration here.*' Then we told them '*You can register us, we're from Aq--- and you can register our names.*' Then they didn't say anything.

The refugees who had fled to Thailand, when they went back, had any of them lost their belongings?

Oh, yes, there are thieves stealing things because they have no job to do and I heard that some houses were broken into. Some of the people I know, their houses were broken into. Some of their things were lost. Also we heard that robberies happened on the Mae Tao T'Lay side.

What kinds of things were lost?

The valuable things.

Have you lost anything?

For me, our neighbour didn't go anywhere so there was nothing lost. We're lucky. If not, it's not easy. We have to run and if we lost our things, we'd be finished.

When you said that some robberies happened in Mae Tao T'LAY, was it civilians or soldiers?

We don't know if it was civilians or soldiers. But there were robberies that happened. We only heard that they robbed one motorbike. We just heard that. It happened in the last two nights. We heard it step by step from people [by word of mouth].

Now how is your family's situation?

Now, we can't work yet. We just eat what we have. We can't work yet.

So, is the case that most of the people can't work yet?

Yes.

How about school, did they already reopen it?

We heard that it will reopen tomorrow [Monday November 15th 2010].

We heard that the school reopened since last Friday?

No, it hasn't reopened yet.

Interview | Naw At--- (female, 45), Myawaddy Town, T'Nay Hsah Township (November 14th 2010)

Who was shot, as you said [earlier]?

It was a fish paste woman seller's nephew in a market. There were that nephew and a pregnant woman who died.

Who fired the mortar?

The DKBA army shot it. People said it was the DKBA army.

[Another speaker] It was probably both sides [that fired the mortar]. The DKBA army and SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] were shooting each other.

When did the incident happen?

On November 13th 2010 they [the Tatmadaw] said they'd release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and they also said they have a responsibility to release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. The DKBA army was going to make noise [attack] again on that day.

Who told you this information?

Now, the whole city is very silent and people move very quickly. Some people have moved to the lower areas [lowland areas] and people who came from that way [people who are from lowland areas but stayed in Myawaddy] fled.

Are they [villagers] allowed to flee to lower areas?

They aren't allowed to flee directly to lower areas. They have to go secretly. The Thai soldiers saw me when I came back with my bag, but they didn't do anything to me. They asked me 'Where will you go?' I replied to them 'I'm going to take my pots, cups, and things to that side.' When I came back this morning, I saw them, but they didn't say anything to me. We can cross the river. They allow us to cross.

[Another speaker] the day when we came back, the Thai Army told us 'Go back, go back.'

Interview | Saw G--- (male), Waw Lay village, Kawkareik Township (November 14th 2010)

Can you update me on information about SPDC [Tatmadaw] activities in Waw Lay?

Now, Burmese [Tatmadaw] soldiers stay in their army camp at Htee Nya Lee, and some of their soldiers stay at Pu [Grandfather] Na Kha Mway's and at DKBA soldiers' houses. Also, some of the soldiers are staying in a monastery. They aren't very active, they just come to the village and buy their food in the village every morning. We heard that [some of] their soldiers are pretending to be villagers and going around in the village, and also going to look at the situation of villagers who haven't come back to the village. They [Tatmadaw soldiers] told us that the villagers can come back and do their work, but some of the villagers haven't dared to come back yet. Even though we're staying in the village we're afraid that an attack will happen and we always have to be ready to flee to the Thai side [of the Moei River] if an attack happens. Now, we don't dare to research the activities of the SPDC [Tatmadaw] because we're afraid that they will accuse us of contacting outside people. So, we have to stay quietly in the village.

Interview | Saw Gh--- (male, 28), Ka--- village, Thandaung Township, Toungoo District (November 2010)

Below are the full transcripts of five interviews conducted with villagers in Thandaung Township, Toungoo District by a villager trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. The interviewees described the following human rights concerns: arbitrary taxation and demands; forced labour including road maintenance, guiding, and messenger duty; forced portering, including by children, and use of civilian porters as human shields; movement restrictions including de facto travel and livelihoods restrictions due

to Tatmadaw patrols and attacks on civilians; restrictions on transporting essential foodstuffs and medicines; attacks on villages; the killing of villagers; attacks on livelihoods and agricultural projects; theft and looting, including of places of worship; risks to civilians from landmines; physical beatings; and rape. The interviewees also voiced concerns regarding food insecurity and food shortages; limited access to adequate health care; disruptions to children's education when teachers are unavailable; limited access to education for children in hiding; and the difficulties villagers face from multiple armed groups, specifically when non-State armed groups attempt to intercept Tatmadaw rations while villagers are portering. The interviewees also described different strategies villagers use to address threats to their human rights and livelihoods, including: hiding from Tatmadaw patrols and working covertly on agricultural projects to avoid attacks; avoiding Tatmadaw camps and checkpoints to avoid forced labour demands; sending fewer villagers than demanded for portering Tatmadaw supplies; negotiating with non-State armed groups to avoid activities that might lead to villagers being punished by Tatmadaw soldiers; and cooperation between villagers in hiding and villagers in Tatmadaw-controlled areas, including economic cooperation. These interviews were received in May 2011 along with other information from Toungoo District, including seven incident reports, five other interviews, one situation update and 453 photographs.² The following five interviews were conducted by a villager in Toungoo District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. It is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.³

Ethnicity: P'Gu Karen

Religion: Christian

Marital Status: Married

Occupation: Cultivating a cardamom plantation

Position: Village head

How old is your oldest child?

Three years old.

How about the youngest one?

One year old.

How long have you been a village head?

It has been nearly one year.

As you are a village head, what is your duty?

² When these documents have been processed and translated by KHRG and when sufficient information has been compiled and analysed, a full Field Report on the situation in Toungoo District will be available on the KHRG website. Until then, KHRG's most recent analysis of the situation in Toungoo District can be found in the recent Field Report, "Attacks on cardamom plantations, detention and forced labour in Toungoo District," KHRG, May 2010.

³ KHRG trains villagers in eastern Burma 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.

I work for villagers and other brothers and sisters [villagers] who come from other places, and I have to help them.

Who gave you the position? Villagers, the SPDC [Tatmadaw] or the KNU?

The village teachers and other villagers like me gave me the position.

Can you tell us about your experience in this position?

I don't have a lot of experience, if I consider when I met at Kh--- with other village heads. I work for the villagers so I try very hard.

How many households are there in your village?

There are 42 households.

How many villagers?

There are 300, or more than 300.

What are the villagers' occupations?

The villagers' occupations are planting cardamom, betelnut, and helping each other.

Do all villagers get enough food?

Some get enough but some don't. Some also have difficulty for their work.

What do they do if they don't have enough food?

I don't know also. Sometimes they carry things for other people for money. I also sometimes have to carry things for money because it helps my family.

How much do you get paid for one time?

Starting from Kler La to Kh---, for ten viss (16 kg. / 35 lb.) you get paid 2,500 kyat (US \$3.11).⁴

In your area here, at what time do you get the most money [income]?

When we sell cardamom and betelnut.

How many years has your village been located here?

⁴ All conversion estimates for the Kyat in this interview are based on the fluctuating informal exchange rate rather than the government's official fixed rate of 6.5 kyat to US \$1. As of June 3rd 2011, this unofficial rate of exchange was US \$1 = 805 kyat. This figure is used for all calculations in this bulletin.

I don't know when Kh--- village [tract] started [was founded]. I moved here not long ago.

Do your villagers face problems?

My villagers have to face problems like the SPDC [Tatmadaw] forces us to porter, and in the future they will ask us more.

Has the SPDC been to your village?

Starting from when I began working as a village head one or two months ago, they went back [Tatmadaw soldiers rotated out of the area] so they haven't come to our village yet.

Around your village in the past, did the SPDC set up a camp?

In the past they did, but since I began working as a village head until now they went back [rotated out] and haven't come back yet.

Have you heard of the SPDC killing villagers in your area?

No, they haven't killed any villagers.

In your village, do you have to work for SPDC?

At this time, we don't. Last week, on October 27th, nine people went [for forced labour].

Did the women have to go?

No, the women didn't have to go.

Did the SPDC write a letter to the village head for [demanding] forced labour?

Yes, they did. They wrote a letter to us and asked us to go a meeting, and at the meeting they asked us to work [porter] in Ta--- and Ti---. But I told him [the Tatmadaw officer] that I'm not free. They told me that I have to find people to go.

How heavy was the weight that one person had to carry?

For one sack of rice, it takes two people to carry it. One sack of rice is 30 viss (48 kg. / 106 lb.) so each person had to carry 15 viss (24 kg. / 53 lb.).

Where you have to take loads from, and to where?

If our brothers [KNLA soldiers] don't work [fight], we have to start from Ko Day (48 mile camp)⁵ to Kw---. If our brothers [KNLA soldiers] disturb [stage military operations during Tatmadaw supply operations], we have to start from Kler La to Kw---.

⁵ Note that Tatmadaw camp names along the Toungoo to Mawchi road are often ascribed according to their distance from Toungoo Town.

How many days does it take starting from Kler La to Kw---

It takes three days from Kler La to Kw---

How about Ko Day to Kw---

It takes two days. One day to go and one day to come back. If you arrive at the gate [of the Tatmadaw camp] they ask you to sleep there.

Do they give you food or do you have to bring it yourself?

If we go we have to bring food for ourselves. But when we arrive there, they give us food. Since I'm the village head, I always have to bring [food] for myself.

On October 27th you carried loads, so did it include other villages?

Yes, it included other villages. It included De---. On October 27th, nine people from Kh--- village came, and I sent [accompanied] them to Kler La. My brother-in-law Ta--- came and saw me [in Kler La], and told me to take my villagers to the office because that evening the SPDC soldiers would check the *eh sa yin* [overnight guest list]. If the villagers who carry loads [and sleep in a Tatmadaw camp] have good registration [if their name is on the overnight guest list], the SPDC doesn't bother them and will leave them alone. But if the villagers [from outside Kler La] aren't registered [as overnight guests in the village], the SPDC soldiers will ask them to work for them [as punishment], so the village head would have to lie [say that overnight guests are regular villagers, so that they could avoid punishment].

Can you tell me the name of the other villages?

Kh---, Ro--- and also La---, Ko---, Th---, Kl--- and Pa---.

Do you want to tell us other things about the SPDC oppression of the citizens and villagers?

No.

Do you have a school in your village?

Yes, we have a government school. But the situation of the school isn't good, like women teachers are not always free [available to teach], and for the men teachers, they want to go back [don't want to teach]. For their food, they go and buy food on the main road or in Wu---.

For the teachers' salaries, does the SPDC support it or do the villagers support it?

For the women teachers' salaries, the SPDC supports them. But for the men teachers' salaries, we have to collect five big tins of rice (80 kg. / 176 lb.) for them [because their salary is not enough].

How many students?

Starting from kindergarten up until grade four, there are over 20 people [students].

Do the students have to pay money to enter the school?

Some have to pay but some don't.

Can the students study smoothly [without interruption]?

Yes, but if the teachers are not free [to teach] their lessons stop like this.

Does the SPDC government⁶ allow teaching [of] Karen?

The SPDC doesn't allow students to study Karen, They give only Burmese language lessons.

Do the SPDC or KNU [KNLA] soldiers ever come and disturb the school?

The KNU never comes and disturbs the school.

Do the students get support such as books or pens?

For pens, they have to buy themselves.

Do you have a clinic in your village?

No, we don't have one. We have to go to Kler La hospital.

What are the most common diseases [illnesses] in your village?

The most common diseases are flu, headache, cold and fever.

If a villager gets a serious illness that you can't cure here, where will you send him or her?

If we can't cure them here, we'll send them to Kler La hospital.

Is there a big hospital in Kler La?

Yes, it's big.

Is it a government hospital?

Yes, it's a government hospital.

Do you have to pay for medicine yourself?

⁶ The State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) was officially 'dissolved' on March 30th 2011; see: "Mission Accomplished as SPDC 'dissolved'," Myanmar Times, April 4-10 2011. The term 'SPDC' was used by the interviewer and interviewee, and is therefore retained in this translation.

Yes, we have to pay for it ourselves.

Does the SPDC allow villagers to bring medicine [back] to their village?

Yes, the SPDC allows medicines, and when we come back from the hospital, the hospital gives us medicine to bring back home.

When you carry loads, does anything happen between the SPDC and the KNLA?

The last time we went, our brothers in the KNLA went to take things [military supplies] from the SPDC, but it involved only the Ro--- villagers. The first time, I sent Kh--- villagers and they finished their work [portering duty] without problems. When the Ro--- villagers had to go, they didn't know the way so I had to send [bring] them to Ko Day in the SPDC-controlled area. We went a little further and our brothers [KNLA soldiers] were waiting for us, to take the food. We asked them, "*Don't take them [the Tatmadaw rations] because if you do, we don't know how the SPDC soldiers will oppress the village head and villagers.*" If we can't tell [predict] what will happen to us, we'll do as we are ordered. Then I asked the Ro--- villagers to pick up the rations and carry them to the [Tatmadaw] army base. We had to do it for them [the Tatmadaw].

Do you know the camp leader, or who asked you to porter?

I don't know their leader.

How about their Light Infantry Battalion and Infantry Battalion [number]?

The [unit] number was Light Infantry Division #77.

Who is the 48 Mile camp leader?

I don't know.

Can you work smoothly [without disruption] at this time [since the last Tatmadaw unit rotated]?

We work smoothly, and the SPDC doesn't disturb us.

Did you see the SPDC come and make your village better?

No, they didn't. In the past, if they asked us to carry [porter] for them one time [one trip] they gave us 500 kyat (US \$0.62), and for two times [trips] it was 1,000 kyat (US \$1.24). They gave us money but when they came to our village, we had to buy things for them with that money.

How do you feel about the KNU?

No. [Saw Gh--- did not answer the question.]

Does the SPDC disturb [restrict] travel, like going to Toungoo city or to Kler La?

If the KNLA attacks the SPDC, we don't know [if the Tatmadaw restricts travel] because we don't go to the city [to Toungoo]. But as we stay here in Kh--- [village tract], there's no problem. If something [conflict] happens in our area, we can't go to Kler La [travel is restricted].

Do you want to report other things that we haven't asked you yet?

Now the SPDC will build a hospital in Kler La and they've asked Kh--- villagers for money. Each household has to give 1,500 kyat (US \$1.86). They haven't collected it all yet.

When is the last day [to give the money]?

The last day is the 30th [month and year not specified].

Did they [authorities in Kler La] write a letter [to request money for the hospital]?

If they write a letter, the Kler La village head has to bring it [to Kh--- village], but they didn't write a letter.

Interview | Naw La--- (female, 32), PI--- village, Thandaung Township, Toungoo District (November 2010)

The following interview was conducted by a villager in Toungoo District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. It is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.

Ethnicity: Karen

Religion: Anglican

Marital Status: Married

Occupation: Farming cardamom

How many children do you have?

I have three children.

How old is the oldest one?

The oldest one is ten years old.

How about the youngest one?

The youngest one is four years old.

Does the SPDC [Tatmadaw] ask villagers to carry [porter] for them?

Yes, they ask.

How many villagers at a time?

They ask for 20 villagers at a time.

Before they ask, do they write a letter or do they come on their own?

They write a letter to the village head.

Do they always ask you [to porter], or is it once a month or once a week?

Whenever they need us, they call us.

When they ask for villagers, do they ask the women in your village to go too?

They ask for everyone, including women, children and the elderly.

Have you ever carried for SPDC soldiers?

Yes, one time.

When was it?

2010.

Do you know the leader or the SPDC commander that asked you [to porter]?

I don't know.

How many days did it take?

It took three days and we had to sleep on the way.

Do you have to bring food for yourselves or did they give you [food]?

When they wrote the letter they didn't talk about the food but when we arrived in Kler La, they gave us rice because it took three days and we had to sleep on the way. But they didn't give us curry.

If your villagers got sick on the way, what would you do?

When we went, nothing happened.

Did the SPDC and KNU soldiers have conflict when you were carrying?

Nothing happened but the SPDC soldiers were afraid, and asked villagers to go in front of them.

Did the villagers go alone or with the SPDC?

We went with the SPDC.

How many soldiers?

There were a few soldiers because they were afraid, but many more villagers.

Where did you start to carry loads and where did you take them?

We started to take them from Kler La to Ma---.

Did other villages have to go?

Yes, it included seven villages.

Can you tell us the village names?

Ky---, Ka---, Pa---, So---, La---, Ko---, Th--- and Pl--- villages.

How many villagers in your village had to go?

19 villagers. They asked for 20 people but we only sent 19 people.

How many villagers went, including from other villages?

There were over 150.

Did you see other porters escape?

Because nothing [no fighting] happened, no one escaped. We sent loads and their rations to their camp and we left for them.

Were women from other villages included or only from your village?

Women and children from other villages were also included.

How old were the children?

Maybe only 13 years old.

How about the oldest?

Maybe around 50 or 60. The oldest person from Ko--- was around 60.

How did the SPDC welcome you when you arrived in their camp?

When they saw us they were happy because they had asked us [to carry] and they gave us rice. But it wasn't enough for everyone. Some villagers didn't get any.

How much weight did each person have to carry?

Each person had to carry 13 mess tins (7.6 kg. / 16.7 lb.). They didn't separate [distinguish] so everyone, including children, women and the elderly had to carry 13 mess tins.

What kind of loads?

We carried rice and some villagers carried sugar, beans and bread. For us, we carried only rice.

While you were carrying, when you were tired could you take a rest?

We went with more villagers and fewer soldiers so we did as we liked. If we wanted to take a rest, we took a rest. They didn't dare to tell us we couldn't.

Did you see SPDC soldiers hit or beat villagers?

I have never seen. When they called us this thing never happened. In the past, it might have happened but when I went nothing happened.

You said you had to sleep along the way. So did they guard you at night or did you sleep separately with other villagers?

We slept separately with other villagers.

Did you have to pass other villages?

Yes, we had to pass Do--- and Mu--- villages but we were not allowed to enter the villages because they [the Tatmadaw soldiers] were afraid, and they asked us to stay beside [outside] the villages. We had to go a very difficult way.

Did they enter the villages?

No, they didn't. They were afraid or didn't dare to go, we didn't know which. They asked us to send [walk] only on difficult ways [paths].

Did you see them rape any women?

No, they didn't. We went with more men and fewer women and also there were more villagers and fewer soldiers, so they didn't do that.

How do villagers arrange if they are sick?

If they are sick, they have to hire others to go [porter] for them.

How much do they have to pay each time?

When others go... *[statement not clear]*.

Does the SPDC pay you when you carry for them?

No, they didn't pay us.

A few days ago, did you hear about the SPDC killing someone?

I think it might have been in another village. In my village I didn't hear anything, and we are women so we don't usually go outside, and we didn't hear anything.

Do the SPDC that ask you to carry [porter] ever come to your village?

No, they never come.

Where is the SPDC that asks you to carry based?

They might be in Kler La.

Do you want to tell any more about the SPDC oppression?

About the past, I don't know. But at the time when I had to carry, we had to work [cultivating] cardamom, so we weren't free to go to our work. We were afraid of them so we had to go [to porter]. Not only my family but also others villagers have problems, but we must go because we're afraid of them.

Interview | Saw---, (male, 40), Palu village, Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District (December 7th 2010)

When did you come back here [to Thailand]?

We came back here this morning. They said to stay for 20 days at our hill field and some said to stay for 10 days there. So, we decided to go back and work. We stay here to see the situation. If the situation becomes fine, we will go back and sleep there. The current situation is that we went to see the situation and the fighting happened.

Where did it happen?

It happened behind the mountain. We could hear the guns firing from here.

So, you dare not to go back now, do you?

We dare not to go back. How can we go back, *saya ma* [teacher]?

Who asked you to go back this morning?

For us, we stayed at Mae Koh Gkay village.

Who came and told you that you can go back?

We went to ask the higher authorities there. They told us to go back and work because the situation is ok. So, we thought the situation is fine and then we asked our friends to send us here as we dare not to go back to the other side of the river [Burma]. If we can stay here [Thailand], we will stay and sleep here. If we can stay there [Burma], we will go back and stay there. As the fighting happened at midday, we dare not to stay there and crossed back with our children. We will stay here.

Interview | Naw---, (female, 30), Palu village, Kawkaik Township, Dooplaya District (December 8th 2010)

Did you flee here together?

Yes, we fled here together.

Why did you have to flee here [Thailand]?

It was because of the fighting.

How many times have you fled here?

We have fled here three times. We fled there twice and once here. It has been three times.

Do you dare to go back if you are asked to go back?

We dare not to go back. For the previous time, even though we dared not to go back, they pointed at us with guns and asked us to go back. They asked us to go back and said nothing would happen to us: *'Go back and stay there.'*

[Another woman interjects]

They came with their guns and asked us *'Bai, Ba'* [Go, go] and we all had to go back.

[Naw --- resumes speaking]

They told us nothing would happen to us: *'Go back and stay.'* They scolded us and drove us to go back like dogs and pigs. Therefore, we had to go back. We went back [to Burma] and came back [to Thailand] again when the fighting happened.

[The second woman interjects again]

They told us to come back [to Thailand] when the fighting happened. They told us like that. So, we came back and stayed here when the fighting happened.

[Naw --- resumes speaking]

Do you dare to go back if you are sent to go back now?

We dare not to go back. We will flee and stay near other houses. If we have an opportunity to stay near the other houses or under the trees, it is fine with us. We dare not to go back to our village now. We'll wait and see the situation first.

Are you tired when you have to flee again and again like this?

We are exhausted from fleeing like this.

[The second woman interjects again]

How could we not be exhausted as we have to flee like this? Just yesterday, we still had to flee.

[Naw --- resumes speaking]

We also have to worry about children's health issues as [our group] includes many kids.

So, if you are sent back, you dare not go back anymore?

We dare not to go back to our village. We will go back and stay near people who we know and we will rent a house to stay in. To rent the house, other people already rented all the houses to stay in.

[The second woman interjects again]
The Thais do not allow us to rent anymore.

[Naw --- resumes speaking]
Not everyone came to stay here, there are many people staying in villages in Thailand. No one stays in our village [in Burma]. So, we dare not to go back and stay there.

Could you bring all your belongings with you when you came here?

No, we could not bring all our belongings with us. We brought only blankets. We could bring only one or two blankets and one or two baby kits. We could bring only these.

How many children do you have?

I have four children. The youngest one is four months old. For mats [to sit and sleep on], we asked the people who we know and who stay here on the Thailand side for a long time. We asked them to use these mats temporarily.

Interview | Naw---, (female, 30), Palu village, Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District (December 8th 2010)

How many times have you fled to [Thailand]?

We fled to a grazing field once and it has been three times including this time.

Why did you go return [to Burma] previously?

The army asked us to go back. The Thai Army asked us to go back. They let us stay only for two days. In the morning, they asked us to go back. We went back stayed for three or four days. Then, the fighting happened and we had to flee again. At nights, we dare not to sleep at our homes, we have to come and sleep in Thailand. We came to sleep and when we went back around midday, people told us the situation was not good and then the fighting happened around 2:00 PM. Then, villagers fled when people fought each other and shelled mortars.

When did you flee to here [Thailand] this time?

We fled here yesterday due to the fighting happening.

Do you dare to go back if you are asked to go back right now?

No, I dare not to go back, but I dare not to stay here because it is in another country. We will have to go back when they [Thais] ask us to go back.

**Interview | Naw---, (30, female), Palu village, Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District
(Interviewed in Thailand on December 8th 2010)**

Did you flee here together?

Yes, we fled here together.

Why did you have to flee here [Thailand]?

It was because of the fighting.

How many times have you fled here?

We have fled here three times. We fled there twice and once here. It has been three times.

Do you dare to go back if you are asked to go back?

We dare not to go back. For the previous time, even though we dared not to go back, they pointed at us with guns and asked us to go back. They asked us to go back and said nothing would happen to us: '*Go back and stay there.*'

[Another woman interjects]

They came with their guns and asked us '*Bai, Ba*' [Go, go] and we all had to go back.

[Naw --- resumes speaking]

They told us nothing would happen to us: '*Go back and stay.*' They scolded us and drove us to go back like dogs and pigs. Therefore, we had to go back. We went back [to Burma] and came back [to Thailand] again when the fighting happened.

[The second woman interjects again]

They told us to come back [to Thailand] when the fighting happened. They told us like that. So, we came back and stayed here when the fighting happened.

[Naw --- resumes speaking]

Do you dare to go back if you are sent to go back now?

We dare not to go back. We will flee and stay near other houses. If we have an opportunity to stay near the other houses or under the trees, it is fine with us. We dare not to go back to our village now. We'll wait and see the situation first.

Are you tired when you have to flee again and again like this?

We are exhausted from fleeing like this.

[The second woman interjects again]

How could we not be exhausted as we have to flee like this? Just yesterday, we still had to flee.

[Naw --- resumes speaking]

We also have to worry about children's health issues as [our group] includes many kids.

So, if you are sent back, you dare not go back anymore?

We dare not to go back to our village. We will go back and stay near people who we know and we will rent a house to stay in. To rent the house, other people already rented all the houses to stay in.

[The second woman interjects again]

The Thais do not allow us to rent anymore.

[Naw --- resumes speaking]

Not everyone came to stay here, there are many people staying in villages in Thailand. No one stays in our village [in Burma]. So, we dare not to go back and stay there.

Could you bring all your belongings with you when you came here?

No, we could not bring all our belongings with us. We brought only blankets. We could bring only one or two blankets and one or two baby kits. We could bring only these.

How many children do you have?

I have four children. The youngest one is four months old. For mats [to sit and sleep on], we asked the people who we know and who stay here on the Thailand side for a long time. We asked them to use these mats temporarily.

Interview | Daw ---, (female, 40), Palu village, Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District (December 8th 2010)

Where are you going now?

I will go back there.

At the moment, you stay there, right?

Yes.

Who asked you to go back? Are you going to other side [of the Moei River, to Burma]?

I am [on the way] to go back at there. [Someone told us] if you don't dare to go back [to your village in Burma], go and stay there.

Why don't you dare to go back?

The reason I don't dare to go back is because we frequently hear the sounds of guns. Some people have many children. They can't carry all their children.

How many children do you have?

I have six children.

Why have you come here now?

At the moment, the Thai soldiers said, '*Go back.*'

Do they order you to go back?

They don't order us to go back. They said, '*You can go back. The other side is peaceful. Nothing is happening.*' I don't dare to go back. Fighting is happening there. We hear [the sounds of fighting] every night.

How many times have you come here?

One time to this monastery and one time to there. In total it is two times.

How do you feel when you have to go back and come back again?

I don't feel anything but one thing: I am afraid. I want to go back to my village. We are free there. We can eat and drink [and be] with our children. But here, it is other people's [place where they are] peeing and urinating and it is difficult for children here.

Do you want to go back?

I want to go back if I can go back. The Thai army said, 'you can go back to other side.' [But they'll] take [people as] porters if men go back to the other side. If they take porters, I just have one husband. What am I going to eat with if they take [him as a] porter? How can I work and feed these six children?

Do you see they [Tatmadaw or Karen armed groups] taking people as porters?

People talk about that but I have not seen it.

So are you going back to [temporary] camp [in Thailand]?

Yes, I will go back.

They asked us to go back but we don't dare to go back. [The woman laughs and says something inaudible]. I have many children and how can I go back? For men, [they] take porters on the other side [in Burma]. What am I going to eat if my husband is taken?

Who asked you to go back?

Thai soldiers, they said it is peaceful on the other side. We can go back. I myself don't dare to go back. I want to [be able to] go back because it is my village. We can stay freely in our village. In here, it is difficult because children are peeing and urinating.

How do you feel when you have to go/come back again and again?

What?

Are you happy [because of this?]

How can it be happy?

Are you growing tired from going/coming back again and again?

Like a water hyacinth [flower], [we] have to float around and float around [idiom for moving without direction or purpose]. Just from this running, I will become like an old woman. Just [we] have to call our children. For a father with six children, how can he carry loads, [his] children and water? But he has to run and carry [things] like this.

So you don't dare to go back now?

[No, I] dare not. It is better if we go back when [the situation] is really peaceful. If [they say] nothing is happening, we want to go back. If they take porters, take my husband, how can I care for my six children? They said [the situation] is peaceful but we hear every night [the sounds of guns]. They let us go and [people] really want to go back. We can stay freely with our children there [in our village]. But here, it is [Thai] people's village. Thai people don't like filth. They are disgusted, but our children are Burmese. We can't [stop] them [making a mess] even if we shout and beat them. Even if we beat them... I would rather go back to the other side. I am happier staying in my village even whatever [difficulties] I have. [But] for the time being, I will stay here. Here, I can't sleep every night. [I] listen and hear [the shooting].

Interview | Saw---, (male, 30), Palu village, Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District (December 8th 2010)

Are you going back [to Burma] now?

We aren't going back. We will go and stay there. We have to go and stay on the river bank, the place where we were yesterday.

Won't you go back to other side?

I – just one man – I will go back and check [on the situation]. How can we [all] go back?

The Thai army said you guys want to go back right?

We don't want to go back but they order us to move from [the temporary camp].

Do they order you guys?

Yes.

What time did they order you?

Some Burmese, they don't defecate in a hole, they defecate on the road. People [Thais] don't want to deal with it when they [Burmese] do like that.
[Interview updated because the group was in travel]

Uncle, tell me more. When did they ask you to go back?

They said [go back] one time this morning... because those Burmese people are different. They didn't defecate in the hole. People [Thais] become angry when they do that. [This reaction] included [anger towards us] because we also stay there [with them] so we [left].

What did the Thai army tell you?

They didn't tell us anything. They told the Burmese people.

[A woman interjects]

Burmese people go back and come back again and again. [Thai] people become angry when people go back and come back again and again [like that]. Yesterday, they all went back. Just two [families] from Palu Gyi [village] and Palu Poe [village] [were remaining]. [But] in the evening when I went and then came back from clinic, [the temporary camp] was full of Burmese again.

Are you going now?

We don't dare to go back. We have to stay here.

[A Burmese man joins the interview]

If the situation becomes a little better, I will go and harvest. I have to pay back people. People gave us corn and ground nut [seeds]. I have to go back and harvest, to pay back this debt. What I am going to eat? How will people want to [give] loans to us [again]? I am thinking it is no good if I don't work, and what I am going to eat?

Is the situation good now?

[I] can say that the situation is good.

What do they say today?

They said [we] get 20 days leave. We get 20 days so [I] have to go back and work and pay the debt.

Now do they give people a chance to harvest?

I heard they give [people] that chance.

Who told you?

People from village, older women talk about it.

Did a foreigner woman come this morning? What did she say?

Yes. She asked, 'Do you dare to go back?' We told her, 'We have to go back and liquidate our debt. We have to go back. I really want to go back.'

Do people force you to go back now?

No, they don't force us to go back. We are coming back by ourselves. We have to go back and work. Now people are feeding us, but when people go back and [if] we haven't harvested the ground nut [crop], what are we going to eat? If the situation is not good, we can't harvest and we will have nothing to pay back our debt.

Interview | Naw P---, (female, 51) Palu Poe village, Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District (December 10th 2010)

This report contains the full transcript of an interview conducted with Naw P---, a resident of Palu Poe village, Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District on December 10th 2010. In her interview with KHRG, Naw P--- described how the military situation in the Palu area is causing prolonged human rights concerns for, and displacement of, civilians during the busy harvest season. Many villagers from the Palu area have sought refuge in Thailand's Phop Phra and Mae Sot Districts. Naw P--- confirmed that, while some displaced villagers are trying to return to Palu, others continue to fear that they will be arrested and forced to porter military supplies, rations and equipment for the Tatmadaw if they return. This is preventing some villagers from returning to their plantations and fields to complete the harvest of bean, corn and paddy crops, the main agricultural products cultivated in eastern Dooplaya. Naw P--- expressed concerns that this will also prevent some villagers from being able to repay their debts next season, which will have long-term consequences for the villagers' livelihoods in the future.

What is your occupation?

I work on a bean plantation.

Which village do you live in?

Before 1986, I lived in Palu village and, at that time, that area [Palu village] was under the control of our Karen people. At that time, because there was a lot of fighting, we moved to the Thailand side [of the Moei river] and we didn't have [our own] place to work, so we had to do daily payment work in Thailand. I lived with my family in Moe Lee Cha village [Phop Pra District, Tak Province, Thailand] for more than ten years and came back to [Palu] village after [the year] 2000. Palu village has been divided into three villages, named Palu Pa Doh, Palu Poe and Min Lat Bpaing. I came back after the year 2000 to Palu Poe village.

Can you tell me why you can't live in [Palu Poe] village anymore and fled to Mae Kong Kay village [Mae Sot District, Tak Province, Thailand]?

We had to flee again at the end of November 2010, because our Karen people are fighting with the enemy [Tatmadaw] soldiers. Many villagers have fled to Thailand and we have been here more than ten days already.

We heard that some people who were staying on the Thailand side have gone back to [Palu] village. So can you tell us about the situation of those villagers and how they managed to get back to their village?

[They went back] because there were many [agricultural] work places where the villagers had to finish [the harvest]. The villagers have to hurry to finish their work, so they have to go back to their village when there are no SPDC [State Peace and Development Council] soldiers in the village. Usually, the villagers go back to their village to look after their [agricultural] work places in the morning, and come back to the Thailand side [of the Moei river] at around 5:30 pm and sleep there.

You mention that you go back to your village where there are no soldiers in the village. Can you tell us more about how you communicate to know whether the soldiers are in your village or not?

Before we cross the river, we stay on the Thailand side [of the Moei river] and check with other people who go back to the village and ask them about the situation. If they say there are no soldiers, we take a boat and go back slowly to the village. Even after we arrive on the Burma side [of the Moei river], before we enter the village, we have to check first to see if there are soldiers before we enter the village.

We heard that some of the villagers on the Thailand side [of the Moei river] do not dare to go back to their village. Can you tell us more about what they worry about and what they are afraid of?

They are afraid of the enemy [Tatmadaw soldiers] because they [Tatmadaw soldiers] come to the village sometimes and their army camp is close to the village. If they go back to their village, they [the Palu villagers] are afraid that the [Tatmadaw] soldiers will arrest them, because they heard people were arrested by the soldiers' and used to porter [military supplies and equipment]. Also, if the fighting happens when they go back, they worry that the shells will hit them. They don't have money to go to the hospital if the shells hit them.

You mention that the villagers are afraid of SPDC [Tatmadaw] soldiers. What about [fear of] KNLA and DKBA [soldiers]?

For the KNLA and DKBA [soldiers], we don't need to be afraid of them, because they are our people.

So, the villagers that do not dare to go back, what about their work places like the bean plantations, corn plantations and other fields?

They will lose [their harvest] of [the beans, corn and paddy crops] and they will face the consequences, like they won't be able to pay back the money that they borrowed from their bosses, the Thai businessmen. Some of the villagers do not dare to go back to look after their work places [the bean plantations, corn plantations and paddy fields] because their work places are far away from the village. Also these people are afraid that the Burmese soldiers will do [the harvest] for themselves.

If the situation goes on like this, what will happen with the villagers' livelihoods in the future?

For the future, livelihoods are bad for us, because we will have to stay in Thailand and work as an employee [with daily payment], like our situation back in 1986. We don't have any [agricultural] work places in Thailand, and we have to look for employment day-to-day and survive like that. If we get a fever, we have to go to Mae Tao clinic [run by Dr. Cynthia Maung in Mae Sot, Thailand] because we can get free [medical treatment] and we don't need to pay the cost of the medicine.

Interview | Saw E---, (male) Thay Baw Boh village, Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District (December 14th 2010)

We heard that villagers from Thay Baw Boh were fleeing from their village – could you tell us why they had to flee from their village?

Because this is the case: The DKBA got news that the Burmese Army [Tatmadaw] planned more [military] action, so they [the DKBA] planned to move to positions close beside the village. The DKBA army worried that, if the Burmese Army came up, they wouldn't be able to ensure the villagers' security. So they [the DKBA] told the villagers that they had to move. Some villagers moved to Thailand and some remained in the village but the villagers that moved to Thailand outnumber those who are still in the village.

How many people are there in Thay Baw Boh village and how many households are there?

There are many people in Thay Baw Boh village. We guess maybe we have 150 houses and each house maybe has 5 people, so the number of villagers is more than 500 people. The villagers who moved to Thailand are mostly women and children.

Right now there is no fighting but what will happen with this situation in the future?

I asked a DKBA officer about the situation and he told me that the SPDC [Tatmadaw] troops that stay in Kyo G'Lee have arrived in Maw Tuh. We have to make our villagers secure. Now our village location is in the middle – sometimes we hear gunshots from Waw Lay village and sometimes we hear them from Palu. If we're ready then it's better for us. This month is December so how will we have Christmas? It's not easy, that's also why the school had to close.

You said the school had to close. Do you have any plans for the students' examinations?

We thought we should stop school. If the school was still open, we know the students wouldn't be interested in their studies because they're staying in a terrible situation. I already talked about this with Saw T--- [a villager in Thay Baw Boh]. We decided that we'll talk with a local school teacher in M--- village and a local school teacher in N--- village and arrange to take some of our students to M--- school and some to N--- school because they have the same curriculum as our school. Saw T--- said we'll collect the two schools in the same place and our teachers will

teach and work together. I'll take my two sons there; the elder one is a level three student.

If the situation continues like this, how will it affect the villagers' lives in the long term?

Everything is up to the SPDC [Tatmadaw] Army. They came to live in a DKBA place and, if they start to be more active, maybe the DKBA will fight them. When they're fighting we only think about running to Thailand. We can't guess the situation now. If the SPDC starts to be more active in the future the villagers will have to run to Thailand. After that, they'll need more supervision and care because they won't have their own land to work. But if the SPDC doesn't start to be too active, then some villagers can go back to their land and work. If they can't go back, then they can't make a living and will need protection.

Interview | Saw F---, (male) relief worker, Mae La Oo, Mae Sariang District, Mae Hong Song Province (December 15th 2010)

I heard that you participated in providing services to the villagers who are crossing into Thailand – is that true?

Yes, I spent last night in the place where those villagers are living.

Can you explain to me about the situation of those villagers?

Yes, the Tatmadaw forced the villagers to go stay at the army camp, carrying water, cooking and carrying injured soldiers. These villagers didn't want to do that because they still have to do their farming so they gathered secretly and crossed into Thailand on the night of December 10th. They arrived on the Thailand side [of the Moei river] on 11th December at around 8:00am. Now most of them are still hiding in the forest at Muh Yoo Hta.

How many of those villagers are in the area now?

There are 65 villagers [13 households] in this area and another group of 34 households who continued down [the Moei river] to the Burma side of the river to a place called K---.

Who is providing the villagers [at Muh Yoo Hta] with services?

TBBC, COERR, UN, MI and CBO groups are providing medical support and other assistance. There are 13 households in this area. We are just providing them with services day-by-day because there has not been any decision made yet as to how to do it.

Is there any plan to move these villagers into a refugee camp?

The NGO groups want to move them to a refugee camp [either Mae La Oo or Mae Ra Moe] but the local Thai Army [RTA] troops will not allow it to happen. We heard that the they [RTA] would like to send them to Kler Koh village further down the [Moei] river on the Thai side. Some of those villagers would like to go and stay in the [Mae La Oo] camp because their children are studying in the camp and they would like to stay close to their children.

What happened to their home village?

After they left, they did not dare to go back. When they first fled, they stayed in their field huts but the Tatmadaw shelled mortar into their farming areas and that is when they left.

The villagers who are staying in Muh Yoo Hta – how many different villages are they from?

They are all from Noh Day village because all of Noh Day village is fleeing.

What about other villagers from the other villages in the Manerplaw area?

There are some villagers from other villages who went to stay at K---. Those villagers have not arrived at this area yet. For their security we don't want this issue published yet. Those people came from villages around the Manerplaw area [Hlaing Bwe Township, Pa'an District] but they headed to K---.

Do those villagers get any services?

The local officer there is looking after them. It is very difficult for them because no aid group can reach that area.

Have you asked those villagers why they are fleeing? As you say, it sounds to me like they are not afraid of fighting but they are afraid of having to work in the army camp?

Yes, the fighting is not happening in the village but the Tatmadaw camp is close to their village. The soldiers came and forced them to go and work in the army camp and carry injured soldiers because there are many Tatmadaw soldiers who were injured. But the villagers have to take risks when they go to carry water.

Do you still hear gunfire when you go and provide services to the villagers at Muh Yoo Hta? [Muh Yoo Hta is close to the area where the fighting is happening.]

Yes, I still hear the mortars exploding everyday, but it doesn't last long – only five or six minutes. I don't know why it is happening. I think they are shelling the area because they [the Tatmadaw troops] have no reinforcements yet.

Who is the fighting happening between?

The fighting is happening between the KNLA and the Tatmadaw. The groups of villagers who are fleeing include some DKBA family members.

Are there still Tatmadaw troops in Noh Day village area?

Yes, there are still Tatmadaw troops. They have no reinforcements. They have injured soldiers and they can't get out of that area. They have no way to get out.

Do you know the [Tatmadaw] camp name?

The camp name is Hseh Preh Gkyo [Hill].

What about travelling on the river now?

No, travelling on the river is forbidden. No one can travel in the river. There are also over 300 villagers hiding at a place called upper Ht--- in the Manerplaw area [Hlaing Bwe Township, Pa'an District]. Those villagers have a more difficult situation. But I don't know the names of the villages that they are from. The KNLA is taking care of security for them. Some of them have crossed to the Thailand side and some have stayed on the Burma side. They are on both sides of the river.

Can you reach that area?

I couldn't get permission to go to that area. If I can get permission I will go. I would like to go and see.

Who provides them with support?

They are receiving support from local villagers in Thailand from M--- village. The M--- villagers come and provide them with some support because where they are hiding is close M--- village.

Is the boat that regularly runs from Mae La Oo camp to Muh Yoo Hta running?

Only the emergency aid groups can travel there.

Where do the villagers from Muh Yoo Hta stay?

They are staying at B---, away from the RTA border control camp. That place is very far from a water source.

Do you want to raise any other issues?

Yes, one of the Mae Pa villagers stepped on a landmine and got injured. It happened at about 5 pm on Sunday evening on December 12th but we didn't receive him until Monday morning. He stepped on the landmine at his village when he was on the way here. Because it is an emergency, I tried to get him to the hospital at Mae Sariang. I don't know his name. We have a record of it in the camp office. But I don't know what type of landmine he stepped on because I had no time to ask. He injured his right leg and thigh.

Who got him from the place he was injured to here?

He was sent from K--- by boat. The DKBA sent him from the place he got injured to K--- and the local KNLA arranged a boat for him from K--- to here.

What do you think will happen in the future? As you talk to the villagers, do you think there will be more or less conflict?

There will be more conflict in the future.

Are there any other issues that you would like to share with me?

The Thai authorities [RTA] came yesterday and said that they will only let these refugees stay here for one week. They have already made that decision.

Do the villagers dare to go back?

I asked them yesterday and they said: we will go back only when the Tatmadaw have all left. If they are still there, we will never go back. It is clear that they dare not go back.

How many Tatmadaw troops are staying at Hseh Preh Gkyo [Hill] camp?

There are 913 soldiers in one group and 28 in another group and these two groups have combined together.

Is there anything else that you want to share?

One thing is that one woman delivered her baby when she was on the way here. And one woman had a miscarriage. We asked permission for them to get medical treatment at the [Mae La Oo] camp hospital and, after they get better, we will send them back to the place they live here. The two women are from Noh Day village and the man who was injured by a landmine is from Mae Pa village. Both villages are in the Marnerplaw area [of Hlaing Bwe Township, Pa'an District].

How do you provide food to these people?

We just send them food day-by-day. We are not allowed to send a lot of food to these people.

Interview | Naw P---, (female, 51) Palu Poe village, Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District (December 10th 2010)

What is your occupation?

I work on a bean plantation.

Which village do you live in?

Before 1986, I lived in Palu village and, at that time, that area [Palu village] was under the control of our Karen people. At that time, because there was a lot of fighting, we moved to the Thailand side [of the Moei river] and we didn't have [our own] place to work, so we had to do daily payment work in Thailand. I lived with my family in Moe Lee Cha village [Phop Pra District, Tak Province, Thailand] for more than ten years and came back to [Palu] village after [the year] 2000. Palu village has been divided into three villages, named Palu Pa Doh, Palu Poe and Min Lat Bpaing. I came back after the year 2000 to Palu Poe village.

Can you tell me why you can't live in [Palu Poe] village anymore and fled to Mae Kong Kay village [Mae Sot District, Tak Province, Thailand]?

We had to flee again at the end of November 2010, because our Karen people are fighting with the enemy [Tatmadaw] soldiers. Many villagers have fled to Thailand and we have been here more than ten days already.

We heard that some people who were staying on the Thailand side have gone back to [Palu] village. So can you tell us about the situation of those villagers and how they managed to get back to their village?

[They went back] because there were many [agricultural] work places where the villagers had to finish [the harvest]. The villagers have to hurry to finish their work, so they have to go back to their village when there are no SPDC [State Peace and Development Council] soldiers in the village. Usually, the villagers go back to their village to look after their [agricultural] work places in the morning, and come back to the Thailand side [of the Moei river] at around 5:30 pm and sleep there.

You mention that you go back to your village where there are no soldiers in the village. Can you tell us more about how you communicate to know whether the soldiers are in your village or not?

Before we cross the river, we stay on the Thailand side [of the Moei river] and check with other people who go back to the village and ask them about the situation. If they say there are no soldiers, we take a boat and go back slowly to the village. Even after we arrive on the Burma side [of the Moei river], before we enter the village, we have to check first to see if there are soldiers before we enter the village.

We heard that some of the villagers on the Thailand side [of the Moei river] do not dare to go back to their village. Can you tell us more about what they worry about and what they are afraid of?

They are afraid of the enemy [Tatmadaw soldiers] because they [Tatmadaw soldiers] come to the village sometimes and their army camp is close to the village. If they go back to their village, they [the Palu villagers] are afraid that the [Tatmadaw] soldiers will arrest them, because they heard people were arrested by the soldiers' and used to porter [military supplies and equipment]. Also, if the fighting happens when they go back, they worry that the shells will hit them. They don't have money to go to the hospital if the shells hit them.

You mention that the villagers are afraid of SPDC [Tatmadaw] soldiers. What about [fear of] KNLA and DKBA [soldiers]?

For the KNLA and DKBA [soldiers], we don't need to be afraid of them, because they are our people.

So, the villagers that do not dare to go back, what about their work places like the bean plantations, corn plantations and other fields?

They will lose [their harvest] of [the beans, corn and paddy crops] and they will face the consequences, like they won't be able to pay back the money that they borrowed from their bosses, the Thai businessmen. Some of the villagers do not dare to go back to look after their work places [the bean plantations, corn plantations and paddy fields] because their work places are far away from the village. Also these people are afraid that the Burmese soldiers will do [the harvest] for themselves.

If the situation goes on like this, what will happen with the villagers' livelihoods in the future?

For the future, livelihoods are bad for us, because we will have to stay in Thailand and work as an employee [with daily payment], like our situation back in 1986. We don't have any [agricultural] work places in Thailand, and we have to look for employment day-to-day and survive like that. If we get a fever, we have to go to Mae Tao clinic [run by Dr. Cynthia Maung in Mae Sot, Thailand] because we can get free [medical treatment] and we don't need to pay the cost of the medicine.

Interview | Saw T--- (male, 59), Ma--- village, Te Naw Th'Ri Township, Tenasserim Division (December 2010)

This report contains the full transcript of an interview conducted in December 2010 in Te Naw Th'Ri Township, Tenasserim Division by a villager trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. The villager interviewed Saw T---, a 59-year-old village head who, at the time of interview, was in hiding from Tatmadaw troops in an area of Tenasserim Division beyond government control. Excerpts from Saw T---'s interview with KHRG have been published in the previous KHRG field report "Militarization, Development and Displacement: Conditions for villagers in southern Tenasserim Division" however, the full transcript of his testimony is now available below. Saw T--- described witnessing attacks on villagers by Tatmadaw soldiers and cited regular demands for villagers to serve as forced porters for the Tatmadaw and other forms of forced labour as one of the main factors which originally motivated him to

go into hiding. Saw T--- explained that villagers in hiding employ a range of strategies to avoid Tatmadaw forces, including coordinating security strategies and sharing information with villagers at other hiding sites, maintaining contact with and seeking protection from non-state armed groups, cultivating crops that are easy to harvest quickly, travelling covertly to villages in mixed-administration areas in order to engage in trade and other livelihoods activities, and crossing vehicle roads during the night. The following interview was conducted by a villager in Tenasserim Division who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. It is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.⁷ This interview was received along with other information from Tenasserim Division, including twenty-one other interviews.⁸

Ethnicity: Karen

Marital Status: Married

Occupation: Logging

Position: Village head

How many children do you have?

I have seven children.

How old is your oldest child?

My oldest child is 35 years old.

How old is your youngest child?

My youngest child is ten years old.

Have you ever lived in a relocation site?

No, I haven't lived in one before.

Why have you become an internally displaced person (IDP)?

⁷ KHRG trains villagers in eastern Burma 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.

⁸ When these documents have been processed and translated by KHRG and when sufficient information has been compiled and analysed, a full Field Report on the situation in Tenasserim Division will be available on the KHRG website. Until then, KHRG's most recent analysis of the situation in Tenasserim Division can be found in the recent Field Report, "Militarization, Development and Displacement: Conditions for villagers in southern Tenasserim Division," KHRG, March 2011.

Because the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw]⁹ soldiers forced the villagers to do forced labour and threatened villagers, we had move. The SPDC Army soldiers said we worked with the KNU [Karen National Union] and KNLA [Karen National Liberation Army], so we had to move.

What are the hiding places have you lived in?

The hiding places we've lived in are K--- village, Ht--- village, S--- village, G--- village and N--- village.

How long did it take you along the way when you fled to the first hiding place?

For some, it took a month or more than a month.

When did you have to flee into hiding?

It was about ten or twenty years ago. I don't remember anymore.

How did you feel when you had to flee into hiding?

The SPDC Army soldiers forced us to porter and forced us to do many things. That's why we decided to flee into hiding. That's all that I felt.

How has living in hiding changed the women's lives? How do the women live?

The children and women stayed in protected places when we flee, and the men, we have to carry the food and supplies.

What did the pregnant women face when they fled into hiding?

They faced problems because it was the rainy season and we had no huts or places to live.

What did the women have to do when they had to flee into hiding?

They didn't have to do anything. They just sat down beside their things.

Who prepared the things for the families to leave?

The men had to prepare all these things and the women had to prepare the food and take care of the children.

⁹ In Karen, the Burmese phrases *Na Ah Pa* (SPDC) and *Na Wa Ta* (SLORC) are commonly used to refer to the Burmese government or to Burma's state army, the Tatmadaw. Many older Karen villagers who were accustomed to using the phrase *Na Wa Ta* (SLORC) before 1997 continue to use that phrase, even though the SLORC has not officially existed since 1997. Similarly, despite the official dissolution of the SPDC in March 2011, many Karen villagers continue to use the phrase *Na Ah Pa* (SPDC) to refer to the Burmese government or to the Tatmadaw; see: "Mission Accomplished as SPDC 'dissolved'," Myanmar Times, April 4-10 2011. The term *Na Ah Pa* was used by the interviewer and interviewee, and "SPDC" is therefore retained in the translation of this interview.

Did the children have the chance to study [when you fled]?

No, all the children lost the chance to study and there was no education for them because they had to flee into hiding.

What do the children have to do [now]?

The children have nothing to do, they only play and shoo away birds and chickens and sweep [leaves].

Do the children go to school?

In the past, the children couldn't attend [school]. Now parents have found teachers so they can go to school, and they can study very well [without disruptions]. But we don't know what will happen in the future.

How do the children feel about having to live in hiding?

The children feel they don't have freedom to work or play, and they have to live quietly all the time.

How has living in hiding changed the elderly people's lives?

The elderly face only old age diseases. I know this because I'm very, very old myself. Nothing else has changed for them.

Do the elderly have to work?

No, they don't have to work; they only look after their grandchildren.

Do the elderly give you any opinions [advice] as you are the head of the hiding site?

They can't give any opinions [advice] because the eldest villagers suffer from dementia.

Do you plant vegetables in the hiding places?

We have to plant the vegetables which are easy to grow, harvest and eat quickly.

Do you face any problems, such as any food problems, in the hiding places?

Yes, we faced food problems in 2004 because rats destroyed our paddy fields. The villagers were starving and all we had to eat was boiled rice [porridge].¹⁰

¹⁰ When outside assistance is unavailable, and other community strategies for attempting to survive periods of acute food insecurity are insufficient, households, or entire communities, in hiding sometimes attempt to extend remaining rice supplies by eating a watered down rice porridge mixed with foraged vegetables (*dtah gka bpor*) or a more basic thin rice gruel mixed with salt (*may klaw*) in order to survive until the next harvest or until more food can be procured. Note that *dtah gka bpor* is also a commonly-eaten traditional Karen dish, in addition to being an effective

When you knew you'd have to flee into hiding, did you prepare food [to take with you]?

We didn't know we'd have to move, so we hadn't prepared anything, but when we fled to the first hiding place, we hid and then went back to my old village to secretly look for food.

What are the villagers' occupations in the hiding places?

The people in the hiding sites work as loggers and collect flowers [to sell], but we have to be careful and watch out for SPDC Army forces. We don't want to meet them. If we meet them on the way, we'll get trouble. We have to work hard for food and we face many difficult problems.

What kind of livelihoods activities do the displaced people do?

We collect flowers and log wood. We don't have any other things to do. As the [Karen] elders' proverb says: "*Klee thaw taw gk'ba gk'na, kler tha mi gk'ba aw kwa*," [roughly translates as "we have to listen for the sound of the bow, we have to look while we eat the fruit of the banyan" or "in everything we do, we must stay alert"].

What kind of trade do the displaced people do?

The way they do their business is that they go to villages secretly to buy things like buffalo and cows [to resell]. They have to work hard for their livelihoods.

Did you prepare any food when you first fled to a hiding place?

We didn't even know that we'd have to flee to a hiding place so we didn't prepare any food. When we didn't have any food, we had to go back to our old village secretly to collect food. So we had some rice to eat.

How do you protect yourselves and store food for the future when you have move from place to place all the time?

To protect ourselves, we contact the KNDO [Karen National Defence Organisation]¹¹ whenever we need to move to a new hiding place.

How about [organising] food?

We have to organise ourselves to plant paddy and vegetables to eat. We don't have to buy and spend our money on [food].

means of stretching declining food stores. For more on strategies villagers in hiding use to address food insecurity, see: *Self-protection under strain: Targeting of civilians and local responses in northern Karen State*, KHRG, August 2010, pp.52-64.

¹¹ The KNDO is a militia force of local volunteers trained and equipped by the KNLA and incorporated into its battalion and command structure; its members wear uniforms and typically commit to two-year terms of service.

Do the displaced people have any plan to keep themselves safe from the SPDC Army forces?

The SPDC Army knew about our plans [to flee], but as long as there are forests and secrets in the world, there's no problem [for us]. The SPDC Army knows everything about us, but there's a world and we can flee. We know this.

How do you feel about having to flee to hiding places and how this affects your livelihoods?

We think and decide about how we have to best support the children, to provide an education for them. If we can do this or not, we will see later, but we all decided to do this for the children.

How does the situation before compare with the present?

The situation was so bad before because we had to flee and sleep in the jungle with no huts or shelter for us to sleep in. Now, we have built up a small village, so it's better for us now a bit.

How do you understand the meaning of the word 'displace'?

I understand it as we have to run and we have to help each other in many different ways when we flee to a new hiding place.

How do you understand the meaning of 'displaced people'?

I don't know because it's too much [for me to explain].

How do you feel about being displaced people?

We feel bad because we have to live in fear and without hope. SPDC Army soldiers abused us, so we had to flee into hiding.

What did you have to face when you lived in your old village?

We had to face forced labour and had to porter for the SPDC Army forces.

How do you feel about being a displaced person?

One thing I feel is happiness and another thing I feel is hardship. I can feel a little freedom here, but we have problems with food, and more fear.

What opportunities did you lose when you fled into hiding?

We've lost many opportunities because we have to live in hiding. We lost all our land, farms, houses and our cows and buffaloes. The SPDC Army soldiers took them and some villagers also sold them secretly when we went into hiding. So we didn't know what to do and had to give them up.

What's different from when you lived in your old village? How about now that you have to move from place to place?

When we lived in my old village, our opportunities were very few, but now that we live in hiding we can breathe easier, like the elders' proverb says: "*Only those who are free to roam are able to clear their own path.*"

What do you want to change to make the situation better?

To make the situation better, we have to protect ourselves and keep in contact with our KNDO, and we have to stand together to protect ourselves.

Do you want to keep fleeing forever?

If possible, we don't want to move. We're further and further away from our birthplace. We can't do it anymore.

Do you want to go back and live in your old village?

We want to go back to our village but we don't dare to go back, because the SPDC Army can enter the village easily.

What do you think you'd need if you were to go back and live in your [old] village?

We have the things that we need. We have our land and plantations, but we don't dare to go back and stay. Our aunts, uncles and siblings look after the things we've left behind.

Do you think of your [current] hiding place as a temporary place [to live]?

This hiding place, we just built it like a small place to live, but I'm not sure yet.

How long do the displaced people live in each hiding place?

We can live a long time [in each hiding place] if the SPDC Army soldiers don't come. We don't want to move now because we've been living here a long time.

How is the situation currently?

The situation is sometimes good and sometimes bad because our movement is restricted by SPDC Army unit activities in the area.

Could you tell me why you started to flee?

We had to flee because the SPDC Army soldiers harassed us in many different ways. We ran to the river's headwaters to hide. People [other villagers] told the SPDC Army that we had contact with the KNU [KNLA]. Then SPDC Army soldiers came and surrounded our village and attacked KNLA troops there. At that time, one of the SPDC Army soldiers died in my hut. We had to flee again in between April and May 2000. My son went to buy some cows and buffaloes. Someone in the village said my son was a spy, so my son ran away, but the SPDC Army soldiers shot and killed him. His wife died first and my son died after. When I went to see my son's corpse, SPDC Army soldiers also shot at me. When the SPDC Army soldiers shot at me, we also shot back and we were injured. We were four people, but none of us died. The SPDC Army soldiers suffered injuries and we also got injured. We ran back and we didn't dare to stay there anymore.

We fled to W--- village. A group who lived in Wa--- and Dt--- area also didn't dare to stay there anymore. We all fled to W--- village.

How long did it take you when you fled to the new hiding place?

I don't remember because I've lived in the jungle for a long time and I'm getting very old.

Do you flee whenever SPDC Army soldiers come close to your hiding place?

Whenever we hear that the SPDC Army soldiers are coming close to the hiding place, we have to go and hide at the headwaters of the river. Sometimes we have to stay there for four or five days while the SPDC Army and KNLA soldiers are fighting and the villagers have to stay in a safe place in the jungle.

How many times have you had to flee to that hiding place?

Since I fled into hiding, if I had to count, almost a hundred times.

Why don't you want to live in relocation site?

We have to avoid relocation sites. After people relocate you, you are not so different from when people breed chickens. They can take you out, and kill you and eat you when they want. They can oppress you. You have to give them when they demand things that they need.

Do you think it'd be good for you to live in a relocation site under the SPDC Army's control?

I don't think it'd be good.

Do you think it'd be good for your livelihood if the KNU [KNLA] surrendered and let the SPDC government control the area?

If the KNU [KNLA] surrender, we'll have to face more problems because the SPDC control is very difficult for us. We don't want the KNU [KNLA] to surrender. We want them to protect us and to stop the abuses by the SPDC government.

How do you want to live in the future?

In the future, we want freedom and we want our Karen people to control us.

Who do you want to control the area in which you live?

I want my Karen people to control it. We need our KNU Army group [KNLA] to be with us in our area. We have suffered a lot under the SPDC Army's control.

Do you still want to be a displaced person when there is peace?

No, I don't want to be a displaced person anymore when there is peace.

What do you understand by the word 'peace'?

I'm not sure. I know only that if we get freedom, it will stop our displacement and that our [KNU] leaders have to struggle and provide for their people.

How do you avoid the SPDC Army soldiers when they come?

How do we avoid [them]? We have to hide in the jungle, in the bush, at the river's headwaters and in the valley.

How do you learn of SPDC Army movements?

I have friends and can contact them to know about SPDC Army [troop] movements. We have to avoid them when we know they're coming.

How do you cross the vehicle road?

We have to cross the vehicle road at night time.

Do you keep in touch with the other hiding places?

Yes, we always keep in contact with them. How could we leave each other when we are of the same blood?

What do you contact them about?

We contact them to tell them where SPDC Army units are and sometimes they also send us messages about SPDC Army unit movements. We mostly contact each other about this. We know the SPDC Army soldiers want to kill and destroy us, so we have to be alert for each other, and have to avoid them.

Do you trade with the villagers who live in SPDC Army controlled areas?

We trade with villagers in the SPDC Army controlled area secretly. They sometimes exchange things and we sometimes exchange things secretly with each other. There are some who love us and [some who] hate us.

What do you need to make your situation better?

It's our leaders' duty to [improve our situation]. We're glad our leaders never rest and still struggle for us.

Interview | Saw Pa--- (male, 29), PI--- village, Thandaung Township, Toungoo District (December 2010)

The following interview was conducted by a villager in Toungoo District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. It is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.

Ethnicity: Karen

Religion: Christian

Marital Status: Single

Occupation: Cultivating a betelnut plantation

Position: Village head

How many years have you been a village head?

I have been a village head for four years.

As you are a village head, what are your responsibilities?

As I am a village head, my responsibilities are that I have to stand up for villagers. When they have to face something [a problem], I have to face it for them first.

Did you want to be a village head or did the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] or the KNU want you to become a village head?

I became a village head because the villagers and the SPDC Army wanted me to do it.

Can you tell us about your experiences, starting from when you became a village head until now?

Yes, a little bit. Starting from when I became a village head until now, I have had to face many things, such as if the enemy [Tatmadaw soldiers] comes we have to welcome [provide] them with many things and for transportation [for their military equipment and supplies] also we have to go even if we don't dare to go. We have to do as they ask. If we don't, they hit us.

How many households are in your village?

There are 37 households in my village.

How many villagers?

There are 158 villagers.

What is the most common occupation for villagers in your village?

The most common occupation for villagers is planting betelnut, cardamom, durian and mango.

Do all the villagers get enough food from their jobs?

No, they just work from one year to the next year.

How about the villagers who don't have enough food? What do they do?

Villagers who don't have enough food, they ask for food from their friends and their friends give it to them.

You told me a moment ago that in your village most people plant betelnut and durian so how much [money do they receive] for one viss (1.6 kg. / 3.5 lb.) of betelnut?

For betelnuts, four or five hundred [betelnuts] cost about 2,000 kyat (US \$2.48).

How about durian?

For durians, if you sell them together [in bulk], it will be 400 or 500 kyat (US \$0.50 – 0.62) [for one *viss*].

In your village, in what season do you get the most money [income]?

From September until December we get the most money.

In your village, do you have to face any problems? And what kind of problems?

Yes, in our village we have many kinds of problems. We have to face problems, such as the SPDC [Tatmadaw] forces us to carry things for them [porter military supplies and equipment], be messengers and other things.

How many people have to go as messengers in one year?

In the past two or three years, I have had to give one person a year.

Has the SPDC ever been to your village?

Yes, sometimes the SPDC comes to my village.

When was it?

In 2007, but I don't remember the month.

What time was it?

Near the time that we made [harvested] betelnut.¹²

What did they do in the village? Did they hurt the villagers?

No, they didn't hurt the villagers but they asked for household numbers, the number of people, the number of students and the number of teachers.

Did they kill or take any animals like chickens?

No, they didn't take [anything].

You told me a moment ago that they took household numbers and student numbers. So what would they do with that [information]?

¹² The harvest period for betelnut in eastern Burma is at the beginning of the dry season, typically around November or December. Betelnuts must be dried in the sun for two to three weeks after harvest before they can be sold.

They will report it to their leaders. What they'll do with that, we also don't know.

Did you hear anything about the SPDC Army killing people or villagers a few weeks ago?

A few weeks ago or a month ago, I heard one person was killed.

Where is his village?

His village is So---.

How old was he?

I didn't know. I just heard like this.

Do you remember the date?

I can't remember the date.

Do you know for what reason they killed him?

I don't know for what reason they killed him. But as we heard, the villager didn't do anything wrong. He was going to cut bamboo, and after that the SPDC Army saw him and they thought he was their enemy and they killed him.

Do you know the Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) or Infantry Battalion (IB) number of the SPDC soldiers [that killed the villager]?

I don't know their number.

Where is the SPDC Army [unit] located?

It might have been active soldiers who were taking road security.

In your village, have you ever had to carry [porter] for the SPDC Army?

Every year, we have to carry things for the soldiers.

How often do they ask per year or per month?

They ask us to carry at least twice per year.

Do they come and ask on their own, or do they write a letter to come meet them?

They write a letter that you [the village head] have to come a meeting.

During the meeting, do they talk only about carrying loads or other things?

They talk only about carrying loads.

What kind of loads?

Many kinds of loads, such as beans, sugar, fish paste, chilli, oil and rice.

For example, how many viss do they ask one person to carry?

For men, they decided they have to carry at least 20 viss (32 kg. / 70 lb.) and for women, 15 or 16 viss (24 – 26 kg. / 53 – 56 lb.).

At a minimum, how many villagers do they ask for each time?

They ask for at least 20 or 25 villagers each time.

Are women included among the porters?

Yes, the porters include women.

Among the women, how old are the youngest?

The youngest among the women are 16 or 17 [years old].

How about the oldest?

The oldest are 47 or 48.

For example, if the women cannot carry 15 viss, will they reduce it?

No, they won't. They have to carry it.

For carrying, how long will it take?

Sometimes, it takes one day and sometimes it takes three or four days. And we have to go with the soldiers.

How many soldiers go with you?

40 soldiers go with us.

Where do you have to start, and where do you have to go?

Last year, in 2010, we started from Kler La and had to go to Ha---.

While carrying, did you see the SPDC [Tatmadaw soldiers] hit or beat villagers when they [villagers] are tired or can't carry anymore?

Yes, they did. If the villagers can't carry, the SPDC hits or kicks them.

Do you remember the date at that time?

Last year, on October 11th 2010.

Do you know which soldiers?

I don't know. I know only [they were from] Military Operations Command (MOC) #7

How about their officer?

Their officer's name is Myo Yee.

While carrying, have you face [a situation] like SPDC soldiers and KNU [KNLA soldiers] have conflict?

No, I have never seen it.

Do you want to tell us about other SPDC oppression?

The SPDC forces villagers [to work], such as carrying their loads. Also if they see us on the way, they call us to become a guide and ask us to do forced labour like cleaning the road.

If they see you on the way and they call you to become guide but if you don't go, what will they do?

If they see us, we can't stay without guiding them. They're angry, and will push or beat us so we're afraid and we send [guide] them.

In the past few months in 2011, did you have to carry loads for the SPDC soldiers?

Yes, one time. We had to start from Da--- to Ht---.

How many people [had to porter]?

In our village, it was more than 20.

Did it include men and women?

Yes, it did.

How many women?

Six women.

How about your travel costs? Did they pay it?

No, they didn't pay for food or anything.

Did they pay you?

No, they didn't pay us.

Do you remember the date?

Yes, it was on February 14th 2011.

Which soldiers [demanded porters]?

New soldiers, under MOC #9.

Do you know the commander's name?

No, I don't.

Did it include other villages?

Yes, it included other villages.

What villages?

They are Kl---, Do---, Mu---, Ko--- and Th---.

In other villages, how many people did they ask for from one village?

I didn't know how many they asked for, but they separated the villages and one village had to carry 25 sacks of rice (1250 kg. / 2750 lb.). For a big village, they had to carry 55 sacks of rice (2750 kg. / 6050 lb.).

How many people were included from Do---, Mu---, Ko--- and Th---?

It might be more than 100, or 150.

A few weeks ago, did you have to cut bamboo for them?

No, we didn't have to cut bamboo for them.

A moment ago, you called out the village names. Does the SPDC Army camp near those villages?

For Ko--- and *[inaudible]*, the SPDC Army camps are near them, because they are near Kler La.

Do you have a school in your village?

Yes, we have a school in our village and it's a government school.

How many grades?

[The school is] Up to grade four.

How many students?

Only 18 students: six girls and twelve boys.

How about the teachers' salary? Does the SPDC government support it, or do the villagers support?

For the teachers, the SPDC government supports them and gives them salary.

How about food for the teachers?

For food our villagers support them. Every kind of food, such as oil, salt and rice.

How many teachers?

Two teachers.

How much food do you have to give per month or year?

One big tin [of rice] (16 kg. / 35 lb.) per month, and other food.

Do the students study smoothly?

Yes, they do but they don't study Karen.

Because of what?

Because it is an SPDC government school. The SPDC people come and teach.

Does the SPDC not allow them to teach Karen, or is there no one to teach [Karen language]?

The SPDC doesn't allow it.

How many months do they [Tatmadaw] stay before they change their place [rotate to another location]?

One unit stays six months.

For the students, does it disturb them when they [Tatmadaw soldiers] change their place?

Yes, when they change their place, one unit has already gone but the other unit hasn't come yet, so it stops students' studying.

How many days does the studying stop?

For one month.

Do the KNU [KNLA] or SPDC soldiers ever come and disturb the school?

No, never.

How about the school materials? Does the SPDC government support them?

For school materials, the SPDC government never supports them.

Do the villagers have to try and make [support] them [the cost of school materials]?

Yes, the villagers have to try and make them by themselves.

How do they do it?

For school writing tables, chairs, chalk and other things, our villagers have to build and rebuild them.

Do you see children who can't go to school in your village?

No, I don't see children who can't go to school.

Do you have a hospital [clinic] in your village?

There's no hospital in my village.

If the villagers get sick, how do you cure them?

If the villagers get sick, mostly we go to Kler La hospital.

What kind of hospital [is in Kler La]?

It is an SPDC government hospital.

For example, if one villager gets seriously sick but doesn't have enough money, can you negotiate with the medical staff?

No, we can't. The villager has to borrow other people's money. We can never negotiate with them.

How much money do you have to give if you go to the hospital once?

It depends on your disease. If your disease isn't serious, it costs 4,000 or 5,000 kyat (US \$4.98 – 6.21). But if your disease is serious, it can cost anything from 10,000 to 1,000,000 kyat (US \$12.42 – 1242).

In your area, what are the common diseases?

The common diseases are fever and malaria.

Do villagers die because of the diseases?

No, none.

Now, can the villagers work smoothly [without interruption]?

Yes, now they work smoothly but for the dry season there is no way to find food. We have to do like this.

How much do you have to pay for one big tin of rice (16 kg. / 35 lb.)?

It costs 8,000 or 9,000 kyat (US \$9.94 – 11.18) for one tin of rice.

How about meat?

For pork, it costs 6,000 kyat (US \$7.45) and for beef, it costs 5,500 or 6,000 kyat (US \$6.83 – 7.45) [per viss].

How about other food such as oil, fish paste and others? Has the cost changed between last year and this year?

Yes, the cost has changed. This year the cost of oil is more expensive, and it costs 4,000 (US \$4.97) for one viss. Also onions cost more than [before], 1,000 to 2,000 kyat (US \$1.24 – 2.48) [per viss].

As it is now, can you tell us about the work situation?

Now, it's the dry season so it's hard to find a job. Some villagers go fishing and some are carpenters.

How about the carpenters, do they work in the village or in another village?

Some work in our village and some are working in other villages.

How much do they get for one day?

It might be 4,000 or 4,500 kyat (US \$4.97 – 6.21).

Do you see the SPDC come and make your villager better?

No, they don't come and make our village better. They come and destroy our village.

Why?

Because they said we work with the KNU.

What is your feeling about the KNU?

The KNU is good. Because of them, we can stay in our village. They [KNLA soldiers] protect us from the SPDC, so we can work smoothly.

Do you have anything else that you want to report that we haven't asked you yet?

In our village, there's a lot of oppression by the SPDC. They force us to carry loads and many things. Villagers have to carry loads for them, so villagers don't have time to work for themselves. Because of this we get into trouble. Those are the things that I want to report.

Interview | Ko A---, (male, 17) former child soldier with the Tatmadaw, LIB #202, January 11th 2011)

How old are you and what is your name?

I am 17 years old and my name is A---.

When did you join the SPDC army?

I started joining the army when I was 15 years old.

Where did you live [before you joined the Army]?

I live in Thone Kwa village in Daik U Township, Pegu Division.

Why did you join the army?

I was recruited forcibly, as porters are, when I went to visit my aunt. Then, I was sent to the recruitment centre and attended the training for 20 days. After that, I was sent to the front line directly.

Where does your aunt live?

My aunt lives in Pegu Town.

Who recruited villager porters?

It was the Tatmadaw army, led by Lt. Soe Than.

What did the authorities in the recruitment centre tell you when you reached there?

They asked me where I lived. I replied to them that I live in Thone Kwa village in Daik U Township, Pegu Division. Then they also asked me about my parents. After they asked everything about me, they sent me directly to the training school. In the training, I had to attend for 20 days and I was sent to the front line directly.

Did you join the army because you wanted to go or were you forced to join the army?

I was arrested to join the army. I was not willing to join the army.

Can you tell us about your experiences in the recruitment centre? What did you have to do there and during the training?

While attending the training, they asked us to dismantle guns and then set up the guns. After the training period, we had to clean grass and paint walls and rooms.



The photo above was taken by a KHRG researcher on January 11th 2011. It shows Ko A---, 17 years old, a former child soldier with Tatmadaw Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) #202. Ko A--- told KHRG that he was forcibly recruited by the Tatmadaw when he was 15 years old and received only 20 days of military training before he was sent to the military frontline in Karen State. [Photo: KHRG]

Were there any soldiers the same age of you when you were in the recruitment centre?

There were over 20 to 30 soldiers the same age as me. The rest were big.

How many soldiers the same age as you do you think were in the recruitment centre?

I do not know everyone there, but there were around 30 soldiers in the recruitment centre.

Did you see them yourself?

Yes

How about in other groups?

For other groups, I do not know.

Where did you have to go after you attended the training?

After the training, I had to go to the front line immediately, to Myawaddy directly. I stayed in Myawaddy for quite a long time. After attending the training, I was based in Myawaddy. Then, I came to stay in Myawaddy Pa Yah Thone Hsoo. We stayed there for three or four months before the fighting happened. Then, our camp was attacked and the ones who got injured the most were us, the children. But, the DKBA soldiers did not get injured a lot. Soldiers in our side got seriously injured.

What did you have to do during the fighting?

During the fighting, we also had to fight along with other soldiers.

Did you have to hold the gun?

Yes. I had to hold the gun.

What did you have to do after the attack in Myawaddy?

After the attack in Myawaddy, we did not have to do anything. We could take a rest for one or two days. After we took a rest, we had to begin activities again. We left Myawaddy and operated at Chin Thit Mountain. Behind Chin Thit Mountain, there is a Karen village. We fought there for a month.

Can you tell us about your experiences in that area after the attack in Myawaddy?

There were no experiences there, but we were based there for a month. In order to go there in the future, we had to find the way and there were four or five or ten children who died because they stepped on landmines. They died by wired landmines that exploded during the trip. We did not go forward and stay in that village. We arrested people forcibly and entered villages and demanded money from the villagers. We came forward after we did this. We came here to Waw Lay directly.

How did your officers plan for the injured soldiers?

For the injured soldiers, they took a rest in a good place and they cured them.

How many soldiers were there when you were based there [at Chin Thit Mountain]?

There were over 200 soldiers at the back of Chin Thit Mountain.

How many soldiers got injured and died?

There were around 500 to 600 soldiers when we started operations, but the total soldiers who died by landmines, during the attack and got shot were over 200. For the current ongoing attack in Waw Lay, there are only 72 soldiers in our group.

Are there any soldiers who deserted from the army?

Yes, there were four or five or ten soldiers deserted from the army.

Did they desert before or after you?

They deserted before me.

What were your responsibilities when you were in the front line?

I had to fight when I saw [KNLA soldiers] and I did not have to do anything when I did not see them. I had to stay beside an officer as a guard and serve for him.

What is your officer's name?

He is U Than, the battalion commander under Division #66.

What did you have to do when you stayed beside the officer?

I had to massage him. I had to do whatever he asked me to do. If he asked me to go and buy things, I had to go and buy the things.

Did you have to carry your gun when you had to do things, for example when you went to buy things?

No. I did not have to carry the gun.

Did you have to shell mortars or plant landmines?

I did not have to plant landmines, but I had to shell mortars.

Do you know where you had to shell heavy arms from and why did you have to shell?

Why did I have to shell? We shelled when we [the Tatmadaw soldiers] got more injuries while we fought each other. Another one beside me measured where to shell and I had to put the mortars in and then we shelled.

How did you know that the DKBA army was there?

We knew it because they [the Tatmadaw] had a measurement, like using the internet, which can target places. We could see the DKBA army running. We shelled directly at them when they approached to us.

Did your officers tell you that there were villages where you shelled the mortars?

They did not tell us this. It was also very far from villages when we shelled the mortars.

Have you ever been to Palu and Waw Lay?

Yes

Have you ever met villagers there?

Yes

What did villagers do when they saw you?

The villagers fled when they saw us.

Why do you think the villagers ran away when they saw you?

They ran away because they saw us and we were a lot of soldiers. They ran away. I mean they went inside their houses to hide if they were working in front of their houses because they worried that the army would arrest them for porters.

Has your battalion often recruited porters from villagers?

They did not often recruit porters. They recruited porters twice per month.

What did they ask porters to carry?

They asked the porters to carry weapons and rations.

Who was it who demanded the porters to carry that? Did the battalion commander demand porters to carry it directly?

The battalion commander did not demand porters directly by himself, but the sergeant asked the porters to carry.

What did the sergeant say when he directed soldiers to recruit porters?

He told the soldiers that this trip is quite far to go. You cannot carry your bullets and guns. So, go and recruit three or four or five porters from this village. It will be better for you. Then, the soldiers went to recruit porters.

What did your officers tell you about how to treat villagers or porters?

They did not tell us anything about this because when the porters arrived there, they had to do whatever they were asked to do. They also told the porters not to go anywhere and if the porters went out and something happened to them, they would not take any responsibility for them.

Can you tell us a little bit about the two girls who were raped [near Waw Lay village]?

Three soldiers who followed their officer came back and told me that two girls were raped. After they raped her, the girl who was raped by the officer was killed. Her head was cut off. Another girl who was raped by them was killed like this. They did not cut off the girl's head. They stabbed her with a knife. I did not know the three soldiers who followed the officer, but their officer was the sergeant, Soe Than.

How did you know about this information?

His three followers came back and told [the other soldiers]. They, the three of them, raped one girl and their officer raped another girl. I do not know the names of the three soldiers.

What is your battalion?

My battalion is Battalion #202. Our Company Commander is U Than Soe. He is the Commander for Company #1.

When did it happen?

It happened about a month ago.

Where were you when these three soldiers came and told you?

I stayed with Tat Ma [Division] #66. It is based in Way Lay.

Why did they tell you about this case?

They told me because they wanted me to be involved in this crime. But I was not interested in doing it. They thought I would be involved in this case. We got along with each other. They were proud of themselves.

How old were the girls who were raped?

I do not know exactly about their ages. According to them [the soldiers], they were about 18 year old. One of them is 18 years old and another is 19 years old.

How long have you been in the army?

2 years

Why did you desert?

I deserted because I did not know what they have done in the past was right or wrong. I did whatever they asked me to do. However, finally, they became worse and more cruel, slowly and slowly like this. I think back about my group. It became like this. Most are selfish. They think only to get profits for themselves. They do not think to benefit other people. After I thought like

this, I thought back deeply about myself, about what happened to me. I had to eat what others fed me and had to do what others asked me to do. I did not have the same value as a dog. It came to my heart naturally. Originally, I am not the one who is patient about things that are not right. Therefore, I was not satisfied that I had to follow and do things like this. But, even though I am not satisfied, I cannot do anything. So, I deserted.

What are your plans for the future?

My future plans are that I have not had any contact with my parents for two years. I never wrote or sent a letter to them. I do not know where they live and whether they have died or not. I will try to find out a way to contact with them. If my parents are still alive, I want to stay with them together. If they have died, I will seek work and stay alone.

Where will you work?

I will work in Thailand.

How will you contact your parents?

To contact them, I do not have their address and number. Therefore, I will have to find out by myself how to contact them.

Where do you live now?

Currently, I live here.

Are you living in this house?

No. This uncle [another KHRG researcher] called me here.

How many days can you stay there?

I do not know exactly. I am staying there because I cannot go anywhere now. I will go when I can go.

Are you willing to share your experiences with other groups, like the foreigners from the UN?

Yes. I have served for the army. They oppress us according to their positions step by step. Even though they receive things, they do not share and they take for themselves. Therefore, I want to warn those who are under-age not to join the army like me.

Do you want to add anything about the army?

They oppress [soldiers] according to their positions step by step. During the fighting, they left those who died and cured those who got injured immediately. But if those soldiers would die within 10-15 minutes, they will not wait. They will shoot them dead immediately. They killed them like this. It happens every time there is fighting.

Is there anything else that you want to say?

I do not know about other things and I cannot say anymore.

What is your battalion?

It is Battalion #202 under Tat Ma [Division] #66.

What are the names of your commanding officers?

The Division #66 is led by U Than. The Battalion is led by Soe Than. The Company is led by Than Soe. The highest officer for the whole Division is U Than.

Who is your Battalion Commander?

My Battalion Commander is Soe Than.

Who is your Company Commander?

My Company Commander is Than Soe.

What is the number of your Company?

I served for the company #2. My Company Commander is Than Soe. I do not know who else the company commander is. I only know these three officers' names.

Interview | Saw W---, (male, 20) Kaw Lay Lu, La Bpoh Ta, Irrawaddy Division; former soldier with the Tatmadaw, LIB #586 (January 11th 2011)



The photo above was taken by a KHRG researcher on January 11th 2011. It shows Saw W---, 20 years old, a former Tatmadaw soldier with Tatmadaw LIB #586, wearing his military uniform (A31). Saw W--- was forcibly recruited after his parents and siblings were killed in Cyclone Nargis. Saw W--- told KHRG that he had to pay 8,500 Kyat for his uniform and another 800 Kyat for each military badge he wore. Saw W--- also told KHRG that Tatmadaw soldiers currently operating in eastern Dooplaya have been explicitly ordered by their officers to fire against civilians. [Photo: KHRG]

When did you join the army?

I didn't want to join the army. People said they would find a job for me. People went and called me and put me in *su hsaw yin* [army recruitment centre] in 2009.

How old were you when you joined the army?

About 17 or 18 years old.

Do you remember your birthday?

My birthday is January 15th 1991.

What is the month when you were forced to join the army?

On February 22nd 2009.

Did you want to join the army?

No, I didn't want to join.

What happened to you after you joined the army?

After we joined the army, we had to attend the training for four and half months and we became a soldier.

What did they teach you in training?

They taught us military tactics, including how to strip and reassemble guns, and what we have to do when we see our enemy, how to shoot them, how to treat our enemy as the sun and fire [a Karen language colloquialism for mercilessness]. If our siblings or parents are our enemy and if we see them in *sit myan bpyan* [the front line area where the fighting is happening], we have to shoot them to death.

Did they teach you how to place landmines and shoot guns?

They taught us about mines and everything, like how to throw hand grenades. We had to learn how to shoot for a week.

What happened to you after the training?

After four and a half months, we received a private number and we got a salary. [For our salary], we got 35,000 Kyat but we received just 5,000 or 6,000 Kyat because they [higher-ranking officers] cut it off from above.

What is the battalion that you had to go to after you attended the training?

We had to go to LIB #586, under the command of MOC #19.

Where was your battalion headquarters located?

Ye Township in Mon State.

How long did you stay in Ye Township?

I stayed in the Burmese army for two years, including attending the training. I had to stay in Ye for one year and seven and a half months. After one year and seven months, I went back and attended the training again.

When you stayed in Ye, did you stay in the city or outside of the city?

Outside of the city.

What did you have to do when you stayed in Ye?

We had to do every job. We had to bake bricks and do any job. We had to dig [construct] the road and cut fire wood.

Just soldiers did this work or did villagers also have to do this work?

We didn't call villagers. Just we, the soldiers, had to do this work.

Did you ever see the soldiers give trouble to villagers when you stayed in the Ye area?

They did [give trouble to villagers]. When we were on patrols and stayed in a place and if the villagers didn't obey what we said, we beat them, sometimes. Sometimes, when people called us for festival security, if villagers were drunk and caused a problem, we beat them and asked for money from them. Nobody can challenge the army. If people make a mistake, they are beaten. Nobody dares go against them because they have guns. If you go against them, they will shoot you to death. When they [the villagers] get drunk and *yih* [Burmese term meaning when one becomes aggressive while intoxicated], if they don't calm down when the soldiers tell them to, the soldiers punch and beat them and ask them for money. But when the soldiers get drunk and *yih*, nobody can say anything to them because they have guns. This happened in a festival, outside of the city, in a village named Kyon Maw. We had to go and take security for the festival.

Did they call porters, arrest villagers or accuse villagers of being KNLA or DKBA soldiers when they saw villagers on the way?

I didn't see those things happen a lot those days because we stayed behind [not at the front line] and we didn't see those things a lot. But when we were patrolling, if people didn't avoid us, we fined them, and if the cars encountered us, the cars had to stop or go back [the cars could not pass or go in front of the soldiers]. If they refused us, we gave them punishment.

Where did you go after staying in Ye?

We went on patrol. As I said to you, at that time we attended [another] training. I attended the training twice. After twice attending the training, we come for the military operation. We came directly for military operation. We attended heavy weapons training. After that we had to come to the frontline directly. We had to take a rest behind [not at the front line]. We had to work and after that we had to go to the front line.

Where did you have go to the front line?

I came to the front line twice, once at Papun. After the Papun military operation, I came back and took a rest and came to Karen state for military operation.

How long did you have to go for the military operation in Papun?

It took four months.

What year?

In the beginning of 2010. We went on March 31st 2010 and came back in July or August.

Where was your camp located in Papun?

It is the place where our battalion stayed in before. We, battalion #586, went and stayed there. I didn't know the name. I just know they called it *bpyu ha agone* [operation command hill]. We stayed in Papun *bpyu ha agone*. It isn't close to the village. It is a big camp [Tatmadaw military base]. We changed again and again. Another battalion comes when the months for active duty are completed.

Did you experience any fighting when you stayed there?

There was fighting that happened. People, the KNU [KNLA army], came and attacked us. They came and attacked us when we were in camp and when we went out. We didn't see them. They shot us. They shot us and one of our soldiers' hands was cut off [by bullets] and others died and were injured from stepping on landmines.

Have you ever planted landmines?

We can't plant landmines. People will take action against us if we put landmines. We will have to be in prison for three years if we put landmines. So we don't put landmines.

Who gave you that order?

The order came before from higher leaders step by step. The order came from Nay Pyi Taw, step by step. Before, people gave us mines but, in 2010, we weren't allowed to put landmines. We had to put landmines in before. The order came from Nay Pyi Taw and it said that villagers are stepping on landmines and their legs were blown up so the order was given.

Have you ever seen any of your friends put landmines?

People don't stupidly put landmines. We can't put landmines and we were not allowed to carry landmines. We were not allowed to carry landmines when we went to the front line. We were allowed to carry hand bombs [hand grenades].

What about when you lived in Ye?

They don't provide mines to us. If they don't get orders from the leaders above, they don't provide mines to soldiers. They keep mines separately because mines are dangerous for life. They don't allow us to use mines.

Another man interjects: He means the landmine department is different and not related to his responsibility..

The soldiers can't carry landmines. When the time is necessary and it is needed, the people from the landmine department have to come and put landmines and there will be a map of the places where they put landmines.

What was your situation before you deserted from the SPDC army?

On December 3rd 2010, we came to the frontline. We came to the frontline and, on December 10th, at 2:00 pm, people [DKBA or KNLA soldiers] were pulling mines [remotely detonating] and three of our soldiers were hit by the mines. Two got injured and one died. After that, we went to Kyo Gk'Lee village. We went to Kyo Gk'Lee village and we arrived to Kyo Gk'Lee village on

December 14th 2010. We were starving for food for four days. We were starving for food for four days and we arrived to Kyo Gk'Lee. We arrived at Kyo Gk'Lee on December 14th and we ate rice and left the two soldiers who got injured at Kyo Gk'Lee village and we continued our trip to Gkwee Ta Uh village. We had to go and sit at the camp at Gkwee Ta Uh village. When we arrived to Gkwee Ta Uh village on December 14th at 1:00pm, there was fighting happening. People came and attacked us once. The DKBA came and attacked us again at 5:00 pm that same day. After two attacks, we arrived at Gkwee Ta Uh village.

Where did the attack take place?

[The attack took place] 25 miles from Kya In Seik Kyi. It wasn't close to a village, just the road. We left from Kya In Seik Kyi and came up along the vehicle road and it took six or seven days. We were attacked when we arrived at 25 miles.

Why did you desert from the army?

I deserted because I don't like the SPDC. They say something and they do another thing. Their words and action don't go together. Because we are Karen, we don't want to kill Christians and Karen people. We love other people's lives. For the SPDC, they are not like this. They don't care if people live. They say something and do another thing. When we lived in the village and if the Karen army came and attacked us, we had to shoot villagers to death. We had to shoot villagers to death if we see villagers and burn down the village. We can do that because our higher leader gives the order to us. The SPDC doesn't do the right thing, I don't like the SPDC.

Can you explain me again about that order?

Even if the KNU or DKBA come and attack us in village, our leader ordered us, if we see one villager, we have to shoot one and shoot them all to death. After shooting, we burn down the village or shell the village with mortars. If we are taking sentry duty at night, whenever we see anybody, villagers or soldiers, we kill them all. He [the commander] will take responsibility.

Can you tell me again exactly what words your leader uses to give that order to soldiers?

He told it to every one of us. We had to form a line and he told us everything. There are 50 soldiers and we had to form and stand in a line to order us carefully. They will tell you. Our leader gave us the order. If the fighting happens in a village, kill all the villagers in the village, burn down the village, or shell it with mortars. When we are sentries at night, if we see villagers travelling at night, even if we don't know whether they are villagers or not, if we see anyone, shoot them. He will take the responsibility. He said it like this.

Another man interjects: it means they did a roll call [when a group of soldiers are ordered to stand in a line and the commander gives the speech or orders them] and tell the soldiers if you see villagers even in day or night time, shoot them to death. If the fighting happens in the village, burn down the village or shell mortars to the village until the village collapses. Their commander instructs them and calls the roll call. It is like this.

Do you remember the name of the commander who gave the order?

His name is Battalion Commander Naing Myo Han.

When did he give you this order?

I don't remember the date exactly. I can say on either December 16th or 17th 2010. It would be in these two days. I don't remember.

How did your commander give this order? Did he say it to you one by one or to all his soldiers?

He gave this order to all the soldiers at once. There were 50 soldiers, including the commander. So he gave the speech in front of 49 soldiers.

Was it the same in your battalion when you went and stayed in Papun?

Yes. It was the same.

Have you ever heard your commander say those kinds of words before?

Those words, they said when I arrived in Karen State [inaudible] because there was a lot of fighting happening. When we look at the Burmese, the SPDC don't like Karen people. They *kwa t'mu bah* [hate or dislike to the point of not even wanting to look at] Karen people. Even if they see a good Karen person, they say, it is *Nga'Bpway* [KNLA]. They say the Karen children will kill you when they grow up. They say those kinds of words. I don't like them either because there are many good people among the Karen but they said that Karen people are bad people.

Did they say it in front of you?

I heard everything about that. Even if Karen people do a good thing, they don't see it as a good thing; they see it as a bad thing. If I have to say, the SPDC never see that Karen people do a good thing.

Have any soldiers done as they were ordered [shot villagers]?

The fighting didn't happen in the village, it happened outside of the village. People [KNLA or DKBA] shot at us when we went outside of the village. The fighting never happened in the village.

Did you see or hear that the soldiers from your battalion gave trouble to the villagers here?

We were starving and we didn't have rations anymore. We ordered villagers to help us. If they didn't give us, we took by force. When we came up, we couldn't carry the bullets [mortars] so we asked for help from the villagers. If we couldn't [get them to help us], we used our power to demand tractors and we asked them to transport rations and military equipment. Fighting happened [while the villagers were transporting supplies] on December 30th 2010 and one of the villagers was hit with a piece of mortar in his leg.

Do you think he was hit by mortar fired by the SPDC, the KNLA or the DKBA?

I don't know. We shot at each other, *bo naing, bo naing* [gun sound].

Where was the villager staying when he got injured?

He stayed in the middle [of the soldiers]. He was on his tractor. He carried bullets for us. There were our soldiers there and there [gesturing]. He stayed in the middle.

You said you starved for four days when you came up from Kya In Seik Kyi?

Not only four days. From Gkwee Ta Uh to the place where we had to go and send bullets, people attacked on the way and we had to starve for food for the whole week. We just had food for seven days when we came up from Kya In Seik Kyi and it was used up along the way.

When you don't have rations and you order the rations from the villagers, do villagers give them to you or refuse to give them to you?

They dare not refuse. You have a gun and they are afraid that you will shoot them to death. They are afraid of us and they have to give them to us. They gave them anytime when we ordered. They worry that we will shoot them to death. The SPDC army doesn't have ears [they don't listen].

Is this your uniform?

Yes.

Man interjects: you said you have to buy it for 8,000 Kyat.

It was 8,500 Kyat. This badge [gesturing] is 800 Kyat, the other badge [gesturing] is 800 Kyat. They didn't provide the uniform for free.

Didn't they provide you any uniform after you graduated from training?

They gave us two uniforms. The quality and the colour are not good. You have to buy them all.

What do you have to do when you were on the frontline?

I stayed in Company #1. There are five companies in a battalion. We stayed on the front line and we had to take point [go on patrol]. Company #1 had to take point. I didn't have to do anything when I was taking point. I had to examine or research the place.

Did you have to carry a gun also?

Yes, of course we had to carry a gun. How can you go without a gun?

You said you attended heavy weapons training, right?

Yes, I had to attend heavy weapons training to use RPG's [rocket-propelled grenades] and I finished it. I didn't have to shoot heavy weapons when I came here to the frontline. I had to shoot small weapons.

How is your current situation here? Is it ok for you?

Yes, I am happy to stay here. The people don't do anything to us. People welcome us warmly. We stay among Karen people.

What do you want to do for your future plans?

I am arriving to my Karen people and I want to be with the Karen army. I will go back and join my Karen army and fight back against the SPDC. I don't fight ethnicities and religions but I will fight the SPDC. I want to go back and fight back against the SPDC.

Do you have anything else that you still want to say?

No.

Man interjects: Tell them about how people arrested you and how your parents died.

I don't have parents. My parents and siblings died in Cyclone Nargis. [There is] just only me left and I had to join the SPDC army.

Do you still have any relatives in your village?

Yes, I still have in my village.

Do you want to stay in Thailand or go back to your relatives?

I want to fight the SPDC. I will join the Karen army. I will not go back and I can't go back. I will go back and fight the SPDC.

Interview | KHRG volunteer researcher, Kawkareik Township (January 13th 2011)

When were villagers' shelters burnt down?

The shelters were burnt down at 8:30 am on the morning of January 13th 2011.

Where did the Thai Army burn the shelters?

They burnt down the shelters in Oo Kreh Htah, Phop Phra district, Tak Province, Thailand.

Who burnt down the shelters?

It was Thai Army soldiers in uniform who asked people to return.

How many shelters did they burn or did they burn all the shelters?

They did not burn all the shelters, yet. I went to check this case in detail just now, but I saw soldiers standing there. There were one or two Thai soldiers. So, I dare not go there anymore. I passed by [instead].

Did they force villagers there to return?

Yes, they forced villagers there to return, but the villagers did not return so they burnt down the villagers' shelters.

Did villagers dare to go back?

No, they did not dare to go back.

What did they do?

They had to flee and stay separately when their shelters were burnt down. Some villagers moved by cars. They moved to stay in different places. I cannot call some villagers. I do not know where they went to stay.

They had to move and hide separately?

Yes

How many villagers stayed there?

There were over 400 villagers.

Did all of them, over 400 villagers, flee?

Most villagers fled, but I still saw a few families had stayed when I went there.

Interview | Saw M---, Ht--- village, Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District (January 17th 2011)

Amid increasing human rights abuses and threats to physical security, villagers fleeing conflict between DKBA and Tatmadaw forces in eastern Kawkareik Township continue to face obstacles to refuge in Thailand.¹³ On January 17th 2011, KHRG interviewed Saw M---, a resident of Ht--- village who is currently seeking refuge at a location on the Burma side of the Moei River. In his interview, Saw M--- confirmed that many villagers in eastern Kawkareik have fled their homes and their village areas to protect themselves and their families from ongoing conflict. However, many are currently staying along the riverbank on the Burma side of the Moei River, in security, health and living conditions that raise humanitarian concerns, because the Royal Thai Army [RTA] prevents them from crossing to Thailand until shelling or gunfire is audible. Saw M--- detailed the current situation faced by those who can neither return to their homes, nor obtain access to refuge in Thailand. He reported that major concerns among populations currently displaced in eastern Kawkareik are access to medical attention, long-term threats to food security and prolonged disruption to children's education. Saw M--- also described the ways in which some villagers have made arrangements to mitigate interruption to education by providing ad hoc lessons for their children during displacement. The full transcript of Saw M---'s interview with KHRG is provided below.

Our current situation is due to the SPDC [Tatmadaw] army and DKBA fighting. We cannot stay at our village and we have to build huts beside the river and stay like that. Then, we face difficulties to live and eat. We are currently staying on the Burma side [of the Moei River] because the Thai Army does not allow us to cross the river to the Thai side. Therefore, we have to be aware of [monitor] the situation and stay on this side with many difficulties. We are living at the edge of Waw Lay [Moei] River and the weather is cold and unusual. It's likely to rain today because it's not sunny. If it rains, we won't be weatherproof [protected from the weather] because we have only this waterproof canvas to protect ourselves. We'll have to stay in a difficult situation like this.

Can you estimate how many villagers have had to flee from their villages?

As far as I know, there are villagers from K--- Ht---, S--- and T--- villages. I only know these four villages fled and there are around 2,000 - 3,000 people, including children and the elderly, from these villages.

¹³ For more information about specific human rights abuses, security threats and obstacles to refuge faced by civilians fleeing fighting in Dooplaya and Pa'an districts since the current conflict began on November 7th 2010, see "Human rights abuses and obstacles to protection: Conditions for civilians amidst ongoing conflict in Dooplaya and Pa'an districts", *KHRG*, January 2011; "Threats to human rights, obstacles to protection: Conditions for civilians seeking refuge in Phop Phra District, Thailand", *KHRG*, November 2010; "Protection concerns expressed by civilians amidst conflict in Dooplaya and Pa'an districts", *KHRG*, November 2010

How do villagers arrange for students' education?

Before the fighting, we had a primary school in every village. It was run and supported by the villagers. We built the school up to grade four and funded the school materials. Currently, we have called teachers to teach the children, so the children will not waste their time and go here and there. We put a waterproof canvas on the ground and the teacher teaches the children with a blackboard under the bamboo [trees].

What is the total number of students?

There are over 90 students from my village, over 100 students from S---, and over 80 students from K--- village. [Local relief groups] are providing medicine to those who are sick. For the children, they give vaccines and medicine to kill worms [intestinal parasites]. For the rations to eat and shelters to stay under, we've requested waterproof canvases, mosquito nets and blankets. Our village and K--- village already received these, but the rest of the villages have not received them, yet. However, we can't guarantee our lives in the future. We'll find out ways to go to a safe place on the Thailand side, even though it'll be difficult for us to go when the situation gets worse. They [the RTA] told us that we can't cross into their side unless the gunfire and shelling reaches near us. It's difficult for me because they [the RTA] will have to look after us. So, they'll allow us to flee when they hear the gunfire and shelling. For us, we've already fled and moved to a further area [from our village] in order to escape from the danger. Finally, we'll cross when the shelling reaches near us even if they don't allow us to cross. For us, as civilians, we want to stay peacefully. Now, we can't stay in peace. Due to this unsafe situation, we have no land to flee to. We have no land to stay on. We have no food to eat. We're facing the problems and we don't know how long we'll continue facing these problems.

Have you ever encountered when armed groups such as the DKBA, KNLA and Tatmadaw demand villagers to porter or to do forced labour?

There's a little help that we have to give. For example, we have to help them by sending [guiding] them here and there. We can also say we have to serve as a porters because we have to go and send [guide] them and then come back.

Do you have to go and help the DKBA?

Yes. We have to help the DKBA because we're under their control.

Interview | Maung Y--- (male, 32), T--- village, Dweh Loh Township, Papun District (February 2011)

This report contains the full transcript of an interview conducted in February 2011 in Dweh Loh Township, Papun District, by a villager trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. The villager interviewed Maung Y---, a 32 year-old married hill field farmer, who described an incident that occurred on February 5th 2011, in which he and eight other villagers were arrested at gunpoint by Tatmadaw Border Guard Battalion #1013 soldiers and arbitrarily detained. During this time, Maung Y--- reported that they were forced to porter military rations and sweep for landmines using basic tools. He described how one villager

was denied access to medical treatment and forced to porter despite serious illness, and reported that families of the detained villagers were forced to pay arbitrary amounts of money to the Battalion #1013 troops in order to secure their release. Maung Y--- also reported that, after this incident, his village was ordered by Battalion #1013 to produce and deliver 7,000 thatch shingles, as well as to provide four more villagers to serve as porters. In response to this, Maung Y--- reported that villagers had, at the time of interview, refused to comply with these forced labour demands. The following interview was conducted by a villager in Papun District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. It is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.¹⁴ This interview was received along with other information from Papun District, including two other interviews, one situation update and 384 photographs.¹⁵

Ethnicity: Karen

Religion: Buddhist

Marital Status: Married

Occupation: Hill field farmer

How many children do you have?

I have two children.



This photo, taken in February 2011, shows Maung Y---, 32, a married hill field farmer and resident of T--- village, in K'Hter Htee village tract. Maung Y--- told KHRG that he was arrested at gunpoint by soldiers from Border Guard

¹⁴ KHRG trains villagers in eastern Burma 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.

¹⁵ When these documents have been processed and translated by KHRG and when sufficient information has been compiled and analysed, a full Field Report on the situation in Papun District will be available on the KHRG website. Until then, KHRG's most recent analysis of the situation in Papun District, and more specifically, in Dweh Loh Township, can be found in the recent Field Reports, "Southern Papun District: Abuse and the expansion of military control," KHRG, August 2010; and "Southwestern Papun District: Transitions to DKBA control along the Bilin River," KHRG, August 2010.

How old is the oldest one?

Six years old.

Battalion #1013 and detained for fifteen days, during which time he was forced to porter military rations and sweep for landmines. *[Photo: KHRG]*

How about the youngest one?

Two years old.

Do you have any [special] duties in the village?

No, I'm a villager.

As you are a T--- villager, have you ever faced forced labour or arrest?

Yes, the [Tatmadaw] Border Guard soldiers came and arrested us.

When did the Border Guard soldiers arrest you?

On February 5th 2011.

What was the [battalion] number of the Border Guard soldiers?

[Battalion] #1013.

Where were they from?

They were from K'Hter Htee [army camp].

Did they come with a lot of soldiers?

They came with over 30 soldiers.

Who was their leader?

Their leaders were Lieutenants Maung Soe, Khoh Htoo and Gkloh Meh.

Can you tell me about how they arrested you?

They told villagers [to come and work], but the villagers didn't [all come], so they came and arrested people by themselves.¹⁶

Did they ask the village head?

¹⁶ A local villager trained by KHRG to document the human rights situation also reported that in February 2011 Tatmadaw Border Guard Battalion #1013 soldiers arrested villagers in southern Dweh Loh Township to serve as porters, after local community leaders were unable to meet a demand for porters issued by Battalion #1013. The villager reported that Battalion #1013 demanded at least 45 porters from at least 10 villages in the Baw Kyoh River valley. See: "Papun Situation Update: Dweh Loh Township, May 2011," KHRG, August 2011.

First they asked the village head [to send villagers to work], but we couldn't help so they said they'd arrest the villagers by themselves.

Where were you when they arrested you?

When they arrested me I was at home, working. I was taking rice to put it in a rice barn and then when I stepped out of my house they called me [to go with them].

Did they show [point] their guns when they called you [to go with them]?

They pointed their guns at me and said: '*Don't run. If you run, we'll kill you.*' And then we had to go with them.

Did other people run or did they kill anyone?

They didn't kill anyone, but they said they saw people run. They said to the people who were left: '*If you run, we really will shoot you.*'

Where did they take you?

They took us to K'Hter Htee and in the morning we portered loads and went to Mae Bpa [in Bu Tho Township].

Can you [describe what happened] step by step, from the time the Border Guard soldiers arrested you until you came back?

We went [to K'Hter Htee] and they told us: '*You were very disobedient, so we had to go and arrest you.*' They also called us the people of Lieutenant Steel. We had to clear the landmines that Lieutenant Steel placed.¹⁷ When we came back we each had to pay 31,000 kyat (US \$42)¹⁸ [to be released].

Where did you have to start portering loads, and to where?

We started to porter loads from K'Hter Htee to Mae Bpa.

How many days did it take from K'Hter Htee to Mae Bpa?

¹⁷ The interviewee did not provide any further information about 'Lieutenant Steel.' In November 2010, the Mizzima News Agency reported that former DKBA Battalion #909 Commander Lieutenant Saw Steel, who had previously been active in Dooplaya District, had defected to KNLA Battalion #101, which operates in Dooplaya and Pa'an Districts; see: "38 DKBA splinter troops rejoin KNU," *Mizzima News*, November 19th 2010. It is unclear from the interviewee's testimony, however, whether the Battalion #1013 soldiers were referring to the former DKBA Battalion #909 Commander, another specific individual, or making general reference to a Karen armed group such as the DKBA or KNLA.

¹⁸ All conversion estimates for the Kyat in this interview are based on the fluctuating informal exchange rate rather than the government's official fixed rate of 6.5 kyat to US \$1. As of August 31st 2011, this unofficial rate of exchange was US \$1 = 737 kyat. These figures are used for all calculations above.

It took two days.

What kind of loads did you have to carry?

We had to carry oil, chilli, onion, salt, and sweet powder [MSG].

Did the loads include bullets?

No, they didn't.

How heavy was one load?

One load weighed ten viss (16 kg / 35.2 lbs).

Did they give you food while you were portering?

Yes, they gave us food.

How about water?

Yes, we drank water.

How about a place to sleep?

The sleeping place was a little hard. We had to sleep under the huts and on the ground.

While you were portering, if you became sick suddenly, did they take care of you?

We were nine people and one of us had elephantiasis [*lymphatic filariasis*]. He asked permission to go back and we went to plead for them to let him go. We thought that they would give him medicine, but they didn't give him medicine and they also didn't let him go. A T--- villager [and Battalion #1013 soldier] whose name is Saw B--- let him go secretly and he went back to T--- village secretly. For medicine, they didn't give us any because none of us was sick.

Did they punch or hit or beat you and your friends?

We were not friendly with them and we stayed away. If they told us [to do something], we did it. We didn't question anything they said, so they couldn't [beat us].

Did they hurt you?

We didn't get hurt in our group.

When you carried loads did anyone get killed or step on a landmine?

No one was killed in our porter group.

When the Border Guard soldiers came and arrested you, how many people were arrested with you?

Me and eight friends. Altogether nine people.

How many days did the portering take?

It took [around] 15 days.

While you were away, what did your family do?

They could do nothing. They were just looking for us. They couldn't work and they were looking for us. Our wives and women went and paid money for us [to be released].

How much did they have to pay? And if they didn't pay, would they [the soldiers] have set you free?

31,000 kyat (US \$42) [per person], and if our wives hadn't paid we wouldn't have been freed.

How did people do this if they didn't have the money?

They borrowed from their friends.

How did they pay back their friends?

We sold rice and paid them back.

While you were away, who looked after your family, like if they were sick?

They had to look after themselves because no one looked after them.

What were the names of your friends that were with you?

My friends were Saw C---, Saw D---, Saw E---, Saw F---, Saw G---, Saw H--- and Saw I---.

Did all those people come back and did they all have to pay money?

Yes, they all came back.

Did the Border Guard soldiers only arrest people from your village? How about other villages? Did they arrest people from other villages also?

In Pya War, they didn't arrest villagers because the villagers lived near them. So, they ordered them to go [to porter] and they [the villagers] went. They had to go for five days each time.

How did they let you go?

Starting from K'Hter Htee, we had to go [to Mae Bpa] on our own and they didn't go with us. When we arrived back [to K'Ter Htee camp] we had to clear landmines.

How did you clear landmines? Can you explain it to us?

They said: '*The KNU placed the landmines, so you have to clear them.*' After that, they gave us a rake and we started to clear landmines.

Did you get hurt?

No, no one got hurt.

How many days did it take to clear the landmines?

We started from Mae Kae Kyaw in Kho Wah Lay and cleared [mines] to T'Ray Pa Baw. It took two days.

How many people had to go [each] day?

They didn't tell people [to go]. We stayed near them, so we had to [were forced to] go.

Did their soldiers have to clear mines?

Yes, their soldiers had to clear mines.

What would they [Battalion #1013 soldiers] have done if you hadn't gone?

They didn't tell us anything. They ordered us to go with their soldiers, so we went. We had to rake for landmines, and we raked. Furthermore, we also had to cut and sweep [trees and brush] to maintain [clear] a road.

After you had cleared the way, what did they do with the road?

They used it to transport their food [rations] to T'Ray Pa Baw, and then they would cross the river to Noh Day.

While you were clearing the landmines, did anyone get injured by a landmine?

In our group, no one got injured by a landmine, neither villagers nor Border Guard soldiers.

Now, have they already sent their food?

I don't know. When we came back they hadn't sent it yet.

After you came back, did they come and arrest you again?

They said they would come and ask for people. They demanded four villagers [for forced labour] and 7,000 thatch shingles.

Have the villagers already sent the villagers and shingles?

No, we haven't given them yet. We refused to give them [the villagers and shingles], so they said they would come and take them by themselves.

What will happen if you don't give them to them?

This, I didn't ask the village head. We just went and listened at the meeting. We don't know if they will give us problems or not.

[They demanded] 7,000 thatch shingles from the whole village, so how much did you have to give from each house?

They said 50 thatch shingles from each house.

Where do you have to send the thatch shingles?

We have to send them to Baw Kyoh Leh.

What would they [the soldiers] use them for?

They said they would build houses for their families.

Did they pay for the work?

They didn't pay us anything.

How often do they ask you for thatch shingles?

Once a year.

Now, have the villagers or village head had any problems because you haven't sent them yet?

They said the village head had to come to [meet] them because we didn't send the thatch shingles for them. The village head has to go without fail. If the village head goes, I think they will tell him to do something [about the villagers and shingles demanded by Battalion #1013]. Now, they haven't done anything to us yet.

Was it only the Border Guard soldiers that asked or forced you to work? How about the [regular] SPDC Army [Tatmadaw]?¹⁹

Now, we don't hear anything from the SPDC Army, but in the past they asked us. We had to carry water or other things along the K'Hter Htee river bank.

Do the Border Guard soldiers work closely with the SPDC soldiers?

Now, they say they are brothers and work together.

In your point of view, are the Border Guard soldiers becoming the SPDC?

In my point of view, the Border Guards and the SPDC are the same group.

¹⁹ The State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) was officially 'dissolved' on March 30th 2011; see: "Mission Accomplished as SPDC 'dissolved'," Myanmar Times, April 4-10 2011. The term 'SPDC' was used by both the interviewer and interviewee, and is therefore retained in the translation of this interview.

Does the SPDC give them a salary?

Yes, the SPDC gives them a salary.

Is the salary they get enough?

I don't know for an officer. We asked their soldiers, and they said they get 35,000 kyat (US \$48) a month.

Does that include a food budget?

For their food budget, I also don't know. We went and portered with the soldiers. We don't know if they were single or married. They said *'Now we get government money for free, 35,000 kyat per month.'* We heard it, but we didn't care.

Did you suffer [forced labour] yourself or did you see [witness] others suffering?

I suffered it myself. I suffered it with eight other people in my village and other villagers.

Have you suffered only forced labour and demands? How about other things?

We don't see everything, so we can't say. We can only say what we've suffered. For other things [abuses or incidents], if other villagers have [experienced those], our village head hasn't told us yet. Or maybe he will tell us later.

Do you face any problems working on [flat field] farms or hill fields?

We face problems with our paddy plants [rotting].

Are you a [flat field] farmer or a hill field farmer?

I'm a farmer.

Do you get enough food?

This year, we didn't get enough rice because some of our paddy became rotten, because of the weather.

Does only your family have to face this problem? How about other people?

Other people also [face this problem], not only me.

Do you get enough food in your village? Do villagers have to find other food?

They have to find other food, I think. For us, every year we harvest 40 baskets of rice (1280 kg. / 2816 lb.) but this year we only harvested 20 baskets of rice (640 kg. / 1408 lb.). So maybe at the end of the year [before the next harvest] we'll have to find food. Or not. I don't know.

If you have to find food, how will you find it?

We'll look for people who have bigger farms and ask if they have extra [rice] or not. If they do, we'll buy it or we'll borrow it.

Interview | Ma M--- (female, 27), Htee Lone village, Pa'an District (Interviewed in Thailand March 21st 2011)

On March 21st and March 24th 2011, KHRG researchers interviewed Ma M---, a migrant worker in Thailand who had just returned from Htee Lone village in Pa'an District. Ma M--- told KHRG that Htee Lone village and neighbouring communities, including P---, T--- and Y--- villages, had received written letters issued by DKBA soldiers under the command of Na Kha Mway. According to Ma M--- the letters demanded cash payments from the villages, and residents of the receiving communities said that the DKBA unit issuing the demands had threatened to attack and burn Htee Lone and a nearby Tatmadaw camp if the villagers didn't pay. Ma M--- did not see the original letter sent to Htee Lone, but said that sources in Htee Lone, including a former village leader, as well as in Pa'an Town had informed her about the demands. She was told that Htee Lone had been ordered to pay 50 million kyat (US \$56,818). As of March 21st Tatmadaw authorities were not permitting community leaders to collect and make the payment, prompting local leaders and comparatively wealthy residents to avoid sleeping in Htee Lone. Community members also informed Ma M--- that the DKBA had told them to expect DKBA – Tatmadaw conflict in that part of Pa'an District to escalate in the near future, but had not specified when the fighting would increase.

My colleague gave me an update that Saw La Pwe, also called Na Kha Mway, has demanded money from villagers. Could you tell me, when did you get this information?

I learned of this when I went back to my village, Htee Lone village, on March 17th 2011. When I first heard this information, I felt [that news was] strange, but people told me that it was true. They, [DKBA soldiers commanded by] Saw La Pwe [Na Kha Mway], sent letters demanding money from different villages. I just stayed a few days in Htee Lone village, and I could only find out this much.

How did they demand the money?

I heard that they sent demand letters. For that, I wasn't there. On the night of the 17th I arrived in my village, and that evening I didn't know of that [the letters demanding money]. My grandfather told me about this news only in the morning [March 18th]. My grandfather said they can't pay, because it's a big amount of money, 50 million kyat (US \$56,818). This amount, only Htee Lone village has to pay this. There are also some small villages close to Htee Lone [that received demand letters], such as P---, T---, and Y---. These are Karen villages. I don't know all the villages that are close to Htee Lone village. I only know about this village [Htee Lone], because I was there for a short time.

Did you see the [demand] letter that was sent to Htee Lone village?

I didn't see it. The village chairperson kept the letter. I didn't dare to go and ask the village head. I was afraid to do that.

Had the village chairperson started collecting money from the village or not?

They hadn't collected it. The [Tatmadaw] authorities didn't allow them to collect money. But in the village, villagers who are rich, and the village headman and secretary don't dare to sleep openly in the village.

How did this demand spread up to Hlaingbwe [Township, in government-defined Pa'an District, where Htee Lone is located]?

I'm not sure about that. But in Htee Lone, if villagers don't give that money, they [the DKBA] have threatened the villagers, for example that they'll burn down [the camp of] Unit [Tatmadaw Battalion] #203 at Sit Mu Htan Haung. They just said things like that. They [the DKBA] also said there'll be war [an escalation of fighting] but that they don't know the exact date. At first I was surprised about this, but when I asked people I learned about it. In Htee Lone village, they say the same thing [that fighting will escalate].

How do those people know that Na Kha Mway demanded money?

The people who told me about this, I don't want to mention their names. But they're people who support groups that operate in Mae Sot.²⁰ I asked them if they were sure that Bo [Officer] Na Kha Mway demanded money, and they said they were sure. I didn't ask only in one place; I also checked about this when I arrived back in Pa'an [Town]. And Yi--- told me about this, too.

How does Yi--- know about this demand?

Yi--- knows about it because he's a retired village headman [in the Htee Lone area]. They [former village leaders] will know more than me, because I was [only] there for a few days. I also heard that for other villages, they sent demand letters to each household, with exact names [names of the head of each household] on them. Those villages are less strong [smaller than Htee Lone]. It was only for Htee Lone village that they sent just one demand letter for the whole village. Htee Lone is big village. I went back on [March] 17th and came back on the 20th.

Interview | Ma M--- (March 24th 2011)

Where is Sit Mu Htan Haung? Is it in your village?

No, it's not in my village. It's been established for over a year. It's very close to my village. It's beside SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] Unit [Battalion] # 203.

Who stays in Sit Mu Htan Haung?

The retired SPDC [Tatmadaw] and handicapped soldiers [former soldiers who lost limbs or were otherwise seriously injured] stay there.

²⁰ KHRG's researcher that interviewed Ma M--- understood this statement to mean that her sources supported political actors other than the Tatmadaw, and therefore might view DKBA forces currently fighting the Tatmadaw positively in other contexts. According to the researcher, Ma M--- was implying that her sources would not attribute the demand letters to the DKBA unless they were certain that the DKBA had in fact issued those letters.

How far is it from your village?

It takes five minutes by motorbike. In Sit Mu Htan Haung, there are many houses that were built beside the vehicle road. There are 30 houses on one side of the vehicle road. It isn't free to stay in these houses. They sold them to the retired soldiers. It costs 300,000-400,000 kyat (US \$341-455) for each house.

Can you tell me how much money the DKBA army demanded from your village again?

50 million kyat (US \$56,818).

Do you know why they demanded this big amount of money?

I think it's because our village is very big. In other villages, they gave the demand letters to each household and made each demand according to the house. If the house was big, they demanded more money. If this house was small, they demanded less money. Some families had to pay 50,000 kyat (US \$57) and some had to pay 100,000 kyat (US \$114).

How many households are there in your village?

Our village is very big. I don't know the exact [number of] households, but I guess it'd be about 1,000 households. It could be more than 1,000 households, too.

Do you know why they targeted to burn down Sit Mu Htan Haung instead of the village?

They didn't only target to burn Sit Mu Htan Haung. They targeted to burn both Htee Lone village and Sit Mu Htan Haung. I heard villagers there [in Htee Lone] say it was included in the letter that they'd do that.

Do you know why they targeted to burn down Sit Mu Htan Haung?

I don't know why, but I think that retired DKBA soldiers will also stay there. It's a kind of threat.

Can you tell me where Htee Lone village is again?

It's in [government-defined] Hlaingbwe Township, Kayin State.

Interview | Saw No--- (male, 28), Be--- village, Thandaung Township, Toungoo District (March 2011)

The following interview was conducted by a villager in Toungoo District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. It is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.

Ethnicity: Karen

Religion: Christian

Marital Status: Married

Occupation: Hill field and plantation farmer

Position: Village head

How many children do you have?

I have only one child.

How many years have you been a village head?

I'm not [only] a village head. I'm a villager.

As you are village head, what is your responsibility?

As I'm village head, my responsibility is chairperson and networking between villagers and Township. I have to lead the villagers for our country. As the KNU orders, we have to find villagers to help the KNU's need, and if something happens in the village I have to lead them in many ways. If I cannot do it, we ask for suggestions from our KNU leaders.

As you are village head, did you want to become village head or did the SPDC [Tatmadaw] or KNU want you to become?

None of them asked me to become village head. Only my villagers wanted me to become village head.

Can you tell us about the SPDC attacks?

Starting from when I was village head, if we look, the main problem is travelling. If one of our villagers wants to go and buy things in Da---, we have to look at the road situation, like whether we can go or not and then whether the SPDC [Tatmadaw] is active or not. If the SPDC is active we have to stop and find another way. For working, sometimes we don't stay in the village and if the SPDC comes, since I'm village head, I have to suddenly collect [information] and inform my villagers. If it happens suddenly, I have to call my villagers and escape. That is the situation that we have to face now.

You said no one is in the village now, so when did you have to leave your village?

We have had to stay in the jungle since April 1997 and then we came back in 2004. In 2004 and 2005 we ran again. We stayed in the jungle again, until now.

How many households are there in your village?

Now we have 30 households.

How many villagers?

There are 150 villagers in the village now.

What are villagers' occupations?

Now, they are planting cardamom and farming hill fields.

Do villagers have enough food?

No, not enough. They have to go and buy food in Da---.

What do they do if the villagers don't have enough food?

If they don't have enough food, mostly they have to find a way [to survive] by themselves. And some villagers ask for help from their brothers [relatives]. If their brothers have food, they help each other like this. Some of them, if they don't have enough food, they find a way to go to [censored] and do daily work [day labour].

At what time do you get the most money [income]?

We get the most money only during the cardamom [harvest] period.

What kind of problems do you have to face in your village?

The main problem is food shortage, and transport [travel] isn't easy for us also. Because on the way, we have to pass the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] so sometimes when we carry back food if they ask us something, we can't answer them. Sometimes, they ask us '*Who are you carrying this food for?*' and if we tell them it is ours, they don't believe us. That is the main problem for carrying food on the way.

Has the SPDC been to your village?

Yes, they have.

When was it?

In April 1997, they came and burned our village.

Did they burn all of the houses?

Yes, they burned them all, but they left one church.

Have they taken or killed your pigs, chickens, cows or buffaloes and did they pay you money?

Yes, they killed pigs and chickens because when they came we had to run, so we couldn't take our pigs and chickens. They stayed there and the soldiers took and ate them.

Why do food shortages happen in your village?

Because we farm hill fields but don't get enough rice. If we plant cardamom, we have to pay tax in the village and, if we carry it [somewhere] we also have to pay tax on the way, so if we sell cardamom we'll get only half of it [the profit]. We don't have enough money to buy food for a year. The reason why we don't have enough food is that, in the past three years, we farmed hill fields in Wo--- and we had already cleared and burned the wood, and they [hill fields] were ready to plant. When it was the time that we were going to measure the place [for planting], the SPDC Army and the BGF [likely a reference to a non-state armed group with a ceasefire

agreement with the Tatmadaw]²¹ came to the Ga--- area, so we couldn't go and work in our fields because they also walked [patrolled] around in that place. We postponed the time and we didn't farm hill fields and, that year, we didn't get enough food and the food shortage continues until today.

In the past two or three months, did you hear if the SPDC killed people?

Yes.

Where was it?

The western Day Loh area [west of the Day Loh River], in Ba--- village.

Why did they kill him?

I don't know why, but the villager went and collected charcoal. They saw and shot him. I don't know his name. I know his father and we call him [the villager who was killed] K---. His name is Saw Yw---.

How old was he?

He was 42 years old.

What month?

In this month, March, but I don't remember the date.

Can you tell us about the situation in your village and what do villagers do now?

Now in our village, we have to work in danger. Even while we work, we have to listen. At anytime, the SPDC can come and we don't know. We work in the daytime. We're tired, but at night time we have to listen [too]. And if we have to travel, we have to travel in danger. We can't go freely, we have to go secretly. We can't sleep on the way, we worry that the SPDC Army will see us. Even if we can go, we have to go at the time that is safe [when villagers will not be seen by Tatamdaw soldiers]. If we go for one day, we have to arrive [in the same day], and if we have to go for two days, we have to arrive on time. We can't stay safely on the way. Even to work, we have to work at the safe time also. And when it's nearly time to measure [plant] our hill fields, sometimes, the SPDC Army comes and disturbs us. These are the difficulties that we have to face now.

You said just now that in 1997 the SPDC came and burned your village so did it include other villages?

Yes, they burned all of the Day Loh Mu Htaw area [the area east of the Day Loh River]. 16 villages.

²¹ Note that Border Guard Battalions were only officially formed in 2010. Saw No--- therefore was likely referring to a non-state armed group with a ceasefire agreement with the Tatmadaw.

Can you tell us the villages' names?

Ma Bpeh Koh, Gkay Law Kee, Kaw Mu Doh, Gkay Ta Kee, Saw Lu Koh, Leh Koh, Leh Ker Der Tha (also called Leh Ker Der Gkah), Ghee La Kaw, Pah Der Gkah, Paw Mee Koh, Ma Wa Kaw, Thay Yer Yuh, Thaw Kaw Hsaw, Dee Da Koh, Pah Weh.

Do the villagers stay in the villages now?

They all stay in the jungle.

Do you have a school in your village?

No, we don't have one.

Where do the children who are able to go to school go?

Children who are able to go to school have to stay in the jungle. They can't go to the school.

Do the children go to other schools, in Da--- or other villages?

Some children whose parents go and stay there when they are young [go to school in other places]. Now, the children who should go to school have to stay like this. Because of difficulties such as country's situation and food shortages, we haven't had a chance to open a school.

Do you have a clinic in your village?

No, we don't have a clinic.

If people are sick, where do you send them?

We have nowhere to send them. We would send them to the town, but it's also not easy. We have to pass SPDC camps and it's also a long way. Mostly, we can't send them; we have to take care of them as much as we can. Sometimes, they shouldn't die but they do die.

Do you have anyone who understands medicine in your village?

No, we don't have anyone, because most of the villagers are uneducated.

Do you know the number of the SPDC soldiers who killed Saw Yw---?

The SPDC soldiers who killed Saw Yw---, they walked [patrolled] only at night. They didn't walk during the day time. No one was there when he was killed. As soon as they killed him they left. They didn't face us, so we don't know exactly what happened.

Have the SPDC set up their camp near your village?

Yes, in front of the Bp--- area.

Do the SPDC soldiers still stay in the camp?

Yes, they still stay in the camp.

Do you know their Light Infantry Battalion or Infantry Battalion number?

I don't know.

How about SPDC soldiers' movement in your village or in other villages?

In Day Loh Mu Htaw area [the area east of the Day Loh River], in my village a few weeks ago, the SPDC was active and they walked [patrolled] secretly. They didn't face the villagers. Two weeks ago, in this month, they came here and to We--- village. The villagers know their camp, but they didn't meet with villagers. Mostly, the SPDC soldiers walked secretly along the way that we don't know, and when we heard news of them they had already left. That time we were careless and they'll come again. These are their movements.

Can you work smoothly in your village now?

The work isn't smooth. We have to work secretly like this.

For transportation, where do you have to buy food?

We have to buy it in Da---.

How many days does it take?

It takes two days.

How much do you have to pay for one big tin of rice?

We have to give 6,000 kyat (US \$7.45) for one big tin (16 kg. / 35 lb.) of rice.

How about meat, how much you have to pay for one viss (1.6 kg. / 3.5 lb.)?

Pork, beef, and buffalo meat are the same amount. We have to pay 4,500 kyat (US \$5.59) for one viss.

Are things like salt and fish paste staying the same amount [price] as in the past?

Not the same amount. From one year to the next year they become more expensive.

Has the SPDC shot your village with mortars?

No, they haven't. They come themselves.

In Day Loh Mu Htaw, if they see villagers do they kill them or ask them to be guides?

Mostly, if they see us they kill us. They don't keep us alive. If they see us, they see us as their enemy and they kill us.

Is Day Loh Mu Htaw outside SPDC control?

Yes, it is.

Do you see the SPDC comes and makes your village better?

No, nothing.

Why?

Because they see the Day Loh Mu Htaw area as a battlefield. And they keep us and all the citizens as their enemies. Because they keep the Day Loh Mu Htaw area as a battlefield, they don't do anything [to make the area better].

How do you feel about the KNU?

As they lead us and do their work, from my point of view it's good. Because they confront the difficulties that we face, they help us and lead us. For our work, they give us suggestions and security. That is my feeling.

At this time, do you have any problems for travelling?

Yes, we have difficulty. Sometimes, if we want to go somewhere, as I have already said before, if we go we have to know the situation on the way first. In one month, we can't go only one way; we have to go many ways. If the SPDC disturbs [restricts] one way, we have to find another way. Sometimes in the rainy season, there are floods so we have to go in danger. If we want to go, the SPDC knows our way, so they come. Now, in the Day Loh Mu Htaw area the SPDC comes and searches the ways [the paths villagers use to travel], and they see [look for] the bridges. If we hear this news, we don't dare to go so we have to find another way.

Which organization do you hear that [news] from?

Our KNU [KNLA] soldiers give us the information.

Do you want to report anything else that we haven't asked you?

I want to report the information that, in May 2008, one of the villagers who's a girl got injured by a landmine. Her name is Naw Yu---. She stayed in Than Daung, and came back and got injured by a landmine in Gkay Wa Mu Htaw, outside Sho Koh village. Now, she has only one leg left.

How old is she?

She is 28 years old.

Is she staying in Than Daung?

No, she stays in Be---.

Is she a simple villager or does she have any duty?

She is a simple villager.

Who are her mother and father?

I don't know her mother, I know only her father. Her father's name is Saw Ly---. Nothing else, I know only this.

Interview | Naw M--- (female, 24), Th--- village, Than Daung Township, Toungoo District (March 2011)

The following interview was conducted by a villager in Toungoo District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. It is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.²²

Ethnicity: Karen

Religion: Christian

Occupation: Teacher

When they shot your uncle, did he die directly or did he have to suffer?

I didn't see. He didn't die on the way [near the road]. He died beside the tall hill.

Do you know where he died?

I know. In D---.

Did the SPDC [Tatmadaw] eat pigs, chickens, cows, or buffalos when they entered your village?

Yes. When we ran, if you couldn't take [the animals] and left them, they ate them all.

If they came once, how many animals did they eat?

Some animals, they ate them, but other animals, they just killed them. They didn't eat them all. Some animals were just killed.

Do you remember the date that the SPDC killed your uncle?

I don't know because I didn't notice [the date].

You said the SPDC killed two people, Saw G--- and Saw Y---. Why did they kill them?

²² KHRG trains villagers in eastern Burma 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.

No reason. For Saw G---, he went and carried things from Kler La. He was outside the village [on the way back] and he didn't dare to face them [Tatmadaw soldiers], so when they called him and he ran away, they shot him. For my uncle, he fled and thought that they [Tatmadaw soldiers] would take [loot] things from his house, and when he went back [to check on his house], he met them and they killed him. Now, my uncle's son and daughter went and stayed in a refugee camp with their mother.

Do you have a clinic in your village?

No, we don't have one.

Where do villagers go if they are sick?

We go to the KNU office and to the medic.

Did the KNU medic cure you comfortably [was the medical treatment good]?

Yes, they cured us comfortably.

Did they give you enough medicine?

It wasn't enough. If we need other medicine [that the KNU medic doesn't have], we have to buy it ourselves. Other people sell it.

Did you need to buy medicine when you went to the KNU medic?

Sometimes, we got it for free but sometimes we had to pay.

How much did you have to pay for one [dose of] medicine?

For one saline solution, we had to pay 5,000 kyat (US \$6.35).²³

In your village, what is the most dangerous disease?

It's malaria.

What kind of treatment do you use for malaria?

We use Chloroquine [tablets].

How do you feel about the SPDC military government? Can you tell us?

²³ All conversion estimates for the Kyat in this interview are based on the fluctuating informal exchange rate rather than the government's official fixed rate of 6.5 kyat to US \$1. As of July 17th 2011, this unofficial rate of exchange was US\$1 = 788 kyat.

For the SPDC military government they govern us, so they oppress us in many ways such as food and travelling [restrictions]. They disturb us. Furthermore, we can't stay in our place. We want to stay freely but we can't.

Where do you usually escape when the SPDC military [Tatmadaw] comes to your village?

We escape in the jungle but some go to the city [towns under Tatmadaw control]. Mostly, we escape around the village.

How many days, weeks or months do you have to stay around the village when you escape?

At least a week.

At what time do the SPDC [Tatmadaw] usually come to your village?

They usually come in the hot season [February to April].

Why do you come back to your village when the SPDC leaves?

We come back to stay in our house, because if we stay like that [in the jungle] we stay on the ground, so it's uncomfortable. We come back to our homes.

How do you feel when you are displaced people? Tell us all about what you feel.

I've had a lot of suffering, for the place [we live] isn't stable and, for food, also there isn't enough. For travelling also it's not comfortable. If we travel, we always have to listen to [monitor] where the SPDC is. If they stay here [in one place], then we have to go there [a different place]. If we need food, we have to go back and take it from where we kept it [stored secretly outside the village]. When we stay outside [beyond Tatmadaw control] like this it isn't easy if we have to travel. We always have to listen to where the SPDC is and always have to avoid them, because we know that if they see us they'll kill us. For school, in 2006 to 2007, we fled so we didn't study in the school and we had to teach and learn in the betelnut orchard. The place wasn't the same.

What are the effects on family life?

The effects are on healthcare and food because when we stay like this, it's cold and children get sick easily. We have to sleep on the ground, so it's not good.

Does anything change for women's jobs when you stay in the jungle? Like when you stay in the village you have to do one thing, and when you stayed in the jungle you have to do different things?

Yes, when we stay in the village we have jobs to do, but when we stayed in the jungle we didn't have anything to do so we just sat and talked to each other.

How did the women live while staying in the jungle?

I couldn't tell [explain] that.

Do women who are pregnant face problems?

One of my cousins was pregnant and she didn't tell [anyone] so she died while giving birth. [Naw M--- is probably explaining that her cousin's baby was born prematurely, so she didn't have time to make arrangements for assistance with birth].

Did she die outside the village?

She died in the village. There was no one there because we escaped, and sometimes we stay far from each and can't look after each other was and it's difficult. At night time we have to use flashlights, and the way [path] also is difficult and it also takes an hour to go from one house to another house. There was no time, so she died.

Does anything change for women's jobs? Like do they have to do anything that isn't like women's jobs?

Yes. Women's jobs are that they have to stay in the house but [when we stay in the jungle] for finding food, if the men go [then] the women also have to go with them. If the men have to go in danger [then] the women also have to go in danger.

Does anything change for children's lives while they stay in the jungle?

While we stay in the jungle, the children don't study [enough]. They should study, but they don't get enough education.

Do they go to school? Why don't they go to school?

Some go to school but some don't go to school. For some their parents couldn't send them because of health problems.

Do the children have jobs themselves, or how do they feel?

Now, in our village, diseases [illnesses] disturb the children who are studying. Sometimes, bad spirits went inside them and they were unconscious and saw only evil. If they slept, it disappeared but if they didn't sleep the spirits did what they wanted [Naw M--- is probably referring to a Karen animist belief that if children get sick, it is because an evil spirit or ghost took their shadow.] So they couldn't study with their friends.

How about for older people? Has anything changed their lives? Like for elderly people, do they need to work and, if they have to work, what kind of jobs are there?

Some elderly people who don't have children have to work for food, to live.

How do villagers manage their lives when they move their place [flee their village]?

To live and no longer staying under SPDC oppression, we'd [like to] work with KHRG.

While staying in the [hiding] area do you have to plant or farm or anything? Could you tell us about what kind of plantations [crops] you plant?

We plant betelnut and cardamom. If we don't have enough food, we have to buy taro and bananas. For other food, I can't say. For taro and bananas, if we grow them, after one year we can eat them.

How do you know when the SPDC [Tatmadaw] will come?

We know because our KNU gave us the information.

How do you look after and manage yourselves when the SPDC comes to your village?

If we get early information that the SPDC will come, we can prepare our main foods, such as salt and fish paste, and we have to hide some in a safe place.

What do you understand about the word 'IDP' [internally displaced person]?

The SPDC fights and oppresses us, so we become IDPs. They come and destroy our village, our food isn't enough, and our place [village area] also isn't stable, so we become IDPs.

How do you feel when you are an IDP?

When we stay in our village we do what we can do, but when we stay in the jungle we can't work. When we work, if the SPDC hears us, they come and kill us.

How is life different in the village and in IDP sites in the jungle?

When we stay in the village, our work was good. If we have to move to another place again and again, we can't work and our work isn't good.

As you always have to flee, have you ever thought that you've lost your rights?

When we have to escape, we want to go to school but we can't go. For example, if this year we should have gone [passed] to another standard, we couldn't.²⁴

Do you want to change your life, to become developed [get an education] while staying in the [hiding] area? What is your goal to get a better life?

Now our place isn't stable and our education also isn't good, so in the future I thought we'd make it better. If we can stay in our village, we'll build our school as much as we can.

Do you want to go back and stay in your own village?

Yes, I want to go back, and work our own jobs. If we stay in our village it's easier for us to work, but if we stay in another village it's far to go to work and it also takes a lot of time. If we stay near our jobs [workplaces], we can work more. If you stay in another place and you want to work five hours per day, you'll get only two hours.

²⁴ Note that Naw M--- is not explaining that she herself is still in school; rather, she is speaking in the first person provide an example illustrating the situation for children in her village.

What do you need in your village when you go back?

In our village we need security, and the KNU [KNLA] will protect us and take [provide] information for our safety. If they hear information about the SPDC [Tatmadaw activity] they'll tell us.

Did the SPDC ever [try to] forcibly relocate you?

Yes, but we didn't go to that same place. They kept our village as a battle area and told us to go to the peace area.²⁵

Did you think that the forced relocation area was stable, or not?

It wasn't stable.

What did the place that you escaped [from forced relocation to] look like?

If we stay in our place, it's good, but if we stay in the place they force us to move then it's difficult for us.

What do you do when you always have to stay outside of your village?

If we stay in our village, we cultivate hill fields, but if we have to flee or if we stay in another village we have to work with them [the other villagers] and carry things for money.

How did villagers decide they didn't want to go to the relocation area?

They didn't want to stay with the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] and didn't want to help them. They wanted to stay in their country and with their own ethnic people.

Which is better: staying in a relocation area or staying in the fleeing [hiding] area?

If we stay in the village, we can work better. If you go and stay like that, you don't have job so it isn't easy.

How do you want to live in the future? Which organization do you want to govern you?

I want to stay in my village, and I want my ethnic KNU leaders to govern me.

If you have peace in your village, do you think you'll be IDPs?

If we have peace in your village, we won't be IDPs anymore.

²⁵ Villages in mixed-control areas that agree to cooperate with military government demands without going into hiding are called 'peace villages' by the Burmese military, or *nyeín chan yay ywa*; see *Village Agency: Rural rights and resistance in a militarized Karen State*, KHRG, November 2008, p. 118.

How do you understand the word 'peace'?

The word 'peace' means that there's no more enemy oppression, and we stay peacefully. We work and travel independently [freely].

What is needed for there to be no more IDPs?

For there to be no more IDPs, first villagers and the KNU have to work together.

How do you avoid it if the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] is active in your place?

We stay [hide] in the jungle.

What do you know about the SPDC [Tatmadaw] operations?

If the SPDC comes into our village, they'll come and destroy our village, and if they see us they'll kill us. So we have to flee.

How do you go if you have to pass a car road?

If we go, the KNU protects [proves security for] us and sends us.

Do you have communication with other IDPs?

Yes.

What kind of information do you share with each other? How do you communicate to them?

We give them information about food, and the SPDC [Tatmadaw] news, like whether they stay nearby or far away, and whether they'll come [to the village] or not.

Did you sell or buy things [from areas] under SPDC control?

Yes.

What do you need for a better situation?

For a better situation, we need our KNU leaders to govern us. If the SPDC governs us there won't be peace, so our KNU will lead and govern us.

What kind of support would make your situation better?

For a better situation we need our leaders to lead us and to work with villagers, and understand each other. We want our leaders who take security to have contact with villagers, and work in unity to make a better situation.

Interview | Saw B--- (male, 36), W--- village, Thandaung Township, Toungoo District (March 2011)

Below are the full transcripts of three interviews conducted in March and April 2011 in Thandaung and Tantabin townships, Toungoo District by a villager trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. The interviewees described the following human rights concerns: arrest and detention; forced labour, including production of building materials, guide duty, and forced portering, including by children; arbitrary taxation, including for political party membership; movement restrictions, including the imposition of a curfew; theft and looting; and attacks on villagers, resulting in death and injury to villagers. The interviewees also raised concerns regarding: the impact of movement restrictions on villagers' livelihoods; high prices of basic commodities; limited access to health care, including prohibitive costs for villagers with limited financial resources; and disruptions to children's education caused by teacher absences from schools. One villager also explained that civilians who own trucks avoid travelling on the Toungoo to Kler La vehicle road, in order to avoid being ordered to transport Tatmadaw supplies and equipment with their vehicles. These interviews were received by KHRG in May 2011 along with other information from Toungoo District, including: a general update on the situation in Toungoo District, five incident reports, three other interviews, and 700 photographs with researcher notes.²⁶ The following interviews were conducted by a villager in Toungoo District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. It is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.²⁷

Ethnicity: Karen

Religion: Christian

Marital Status: Married

Occupation: Farming cardamom and betelnut

Position: [censored for security]

What did you face when you were [censored for security] in 2008?

The SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] took my house and land. They arrested me and put me in stocks and didn't give me food. Moreover, they beat me.

Why did they arrest you?

They arrested me because they misunderstood me. They said I had contact with KNLA soldiers.

Did they arrest only you?

²⁶ When these documents have been processed and translated by KHRG and when sufficient information has been compiled and analysed, a full Field Report on the situation in Toungoo District will be available on the KHRG website. Until then, KHRG's most recent analysis of the situation in Toungoo District can be found in the recent Field Report, "Attacks on cardamom plantations, detention and forced labour in Toungoo District," KHRG, May 2011.

²⁷ KHRG trains villagers in eastern Burma 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.

No, they didn't arrest only me. They arrested three or four more villagers, including a pastor.

How many times did they arrest you?

The first time they arrested me for four days, the second time for two days and the third time also for two days.

Which MOC [Military Operations Command]²⁸ number arrested you?

MOC #10 Operation Commanders Myint Thein, U Kyaw Myint and Aung Ko Ko Win.

How was it between 2009 and 2010?

Between 2009 and 2010, they asked for two or four villagers to carry things [porter] for them and they forced villagers to go guard their camp. If the water wasn't flowing to their camp, the villagers had to go and carry water for them, including women too.

What was the LIB [Light Infantry Battalion] number?

In 2009, LIB #342 and an MOC were also based in the village.²⁹

What was the Battalion Commander's name?

The Battalion Commander's name was Kyaw Kyaw Hla.

If the villagers are sick, where do they go?

Some villagers go to Than Daung Gyi, close to Payinnaung Army [Tatmadaw] camp, and also to Lo---.

How long does it take if you walk to Payinnaung Army camp?

It takes four hours to walk to Payinnaung camp and, if you walk to Lo---, it takes about six hours. There are two different SPDC Army camps they have.

How much is the cost every time you go?

If we go there, it costs 500 kyat³⁰ (US \$0.64) [to travel on the road].

When they ask you to porter, what do you have to carry?

²⁸ A Military Operations Command (MOC) typically consists of ten battalions. Most MOCs have three Tactical Operations Commands (TOCs), made up of three battalions each.

²⁹ The villager likely means that the commanders of an MOC were headquartered in W--- village with a detachment of soldiers, but not that an entire MOC was based in his village.

³⁰ All conversion estimates for the kyat in this bulletin are based on the fluctuating informal exchange rate rather than the government's official fixed rate of 6.5 kyat to US \$1. As of June 7th 2011, this unofficial rate of exchange was US \$1 = 782 kyat.

We have to carry rice and beans.

Do they pay you?

No, they didn't pay us and, moreover, when the villagers get back home, they are starving and have nothing to eat.

When the villagers go to porter, are women included?

Yes, but not only women. Also children are included. They [Tatmadaw soldiers] don't choose [specify] the ages.

Did you know which month it was?

I don't remember the month but it was in the summer time [the dry season], in December, between January and April, and throughout the summer.

How old was the eldest one who had to go to porter?

The eldest one who had to go to porter was about 60 years.

How old was the youngest one?

The youngest one was about 14 or 15 years old because they can't refuse to go to porter. They have to go.

How about the people who don't go?

Only the SPDC members are left [when porters are called] because they don't need to worry. The others have to worry because they aren't SPDC members and they have to go.

How about in 2010?

In 2010, they killed one of the villagers and, two days later, when we came back from a meeting, we had the order from above. They started to arrest people in the evening and they said that if the [security] situation wasn't good, then they would kill the villagers. They said that in front of us. So, weren't allowed to travel at night time, and if they saw someone travelling at night, they arrested them. In March 2011, they arrested also three villagers.

The three villagers who were arrested by the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw], were they men or women?

They were three men, and their names were Saw Ku---, Saw Ye--- and Saw Ri---.

Are they married?

Yes, they're married.

Do they have kids?

Yes, they do. Saw Ku--- has one kid. Saw Ye--- has two kids. His eldest one is four years old and the youngest one is one year and five months. Saw Ri--- has three kids. His eldest one is 15 years old, and his youngest one is nine years old. But the eldest one isn't married yet.

What is their occupation?

They work on betelnut plantations.

Where did they arrest them?

They were arrested on the road, at the time when they were walking to their betelnut plantations.

Did they abuse them?

No, they were arrested to be guides.

You are [censored for security] so do you have to porter for the SPDC Army?

Yes, I also have to carry things for them if we don't have enough people.

When were you forced to porter by the SPDC Army?

We have been forced since 2006 by the Military Operations Command (MOC) [*MOC number not specified*]

How many of the villagers from your village were forced to porter?

Eighty of the villagers had to carry things from Di--- to Lo---. It took three days and we had to sleep on the way. In July and August 2010, the situation was getting a little bit bad. When the villagers went and sold things near the Payinnaung Army camp it wasn't too far. It only took 40 minutes. There were some villagers who slept in their betelnut plantations and, when they slept there, the SPDC [Tatmadaw] soldiers came to loot, and they shot one woman in her leg. She's over 50 years old. In the morning they took her to hospital and gave her 30,000 kyat (US \$38). Her name is Naw W---. She lives in Da--- village in [*location censored for security*] and her age is 55 years.

Is she married?

Yes, she is.

How many children does she have?

She has seven children. The eldest one is 38 years old and the youngest one is 12 years old.

What's her occupation?

She farms a betelnut plantation. At the time she was shot, at about 8:00 pm, she was going to sell a little bit of *koh kyao* [a hand-made fried snack] and the SPDC soldiers came and shot her.

What is the MOC, LIB and Battalion Commander's name?

MOC #7, LIB #421, and the Battalion Commander's name is Khaing Lhin. The soldier Daik Khaik Yay who did the shooting is from Payinnaung camp and also from LIB number #421.

Did they help the woman they had shot?

They didn't help her, they just took her to hospital but didn't give her food. People [other villagers] had to bring food for her.

Did she get any support?

No, she didn't get any support.

How far is it between Da--- and the place where she was shot?

It's about 30 minutes.

About 30 minutes?

Yes, 30 minutes.

Did she die?

She didn't die but she got shot in her leg. Now her leg isn't good anymore and she can't walk properly as normal.

Were there any others killed?

In our village there were no others killed. On the road they've killed two or three people but I don't know when exactly it happened. We don't know about the future yet. In 2011, they set up many different political parties [political parties have become active]. The Karen People's Party (KPP) asked for money. We have to pay these parties as they want. To become a party member you have to pay 1,000 kyat (US \$1.28) for each person and you can't refuse to pay. We aren't sure whether the payment for party membership is 1,000 kyat for one month or for one year. The KPP party and *Ta Sa Nya* [National Unity Party] are also SPDC members. All of them are the same. They ask for a lot of money and we can't refuse to pay them. This taxation causes a lot of problems for villagers. We don't have *twet pout* [a way out]. A Commander of LIB #473 in MOC #9 warned the villagers: "*You are both Karen people [villagers and KNLA] so if you see [meet with] each other in the village, we'll shoot you all.*" We don't know how to live in the future. Our basic necessities are disappearing and we've faced a lot of problems from that. Each day we aren't allowed to go to our plantations freely. So there's no guarantee for the security of our lives and we can't go to our plantations as we want. We're living without hope. If they see us on the way, they arrest us. Or if they want to kill us, they kill us, so our villagers are living in fear.

Do you have a school in your village?

Yes, we have a school.

How many standards does it have?

It has four standards.

Who supports the school?

The school is supported by villagers, and after primary school they have a government high school. Between 2007 and 2008 they have [started] Jo--- school [a school in Jo--- village].

Do they teach the Karen Language?

No, they don't teach the Karen Language.

Where are the teachers from?

Three of the teachers are from another area.

How much do they earn per month?

They're government members, so they earn over 30,000 kyat (US \$38). Primary teachers earn over 30,000 kyat, and high school teachers earn 40,000 kyat (US \$51).

How many students do they have in school?

They have 140 students.

How much does each student have to pay for school fees?

They have to pay for books and other things. They have to pay 50,000 or 60,000 kyat (US \$64 – 77) per year but it depends on the standard.

Do the students have a good chance to learn?

They don't have a good chance to learn, because the teachers don't come to school every day.

How many teachers do they have?

There are seven teachers.

How many male teachers do they have?

They don't have male teachers, only women.

Do the students get any support, like for book fees?

No, they don't get support and if any of the students don't pay school fees, they aren't able to go to school. We have to help them ourselves.

How about children whose parents can't send them to school?

Children whose parents don't have money to send them to school become uneducated. They try to go to school but the teachers shout at them because they don't have money. [Then] they're shy and don't dare to go to school again.

Do they have a clinic in your village?

No, they don't have a clinic.

How about if someone gets a bad flu?

If someone is very sick we carry and take them to Than Daung Gyi Town, Toungoo District.

How long does it take you to walk between Than Daung Gyi and your village?

It takes us about three or four hours to Than Daung Gyi from my village.

What kind of common diseases [illnesses] do the villagers get?

The common diseases are malaria and cancer. For cancer, they don't have money to cure and pay for cancer operations, so a few of the villagers have died. One cancer operation costs millions and millions of kyat.

Are villagers able to work smoothly [without difficulty]?

The villagers aren't able to work smoothly because we have to go in the morning and come back in the evening on time [before curfew], but if the soldiers see us on the way they arrest us or kill villagers so we can't go to work smoothly.

Where do you buy rice from?

I buy rice from Da---.

How much do you pay for one milk tin of rice?

One big tin of rice (16 kg. / 35 lb.) costs 18,000 kyat (US \$23), but in my village it costs 25,000 kyat (US \$32). It's poor quality rice.

How about meat? How much does one viss (1.5 kg. / 3.5 lb.) of pork cost?

Now, one viss of pork costs 4,500 kyat (US \$5.75).

How about chicken?

One viss of chicken costs 6,000 kyat (US \$7.67).

Has SPDC Army had any development project for the village?

[There are] no development projects. Moreover, they come and destroy [our] village and threaten villagers. Before we lived and went [worked] smoothly and freely. Then they came and threatened us, and now we see they only destroy things.

How do you view the Karen National Union [KNU]?

We see KNU as being for the protection of Karen people. The KNU and KNLA are our Karen people's protection. We don't have freedom yet. To get freedom, the KNU are still struggling and resisting. The KNU revolt for democracy, and we see that all the SPDC Army officers who run [desert] to them aren't killed but are relieved [of their duties]. It isn't that we are blindly proud of our people [the KNU], but they truly struggle for democracy. They know how to adjudicate and who should be punished or not punished. They have a sympathetic heart. They know villagers have to work for themselves so they don't disturb villagers and, because of this, we are proud of our people [the KNU]. They try their best to resist and get independence for our Karen people.

Do you have any other things to say?

I don't have anything to say, but I 'm happy to see KHRG members come and visit us. In the future, if possible, we hope that KHRG will come and visit us once or twice a year to share our suffering. We want to work for our rights. We'll struggle to express our rights and achieve our hopes and the freedom that has been lost.

Interview | Saw F--- (male, 40), M--- village, Thandaung Township, Toungoo District (March 2011)

The following interview was conducted by a villager in Toungoo District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. It is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.

Ethnicity: Karen

Religion: Christian

Marital Status: Married

Occupation: Farming hill fields, cardamom and betelnut plantations

Position: Village head

What is your name?

My name is Saw F---.

How old are you?

I'm 40 years old.

Which village you live in?

I live in M--- village, Thandaung township, Toungoo District.

How many children do you have?

I have six children. The eldest is 15 years old and the youngest is two years old.

How many years have you been village head?

I've been village head for 10 years.

What is the village head's duty?

The duty is to work for the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw].

How did you become village head? Did you want to be, or did the SPDC force you to be?

I didn't want to be the village head but my villagers asked me, and I accepted because I love my villagers.

Can you tell us about your experience being a village head?

A Village head faces a lot of problems from the SPDC Army.

What do they call your village's name?

They call it M---.

How many households?

There are 53 households.

How many villagers do you have?

We have over 200 villagers.

What were villagers' occupations?

Some villagers are farming hill fields and some are farming plantations.

Do villagers have enough food?

No, some don't have enough and they have to find food day by day.

What do they do when they don't have enough food?

They have to work for daily wages [perform day labour].

Do they have any other income?

They hope [try] to sell betelnut and cardamom for their income.

How long has your village been set up [established]?

The village has been set up since before I was born.

Has this village faced any problems?

We've faced so many problems from the SPDC [Tatmadaw] we can't report them all.

Has the SPDC attacked your village?

From 2006 to 2010, the SPDC Army came and based their camp in my village.

What does the SPDC Army do when they come to your village?

When the SPDC Army comes to the village they ask for many different kinds of food. Basically, they asked for chillies, salt and sweet powder [MSG].

Have they hurt villagers?

They didn't hurt the villagers but they did threaten the villagers.

Did they take buffaloes and cows when they entered the village?

Now, not anymore. But in 1997, 1999 and 2000 they took [villagers' livestock].

Have they ever killed villagers?

In 1990, they killed two of the villagers.

What were these two villagers' names?

Their names were Saw Khu Htoo and Saw Kee Poh,

How old were they?

Saw Khu Htoo was 20 years old and Saw Kee Poh was 16 years old.

Were they married?

No, they were single.

Why did the SPDC Army kill them?

The SPDC Army killed them because they escaped from forced labour. Sometimes the SPDC Army asked for forced labour but some villagers run away and don't go as they order. They [Saw Khu Htoo and Saw Kee Poh] only ran away for a few days and when they came back to the village the Army shot them.

Where were they killed?

They were killed beside their village.

What was the battalion's name [number]?

The Army battalion unit was [Infantry Battalion] 48.

What was the battalion officer's name?

The battalion officer's name was Khin Maung Soe.

Have you carried things [porterred] for the SPDC Army?

Do you mean this year?

I mean, in 2010 have you gone to carry things for the SPDC Army?

We had to go two or three times, around September 15th 2010.

Where did the villagers have to start carrying things?

They had to start carrying things from Ko Day to the army camp [*camp name not specified*].

How many villagers had to go?

The first time, 12 of the villagers had to go and the second time 16 of the villagers had to go.

How old was the eldest person who carried things for the SPDC?

The eldest one was 57 years old and the youngest one was 15 years old. They [the youngest porters] had to go instead of their parents because their parents weren't available to go.

How heavy were the things they had to carry?

Men had to carry 15 bowls of rice (23.45 kg. / 51.58 lb.) and women had to carry 12 bowls of rice (18.76 kg. / 41.26 lb.).

Was there any fighting when you went to carry things?

There was no fighting because we went by ourselves.

Did you get any payment when you went to carry things?

No, we didn't get paid.

Did you face with any SPDC Army force [pressure or abuse]?

We're always facing force from the SPDC, and we have to go whenever they ask us to go.

In 2011, did you go to carry things for the SPDC?

In 2011, we were forced by SPDC Army MOC #8 [probably MOC #9] under Operation commander U Myo Hla.³¹

³¹ Note that KHRG's most recent information, based on multiple accounts from other villagers in Toungoo, indicates that MOC #9 rotated into Toungoo District in 2011 and that MOC #8 is not currently active in Toungoo District. See: "Toungoo Incident Reports: March and April 2011," KHRG, May 2011; "Toungoo Situation Update and Interviews, May 2010 to January 2011," KHRG, May 2011.

Do they abuse the children if the children are tired and can't continue to carry things?

The women and children can't carry things but they still have to carry on. We have to help the old people who can't carry the things, because we go by ourselves.

Did they force the villagers to carry things in 2011?

Yes, we had to go once in 2011.

When was it?

It was on March 23rd 2011.

Where did you have to carry things?

From Dy---.

From Dy--- to where?

From Dy--- to Th'Ay Hta.

What did you have to carry?

We had to carry rice and oil.

How many villagers did they ask for?

They asked for 30 villagers.

Were women included when you went to carry things?

Yes, women were included.

How many women were included?

There were 10 women.

How many years [old] was the oldest one?

The oldest one was 40 years old.

How old was the youngest one?

The youngest one was 15 years.

Do you know the battalion name and the commander's name?

The battalion [unit] number is MOC #8, and the Operation Commander is U Myo Hla.

How many hours did it take to carry things to the army camp?

From Klaw Mee Der to the army camp we had to walk along beside the road, so it took three days. We had sleep in Dy--- one night and then come back to Klaw Mee Der.

How about the food for villagers to eat during their trip to carry things?

We had to bring our own food.

Did they ask for food from the villagers?

If the any of villagers' houses have good curry, they come and eat with the villagers.

When was the last time you had to carry things for the SPDC Army?

The last time we carried things for them was on March 23rd 2011.

Do they have a school in your village?

Yes, we have a school but it is an SPDC-supported school.³²

How many standards do they have?

They have only four standards.

Where are the teachers from?

One teacher is from Toungoo, and he was sent by the SPDC.

How many teachers do they have in the school?

They have two teachers.

How much do they earn per month for their salary?

The SPDC pay them 20,000 kyat (US \$26) per month.

Do the children get anything free from school?

No, they have to buy everything on their own.

How much do they have to pay for school fees for each student?

Each student has to pay 500 kyat (US \$0.64).

³² The State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) was officially 'dissolved' on March 30th 2011; see: "Mission Accomplished as SPDC 'dissolved'," Myanmar Times, April 4-10 2011. The term 'SPDC' was used by the interviewee, and is therefore retained in this translation.

Are they allowed to teach Karen Language?

They don't teach Karen Language because all the teachers are Burmese.

Do the students learn smoothly [without interruption]?

The teachers don't come to school every day, and they say they have to go for training then they disappear. So the students don't have a chance to learn smoothly.

Do the SPDC or KNU [KNLA] soldiers ever come and destroy the school?

We don't see any KNU or SPDC soldiers come and destroy anything. The SPDC said they would come and develop the school, but they've never come to develop for us.

Do you have a clinic in your village?

We don't have a clinic or medicine in our village.

Does the military government help villagers when they are sick?

The military government doesn't help. If we're sick we have to go and cure ourselves.

Where do villagers go when they are sick?

When the villagers are sick they go to Kler La village.

How long does it take to get to Kler La?

It takes two and a half hours.

What kind of common diseases [illnesses] do the villagers face?

The common disease we're always facing is malaria.

Do the villagers get any help when they go to hospital?

They don't get any help and they don't have money, because they're daily workers. If they are sick they have to borrow money from their friends and go to the hospital. If they borrow 10,000 kyat (US \$13) they have to pay interest of 500 kyat (US \$0.64) for one day and if they take money for two days they have to pay 2,000 kyat (US \$2.56) interest.

Are villagers able to work smoothly [without interruption]?

If the SPDC comes and asks villagers to carry things we can't work smoothly.

How much is the cost of a big tin of rice (16 kg. / 35 lb.) in your village?

One big tin of rice in my village costs 10,000 kyat (US \$13).

How much does one viss (1.6 kg. / 3.5 lb.) of meat cost?

Pork and beef are 5,000 kyat (US \$6.39) for one viss.

How do you feel about the KNU?

We do not think there's anything wrong with the KNU.

Can villagers travel along the way [road] between Toungoo and Kler La smoothly [without difficulty]?

On the way between Toungoo and Kler La village, villagers can't travel smoothly because the SPDC Army restricts villagers who travel.

Do they have to pay at checkpoints?

We have to pay 500 kyat (US \$0.64) for each checkpoint.

How many checkpoints do they have in Toungoo [District]?

They have seven checkpoints.

Can trucks travel?

The trucks can't travel. They use only motorbikes.

Why don't trucks travel?

Because the villagers are afraid they'll be forced to go to the front line for the SPDC [carry military equipment and supplies with their trucks] so they don't dare to travel by truck.

Because the trucks don't travel, what problems does it cause for the villagers to be able to buy food?

Because trucks are not travelling, the price of rice has gone up. For one bag [sack] of rice (50 kg. / 110 lb.) it's 25,000 kyat (US \$32). But before when the trucks were travelling, it was only 20,000 kyat (US \$26) for one bag of rice in Kler La village.

How much is the price of rice in your village?

In my village, it's 30,000 kyat (US \$38) [for a sack of rice].

Can the motorbikes come to your village?

The motorbikes can come to my village.

How much is the motorbike taxi fee from your village to Toungoo [Town]?

From my village to Toungoo the price for a motorbike taxi is 15,000 kyat (US \$19).

Because the trucks aren't travelling, does the SPDC Army ask for motorbikes to carry things for them?

In March 2011 the motorbikes had to carry things from Kler La to Dy---.

How many motorbikes did they ask for?

Five motorbikes had to go from M--- village. Each motorbike had to carry three bags [sacks] of rice.

Did other villages have to go?

Yes, there were four other villages that had to go: Sa---, Ka---, *[other two villages not audible]*.

Did the villagers get any payment for the motorbikes?

The villagers didn't get any payment, but the SPDC Army filled the petrol for the motorbikes.

How long does it take from Dy--- to your village?

From Dy---, we arrived home at about 11 am to 1 pm *[the time at which villagers left Dy--- was not specified]*.

Do the motorbike drivers face any problems along the way?

Motorbike drivers don't face any problems, because sometimes they're given a [travel] permission letter for security.

When did they ask for motorbikes to carry things for them?

They asked for motorbikes to carry things for them on March 15th 2011.

Do you have anything [else] to mention?

The last thing I want to say is that in 2011 the SPDC Army killed one villager.

What was his name?

His name was Saw To---.

How old was he?

He was 40 years old.

What was his occupation?

His occupation was farming hill fields and cardamom and betelnut plantations.

Was he married?

Yes, he was married and had three children.

How old is the oldest child?

The oldest child is seven years old and the youngest one is two years old.

Where he was killed?

He was killed beside Kler La village.

When did they kill him?

The SPDC Army came and looked around Kler La village, and saw him and killed him. But no one knew until two weeks later, when the villagers saw his dead body. We went and saw it was him.

Which Army battalion [killed Saw To---]?

We didn't know, but in January one of the [Tatmadaw] army units came to Kler La village and the number of that battalion was LIB #375, but I don't know the MOC number. I'm not sure if it's MOC #9 because when we went we saw that the symbol they wrote on their car was only LIB #375.

Did the SPDC Army help his family?

The SPDC Army didn't help his family. Moreover if we went and asked them, they would hurt us. The villagers are living in fear.

Does his oldest child go to school?

Yes, he's still going to school.

What problem did she [Saw To---'s wife] face after her husband passed away?

She faced a lot of problems for how to take care of her kids. She struggles for each day because she has to work very hard in her daily work.

Do his children have a chance to study smoothly?

Only his oldest child goes to school in Wi--- but the others don't go to school yet.

Who did you report to when the SPDC Army killed the villager?

We don't know where to report to or who we should report to.

Have they killed other villagers?

No, they haven't killed any other villagers yet.

Lastly, do you have anything else to report?

The last thing I want to report is about our livelihoods and how we're struggling for each day. We hope our leaders above will help us.

Interview | Saw W--- (male, 54), Dt--- village, Thandaung Township, Toungoo District (April 2011)

The following interview was conducted by a villager in Toungoo District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. It is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.

Ethnicity: Karen

Religion: Christian

Marital Status: Married

Occupation: Hill field and plantation farmer

How many children do you have?

I have only six children.

How old is your oldest child?

24 years old.

How old is your youngest child?

16 years old.

How many households in your village?

There are 58 households in the village.

How many villagers in your village?

There are 380 villagers in the village.

What is the most common job in your village?

The most common jobs are farming [hill fields], plantations, betelnut and cardamom orchards.

Do villagers get enough food?

Some people get enough food but some don't. The reason is because some people have small children or are sick, or have a lot of children, so they are not free to work, so it becomes a problem.

For people who don't get enough food, what do they do?

Some work for rich people, some carry things for money and some go to their siblings or relatives and they help them. But at end of the year, they have to pay it back.

In your area for people who porter [as day labour], how much money do they get for [carrying] one viss (1.6 kg. / 3.5 lb.)?

It depends on the loads. They get different payment for heavy loads and light loads. We carry things starting from our village to Da---. One viss is 200 kyat (US \$0.25). Some help each other like when we carry betel leaves. If we get 1,000 kyat (US \$1.24) we share it with each other, like you take 500 kyat (US \$0.62) and I take 500 kyat. We help each other like this.

How many days does it take from your village to Da---?

It takes one day: one day to go and one day to come back.

In the cardamom [harvest] period, how much do you have to pay for one viss?

It depends on the situation. If you want to sell quickly, the payment is different than if you want to sell slowly. It might be 300 or 400 kyat (US \$0.37 – 0.49) for one viss.

What time do you get the most money [income]?

We're hill people so we get the most money during the cardamom [harvest] period. The time that's helpful for us is the cardamom period.

How long has your village been established?

It has already been established for 100 years.

What kind of problems do your villagers have to face?

The problems that our villagers have to face are, as I already said, If we want to go and sell things in Da--- but the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] stays there, we don't dare to go. When we go, if we hear the SPDC Army is coming there, we have to go back to our village. When we want to go and sell betel leaves or betelnuts, but then we have to leave and go back to our village, it's difficult for us.

Has the SPDC Army been to your village?

Our village is close to the Day Lo Mu Nuh area [the area west of the Day Loh River] so the SPDC Army always comes to our village [which is located east of the Day Loh River, in the Day Lo Mu Htaw area]. Sometimes, we don't know ourselves. When they arrive, we have to run and escape.

Now, do your villagers stay in the village or in the jungle?

Not only my village but also all the villages which are in the Day Lo Mu Htaw area have to stay in their orchards or huts or in the jungle.

In the past, has the SPDC Army ever come and burned your village?

Yes, it has.

When was it?

On April 27th 1997, they came and burned our village. After burning it, we didn't know ourselves. Some of the villagers who were in the front of the village when they heard the SPDC [Tatmadaw] coming could escape but for those who couldn't escape, they tied them up and put them under the church. After they put them there, they started to burn the village. And the villagers looked at their houses burning and cried. Moreover, they called the villagers to go with them, including all the men and women and, when they arrived in Koh Der Ka village, they killed two or three of the villagers. Some had been beaten and when you saw their faces, you couldn't recognize them. You looked at their head and you would think it was a ball, and some were killed. For the women, they raped them. This is our villagers' suffering. They [the Tatmadaw soldiers] went back and we thought that it was already finished. In two or three years, we came back and re-established our village. In a short time, they came again and burned it again. We escaped again and we stayed like this and thought that it [the situation] would be quiet. But in 2009, they came and set up their camp in our village, which is Dt---. There was no one in the village so they cut all the plantations like the coconut trees, the durian trees and the betelnut trees. For the church, I thought they would respect it and not do anything, but they took all of the roofing that was made of zinc and used it for their fence and brought it to their camp. There is no church in our village now.

How many soldiers do you think?

When they first came and burned the village in 1997, it was Battalion #20 under Western Command. Their Battalion Commander was called Lay Htay and their Column Commander was called Myin Thah. In 2009, they came and stayed in the village and it was Battalion #636 which was from Chin State.

Are the soldiers still there now?

They already went back.

Do they still have their camp in your village?

They still have their old camp but they [Tatamdaw soldiers] are gone.

When did they leave your village?

In December 2009. They stayed in our village for one year and, in November, they went back.

Where did the villagers live when the SPDC stayed in the village?

Some villagers went to the Day Lo Mu Nuh area [west of the Day Loh River], where the villagers didn't have to move away, and some went to Da---. For single people, they stayed beside the village in their orchards, secretly.

Could you tell us about what you felt when the SPDC soldiers stayed there at that time?

When the SPDC soldiers stayed here, we had to face work problems and our lives also became difficult, because our villagers could go and work only for cardamom [villagers could only cultivate cardomom for their livelihoods]. And then they came they destroyed our plantation land and burned our cardamom orchards. Our villagers who stayed around their camp, we thought

we would go and work secretly but we worried that they would go around [patrol] and see us and then kill us. Those were our work problems.

When they stayed in your village, if they saw they would kill you?

If they saw us they would kill us, so our villagers didn't dare to face them [the villagers hid from the Tatmadaw soldiers].

Two or three weeks ago, did you hear if the SPDC killed people?

Yes, in the past in March 2011, one villager who is from Ba--- village, named Saw Yw--- and we also called him K---. He went and collected charcoal with his daughter. He said to his daughter, '*You go back first and, in two days, if I don't arrive home, come and look for me.*' After he talked to his daughter, his daughter came back. In two days, he didn't arrive so his daughter went and looked for him. She didn't see her father; she saw only saw SPDC [Tatmadaw soldiers'] footprints. She is a girl; she didn't know exactly what happened so she went back and told her uncle who is Saw Y---'s younger brother. After that Saw Y---'s younger brother came and looked carefully and saw that the SPDC had buried his brother Saw Y--- but not carefully so that his leg appeared [protruded from the soil]. He knew that the SPDC killed his brother. After that, he called the villagers, and they buried him again.

Before the SPDC killed him, did they ask him any questions?

When they killed him, we don't know whether they asked questions or not, because we didn't see it.

In the past or now, have the SPDC raped girls or taken villagers' things without giving money?

In the past, they raped the girls as I have already reported. They captured people and, for boys, they killed them but for girls, they called them to go with them and then raped them. For the girls, they couldn't do anything so they had to suffer it. For the boys, if they could escape they were free but if they couldn't, they were killed.

Can you explain us about SPDC oppression for villagers and citizens now?

The SPDC talks only about developing the country, but we see they do [act] another way. As I have already reported, they came and took our land, burned our orchards and plantations, took our church roof and took it to their place [camp]. Those are our problems that we have to face now. And if we want to worship, we have to worship under the trees or bamboo.

Now, are all the villagers not staying in the village and just staying in the jungle?

Yes.

Do you have a school in the jungle?

No, we don't have one. Children who should study have to stay in the jungle and have no chance to go to school.

Why don't children go to school when they should go?

Children should go to school but they don't because, as I have already reported, it isn't easy to get together, have a teacher and build a school. We stay in different areas and it isn't easy to get together. To find a teacher also we don't have any money to hire them, so that is our weakness.

Because of who?

Because of the SPDC military [Tatmadaw]. They came and destroyed our plantations and it isn't easy to get together with others. If they didn't come, we'd get together and we could find a teacher to teach. And then we could build our school. If they didn't come it'd be easy for us but because of them it has become difficult.

Do you have a hospital [clinic] in your area?

No, we don't have one.

If someone gets a serious illness where do you send them?

We don't have anywhere to send them. We help them as our grandparents have already taught us. But if we can't help, we just leave them to die.

Is it easy to bring medicine to your village?

It isn't easy to bring medicine.

Why isn't it easy? Who restricts it?

It isn't easy to bring, because the SPDC Army is disturbing us.

What will they do if they see you bring medicine?

If they see we bring medicine, according to their orders, they won't allow us to bring medicine, salt, fish paste and rice. For salt and fish paste it's a little easier, but for medicine, wire and batteries, they've made a martial [security] law so we can't live.

Does your work go smoothly when you stay in the jungle?

Even when we stay in the village our work isn't smooth, and it becomes worse when we stay in the jungle and it's difficult for us. Nothing goes smoothly. If we want to go and buy [something] in Da---, we have to go secretly on the way [path] that they [Tatmadaw soldiers] don't know.

You said it takes two days to go to Da---, so if you sleep in Da--- do you need to apply for the *eh sa yin* [overnight guest list]?

Yes, we have to apply for *eh sa yin*. For Da---, the SPDC chairpersons [village leadership], they understand us. They know we are Karen so we have to work with understanding. There is no need [for us to register for *eh sa yin*] and if they really check registration, the village head has to inform us and then we have to hide. Because we are Karen, we understand each other so that it isn't a problem. But when we go back on the way [path], they don't take responsibility [for us].

Do you have to pass any SPDC gates [camps or checkpoints] between your village and Da---?

Yes, we have to pass By--- camp. Now it's the dry season and their camp is on the top of the hill. For carrying water, if villagers pass their camp they call them and ask them to carry water, and after that they let them go. For this reason, some villagers find another way that doesn't lead to [pass] their camp.

Do they give money [for carrying water]?

No, they don't give any money.

Can you explain to us about what has happened, starting from when the SPDC burned your village and until now?

Starting from March 1997 and until now villagers' work became worse and worse from one year to the next year. We don't know what we should do in the future.

How much do you have to pay for one big tin (16 kg. / 35 lb.) of rice?

We stay in our village and go and buy rice in Da---. We have to pay 6,000 kyat (US \$7.45) for one big tin of rice.

How about if it arrives in your village?

In our village, we don't know because we [only] carry [rice] ourselves.

How about the meat price?

For pork it's 4,500 kyat (US \$5.59) for one viss, and beef and buffalo meat are also 4,500 kyat. It's the same.

How about food, between last year and this year, is it the same amount [price]?

You can't tell from one year to the next year. It just becomes a little more expensive. For example, for salt last month we had to pay 500 kyat (US \$0.62) for one viss, and in another month it becomes 600 kyat (US \$0.75). As time goes on, it becomes more expensive. It'll never be cheaper.

You said in your village, villagers work in cardamom and betelnut orchards, so how much do they get for one viss of cardamom?

The price for cardamom isn't stable. They have different prices for new and old cardamom. If there's a lot of new cardamom, the price goes down and if there's only a little cardamom left, the price goes up. For betel leaves also it's the same. Today, if they can sell one viss for 3,000 kyat (US \$3.72), then tomorrow it can go down to 2,000 kyat (US \$2.48), and the day after tomorrow it can go down to 1,000 kyat (US \$1.24). There aren't stable prices.

Do you see the SPDC comes and makes your village better?

The SPDC never comes and makes our village better. They only come and destroy our village.

Why do they come and destroy your village?

As I have already told you, they keep our Day Lo Mu Htaw area as a battlefield. They keep us, like it is a shoot-on-sight [area], and in that shoot-on-sight [area] it's like you can't tell humans from dogs. If they see only dogs, they have to kill them. If they see one human they kill them. So we can't do anything.

How do you feel about the KNU?

Because we have the KNU organization, if we want to go somewhere we have to ask them, like if the situation on the way is good or not. If they say we can't go, we have to stay. Because they care for us like this, we can go because of them. If we don't listen to them and do whatever we want, it can cause problems for us.

Do your villagers have to go and work in other villages?

Yes, for our village, it isn't easy to work so we have to go and work in other villages that can stay [villages that don't have to flee from Tatmadaw soldiers].

How much do they pay for daily workers [day labourers]?

For daily workers, the time isn't the same so the price also isn't the same. During the cardamom [harvest] period, they get different payment because there's more work. If there's less work, the price also changes. It depends on the situation.

Do you have any other information that you want to report?

I think it's already complete. There's nothing I want to report.

Interview | Naw P--- (female, 28), A--- village, Tantabin Township, Toungoo District (April 2011)

This report contains the full transcripts of three interviews conducted during March and April 2011 in Tantabin Township, Toungoo District by a villager trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. The three female interviewees described the following abuses: attacks on villages, villagers and livelihoods; killing of villagers; theft and looting; taxation and demands; forced displacement; and forced labour, including the production and supply of building materials and forced portering. They also raised concerns regarding food shortage, the provision of education for children during displacement caused by Tatmadaw attacks, and access to healthcare. One of the women explained that villagers communicate with non-state armed groups and other villagers to share information about Tatmadaw movements, prepare secret caches of food in the forest outside their village in case of a Tatmadaw attack, and hold school classes outside of their village in agricultural areas during displacement caused by Tatmadaw attack. These interviews were received along with other information from Toungoo District, including a

*general update on the situation in Toungoo District, ten incident reports, seven other interviews and 350 photographs.*³³

*The following interview was conducted by a villager in Toungoo District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. It is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.*³⁴

Ethnicity: Karen P'Gku

Religion: Christian

Marital Status: Single

Occupation: Farming a hill field

Position: Teacher

How many years have you been teaching at the nursery school?

Five years.

What is your duty as a teacher?

I look after the children in the school.

Did you want to be a teacher or did other people [the KNU or the SPDC] give you the position?

My church gave me the position.

Could you talk to us about your experiences?

My experiences in the village, starting from when I was teaching in the nursery school for children: our convention [church] leaders gave us duties, one being that the village church should have a nursery for children to learn their own language. The nursery school was started, but some didn't want it [didn't want to send their children to school]. After a while, the village head and the convention leaders understood their problem [as some villagers didn't want to send their children to school]. After that, the government school wanted to join and wanted government teachers to teach in our nursery school, but we didn't allow them to. The school was given to us by our convention [church] leaders.

How many households are in your village?

³³ When these documents have been processed and translated by KHRG and when sufficient information has been compiled and analysed, a full Field Report on the situation in Toungoo District will be available on the KHRG website. Until then, KHRG's most recent analysis of the situation in Toungoo District can be found in the recent Field Report, "Attacks on cardamom plantations, detention and forced labour in Toungoo District," KHRG, May 2010.

³⁴ KHRG trains villagers in eastern Burma 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.

There are 86 households.

How many villagers are in your village?

I don't know.

What are the main jobs for villagers?

Mostly, they farm and plant in the hill fields.

Do villagers get enough food from farming?

No, they don't get enough food. Most of the time, the grain is dry and insects eat it.

What do villagers who don't have enough food do?

They have to buy it in the market.

How much do they have to pay for one sack of rice?

This year, they have to pay 14,000 kyat (US \$17.77)³⁵ for one sack of rice.

Do you have a way to get income?

We can't get an income in our village. We can only get an income during the paddy [harvest] period. If we can do hill field work, we will get money. In our village [A---], we only do hill field farming, so if our paddies are good we can sell rice, but if our paddy is not good, we have to buy it in other villages.

How many years ago was your village established?

It has already been 160 years.

Do you have to face any problems in your village? Could you tell us about your problems?

We have to face problems from the military government, because we stay in the area that is called Than Daung Township, and this year our A--- villagers have been commanded to do forced labour by the SPDC many times. We have to carry or cut bamboo. We cut bamboo for them but they weren't happy. They said "your bamboo was young, you have to cut mature bamboo". They didn't use the bamboo only to build their camp, they also sent it to the city. That was a problem. They not only sent bamboo, but also wood that was mature. Now, we don't have much mature wood.

³⁵ All conversion estimates for the Kyat in this interview are based on the fluctuating informal exchange rate rather than the government's official fixed rate of 6.5 kyat to US \$1. As of July 17th 2011, this unofficial rate of exchange was US\$1 = 788 kyat. These figures are used for all calculations above.

What kind of bamboo do you have to cut for them?

We have to cut wa thoh [oily bamboo]. Sometimes, we have to cut wa blaw [glutinous bamboo]. In our village, some had wa blaw bamboo, but we didn't have any. In our village, we have 86 households, but we only a few houses have the wa blaw tree, so if the SPDC asks for it, we have to buy it for them. We had to pay 500 or 450 kyat (US \$0.63 or \$0.57 respectively) for one wa blaw bamboo.

How long do you have to cut the bamboo for them?

At least 10 cubits [measurement from fingertip to elbow].

How big [wide] is the bamboo that you have to cut?

Two hand spans.

What kind of wood do you have to cut for them?

We have to cut thay hter and thay pway [ironwood tree, commonly used to build houses]. In here we have only hter and pway.

How long [cubits] do you have to cut the wood for them?

Sometimes, we have to cut it to 12 cubits long and, for the hter, we cut it to 6 cubits for them.

For what do they use the wood and bamboo that you cut?

They use them for a fence.

Where is their [Tatmadaw] camp?

Their camp is in between S--- and A--- villages.

Do you know their officer?

I don't know.

How many people are in the camp?

Some people said that there are 30 or 40 soldiers.

Does the SPDC come into your village? Do they come often or randomly?

They come very often.

Do you notice the dates that they come?

I don't notice, because they stay near and come very often.

What do they do when they come to the village? Do they hurt villagers?

They don't hurt people, they mostly asked for food. Sometimes, they order village heads to buy wine for them. If the village heads can't buy the wine, they are forced to take chickens from the village. They force us to give them things.

Do they pay for the food that they demand when they are in the village?

No, they don't pay.

In the days before you came here did the SPDC kill any villagers?

No.

Have you ever been forced [to do labour] by the SPDC?

Yes.

Did anyone escape from forced labour?

No, because they were very strict on the villagers. If villagers escaped, they asked the village head to send them back, and then they would hit or punish them.

If they ask for money, how much do you have to pay per person?

Sometimes, we have to pay 2,000 kyat (US \$2.54), and sometimes we have to pay 5,000 kyat (US \$6.35).

Do they pay you or give you food when you work for them?

No, they don't give us anything.

Do they ever enter to your village while you work for them?

They don't come [to our village while we work for them].

Can you tell us your opinion about the SPDC's actions [military activities]?

In my opinion, the SPDC Light Infantry Division goes around the Than Daung area everyday. In the evening, they come and steal things, even if you tell them they aren't allowed. They do bad things to us. They also stole pigs.

Which LID entered to your village?

I don't know the number.

Does the SPDC rape women or take things without paying the villagers?

In the village, they took our chickens and vegetables without asking us. If we told them [not to do it], they said "We walked and we were tired so we wanted to eat. We don't need to ask because this area is controlled by the Burmese. I am the owner, not you".

Did any fighting [with armed groups] happen while you were portering?

No.

Do you want to tell us about the SPDC tactics of oppression?

Yes, I want to tell you. The SPDC Army came in our village and forced us [to do labour] and asked us for food. Our villagers and other villages in the area don't want them here. We don't want them to use power and force us. We want them to go back to where they are from. We don't want them to stay in our village.

Do you have a school in your village?

Yes.

For your school, did the SPDC or the villagers build it?

It was a government school.

How many teachers were in the school?

Three teachers.

How many grades?

Up to fourth standard.

How many students?

78 students.

How much money do the teachers get per person?

For headmasters, they get 45,000 kyat (US \$57.11).

For the salary, did the villagers or the government pay them?

The government paid them, but teachers stayed in our village, so we had to give them rice and everything that they asked for. As we are villagers, sometimes we didn't have food to eat. Some students also didn't have enough food to eat. They asked [for food] once a week so some students could not give.

Where were the teachers from?

They were from Tantabin.

Do students have to pay money for entering the school?

They have to pay 4,500 kyat (US \$5.71).

Who do they have to pay?

They have to pay the headmaster or the teachers.

Do the students study peacefully [without interruption]?

In the past, they studied peacefully. But this year, the teachers were always absent, so the students didn't get a good education.

Do they allow teachers to teach the Karen language in the school?

No, they don't.

Why don't they allow teaching of the Karen language?

During school they only teach in Burmese, so they don't allow [Karen to be taught]. Most of the time, they want to use only Burmese.

Does the SPDC Army come and disturb the school?

No.

Does the KNU [KNLA] come and disturb the school?

No.

Do the students get support like books or other things?

No, they didn't get anything.

Do you have a hospital in your village?

No.

Where do you have to go if you are sick?

We had to go to the hospital in Zayatkyi [town] or in Tantabin town.

Were there any problems on the way?

There weren't any problems.

Do villagers get free medicine when they go to the hospital?

No, we have to pay. Last week, my aunt was bleeding. She went only one day, but it cost millions [of kyat].

How much do sick people have to pay for one injection?

Some cost 5,000 kyat (US \$6.35), and some cost 200 or 300 kyat (US \$0.25 and \$0.38 respectively).

What is the most common disease in your village?

Malaria.

In the past, has malaria caused death?

No.

How about this year?

No.

Do the villagers work smoothly [peacefully]?

In the past, we worked smoothly [peacefully] in our farms but now we cannot. When we need to go to our farm, the SPDC does not allow us to go. If the LID come and see us when we go to the jungle they make us go with them [to work for them] for a week. When you go with them [to work for them], they don't give you rice. They give you only one handful of rice.

Do villagers get enough food? If not, if they have to buy food, how much do you have to pay for one viss [1.6 kg or 3.5 lb] of meat?

For pork, it costs 3,500 kyat (US \$4.44), for beef the cost is 4,000 kyat (US \$5.08).

How about for fish paste, salt and sweet powder?

For market fish paste, one viss is 1,200 kyat (US \$1.52) or 1,500 kyat (US \$1.90). For the home-made fish paste, it costs 3,000 kyat (US \$3.81).

How much for one sack of rice?

It costs 14,000 kyat (US \$17.77).

Do you see the SPDC comes and makes your village better?

For the SPDC, they never come and make our situation better. They come and ask for villagers' food. I don't see them as good.

How about the KNU? Do you see good things from them?

I saw that if we didn't have the KNU, the SPDC would oppress and kill us. We have the KNU and they stand up for us, and now things are different. The difference is that, in the past, if we have to go somewhere, we have to be afraid of many things, but now because of them we have less danger.

Do you want to report anything else?

The other information I wanted to report happened in the past, the SPDC came in our village and searched things in my house and saw Ba U Gyi's [first president of the KNU] photo that cost over 100,000 kyat (US \$127). And, they said they would kill me, because they saw it in my box. Their commander didn't say anything but the soldiers wanted to do bad things to me. Their commander kept calm and went back, so they followed him. Also, last week the LID came in our

village and slept under our house. At night time, about 9:00 or 10:00 pm, they entered under our house and at 10:00 or 11:00 pm they were drunk. At that time we were sleeping. Under my house, there were six hens. The hens had all laid eggs. In the morning, the hens screamed and I said, "Don't steal my hens, my hens lay eggs." The oldest [highest-ranking] one among them said not to accuse his soldiers. "If we wanted to eat we would ask you." But in the morning, I found that they had stolen my two hens. I was unhappy and said to them, "You said you didn't steal my hens but I lost two hens and if you want to eat my hens, eat them all." They said, "uncle [a term directed at elders for respect] didn't eat your hens, pray a lot and the one who ate your hens will die someday". So it is best if they don't come in our village. If they come in our village, they always oppress us. We were afraid of them, so it is best for us if they don't come. We are Karen, so we can't speak Burmese fluently.

Did you know the name of the commander who saw Ba Oo Gyi's photo in your house?

I didn't know.

Did you notice the date?

I didn't notice the date.

Interview | Naw R--- (female, 35), S--- village, Tantabin Township, Toungoo District (April 2011)

The following interview was conducted by a villager in Toungoo District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. It is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.³⁶

Ethnicity: Karen

Religion: Christian

Marital Status: Married

Occupation: Farming

Position: [censored for security]

How many people are in your family?

I have five members in my family.

How old is your oldest child?

17 years old.

³⁶ KHRG trains villagers in eastern Burma 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.

How old is your youngest child?

Six years old.

What is your duty?

I work for the [censored for security] organisation.

How many years have you been in the organisation?

[I joined] in this year.

What are your duties, as you are in the organisation?

We work for women.

Did you want to become part of the [censored for security] organisation, or did the KNU or the SPDC [Tatmadaw] give you the position?

Our village head gave me the position.

Can you tell us about your experiences, as you are a women's leader?

I can't say because I am a new staff [member].

What is the name of your village?

It's called S---.

How many households are there in your village?

400 households.

How many villagers are there?

I don't know.

What kind of jobs do villagers do?

Farming [rice paddy] and planting betelnut.

How much they get from betelnut plantations in a year?

In one year, we sell 1,000 viss (1,600 kg. / 3,520 lb.) of betelnut.

How much [do you receive] for one viss (1.6 kg. / 3.5 lb.)?

One viss is 2,500 kyat (US \$3.17).³⁷

Do villagers get enough food from their farms?

No, it's not enough.

What do they do if they don't have enough food?

They sell rice [to get money to buy other food], collect leaves [to make thatch to sell] and borrow from other people.

How much do they have to pay if they borrow from other people?

If they take rice [from them], they have to pay 4,000 kyat (US \$5.08). [Naw R--- did not specify the quantity of rice that could be acquired for this amount of money.]

Do villagers have any way to get income?

Only during the paddy harvesting period, because we can sell rice and betelnut.

How many years has your village been established?

I don't know.

Does your village have to face any problems?

Yes.

Can you tell us what kind of problems?

The SPDC comes and oppresses us, and sometimes forces us to cut wood and bamboo. And they ask us to make fences for them.

How many bamboo [poles] do you have to cut for them each time?

Over 100 bamboo [poles].

How many people do they ask for [to cut and deliver the bamboo]?

We have to go with 10 or 15 carts each time.

How about the number of people?

³⁷ All conversion estimates for the Kyat in this interview are based on the fluctuating informal exchange rate rather than the government's official fixed rate of 6.5 kyat to US \$1. As of July 17th 2011, this unofficial rate of exchange was US\$1 = 788 kyat.

Fifteen people.

What kind [of wood] was the biggest bamboo or wood you've had to cut?

Thay ter [a type of wood from which villagers often collect leaves to make roofing thatch].

What length do you have to cut [the pieces of thay ter]?

Ten cubits.

How wide?

Two or three handspans.

What kinds of wood [do you have to cut]?

Thay ter and thay pway [literally 'iron wood'; a type of wood often used to build houses].

How about for bamboo?

Wa blaw [glutinous bamboo] and wa thoh [big bamboo].

How long must the wood [bamboo] be?

Twelve or fifteen cubits.

How wide?

I don't know.

Does the SPDC [Tatmadaw] ever enter your village?

Yes, they always enter our village.

Did you note the dates that they've come?

I haven't noted it.

What do they do if they enter the village?

If they enter the village, they ask villagers to porter.

Have they hurt villagers?

Yes.

How did they hurt them?

They put them in the water, and stepped on them and sometimes punched them.

Do you know the names of the villagers that suffered this?

Yes, their names were Saw T---and Saw P---.

How old was Saw T---?

40 years old.

What was his parents' name?

I knew only his father. His father's name is Saw K---.

How did they kill him?

They didn't kill him. He escaped.

How old was Saw P---?

25 years old.

Do you know his parents' name?

His father's name is Saw L--- and his mother's name is Naw H---.

Did they put him in the river?

Yes.

Which river?

The K--- River.

How wide is the K--- River?

10 cubits. No, not only 10 cubits, [wider than 10 cubits].

How deep is it?

It's very deep.

What difficulties did they have to face before they escaped?

Before they escaped, they had to catch ta mu khar a su [literally 'the hand of ghosts'; a term used to refer to poisonous animals and insects] and they were afraid so they escaped from the Army camp through three fences.

Did the SPDC [Tatmadaw] see them after they escaped?

The SPDC never saw them again.

Did they stay in the village?

They stayed outside the village. If the SPDC saw them, they would have killed them.

Has the SPDC taken your cows or buffaloes when they entered your village?

No, but when they entered the village, they've asked for chickens and then stolen pigs and dogs.

Did they pay for the things that they took?

No, they didn't pay.

Did they ask villagers [for permission]?

They didn't ask us. They stole and took whatever they wanted.

In the past few days, did you hear that they killed any people in your village or around your village?

No, they haven't.

Tell us about how you feel about the SPDC oppression?

Now, we stay in our village and they always ask us to work. One day, we have to bring chickens for them and, one week later, we have to bring pork for them.

When the SPDC asks you to work or cut bamboo or wood for them, do they allow you to go back or do you [have to] escape?

They allowed us to come back.

If you porter for them how long does it take?

One day.

For what do they use the bamboo poles that you cut for them?

They build their camp.

Where is their camp?

In S---.

Do you know their officers?

I don't know them.

How many people soldiers [are there] in their camp?

I don't know.

Do they pay or give you food when you portered for them?

No, they don't pay or give food.

While you were portering for them did they come to your village?

Yes, they entered. They entered in two or three groups.

Do you know the dates?

I don't know the dates.

What did they do when they entered your village?

Mostly, they asked for villagers' food.

Can you tell us about your feeling about the SPDC [Tatmadaw]?

I can't tell.

Does the SPDC rape the women?

No.

Do they take villagers' things without permission? What kind of things?

If we plant vegetables, they steal it. They always steal chickens and pigs. You can't tell them [anything].

Does their Commander order them to steal or do they [lower-ranking Tatmadaw soldiers] do that as they want?

I don't know.

Did any conflict [fighting with non-state armed groups] happen when you portered?

No.

Do you want to tell us anything else about SPDC oppression?

The SPDC asks us to bring food for them without paying for it. They steal our pigs, dogs and vegetables without asking the owners. They do whatever they want.

If they ask you to cut 1,000 bamboos for them, can you give only 500 bamboos?

No, we can't.

How many bamboo poles do they ask you to cut each time?

Mostly, 100 bamboo poles.

Do you have to give them thatch?

Yes.

How many thatch pieces do you have to give?

We have to give 20 thatch pieces to each house. The whole village is 2,000 thatch pieces.

Do you have a school in your village?

Yes, we have a school.

Who built the school? Did the SPDC [Tatmadaw] build it or did the villagers build it?

The SPDC built it.

How many grades [in the school]?

Until grade four.

How many students?

145 students.

How many teachers?

It has four teachers; two male teachers and two female teachers.

Who gives the salary for teachers? The SPDC or the villagers?

The SPDC gives them a salary but they stay in our village so we have to give them rice and oil.

How much rice and oil do you give them each time?

If we give money, it is over 10,000 kyat (US \$ 12.69).

How much do you have to pay for one child to enter the school?

It costs 3,000 kyat (US \$ 3.81).

Who do they have to give it to?

They have to give it to the headmaster.

Do the students study without interruption?

No, their teachers are always absent.

Why don't they come to the school?

I don't know.

Do they allow teaching Karen?

No, they don't.

Why?

I don't know.

Do the SPDC or the KNU come and disturb your school?

No.

Do the students get books or other things?

No.

Do you have a hospital [clinic] in your village?

No, we don't have.

Where do the villagers go if they are sick?

To Zayatkyi in Tantabin Township.

Do they have problems about travelling?

No, we have no problems.

How about travelling costs?

We have to ride in a line car so it costs 5,000 kyat (US \$ 6.35).

Do they get good cure?

Yes, they do.

Any problems?

No problems.

Do they need to buy medicine?

Yes, they have to buy.

How much for one medicine?

We have to pay 300 kyat, 400 kyat, 5,000 kyat, 6,000 kyat, or 10,000 kyat (between US \$ 0.38 – 12.69).

Can they get free medicine?

No.

What is the most common disease in your village?

Malaria.

What kind of medicine do they take?

They take malaria medicine.

Does malaria cause death?

No.

Do villagers work without interruption and do villagers get enough food?

For farming, we work without interruption but if we go to the forest [to work], we have to get written work permission documents.

Do they get enough food?

Not really enough.

How much do they have to pay for one sack of rice (50 kg. / 110 lb.)?

15,000 kyat (US \$ 19.03) for one sack of rice.

How about for meat?

For pork is 4,000 kyat (US \$ 5.08) and beef also 4,000 kyat (US \$ 5.08) per viss.

How about for salt and fish paste?

For fish paste it is 1,500 kyat (US \$ 1.90) and salt is 500 kyat (US \$ 0.63).

Does the SPDC come and make your village better?

No.

How about the KNU, do you see them come and make your village better?

Sometimes, they do. Because of them our village is stable.

Do you have anything else to report?

No.

Interview | Naw Lu--- (female, 21), Ma--- village, Tantabin Township, Toungoo District (April 2011)

The following interview was conducted by a villager in Toungoo District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. It is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.

Ethnicity: Karen

Religion: Christian

Marital Status: Single

Occupation: Farming cardamom and betelnut

What is your name?

My name is Naw Lu---.

How old are you?

I'm 21 years old.

What is your village and Township name?

I live in Ma--- village, Tantabin Township, Toungoo District.

What did the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] do when they wanted the villagers to go for forced labour?

The SPDC Army wrote a letter to the village head and asked the village head to go for a meeting.

Where did they have the meeting?

They had the meeting in Kler La village.

How many times do they order forced labour each year?

They order forced labour once a year.

How many villagers did they ask to porter?

They asked for ten villagers to porter for them.

Where did the villagers have to porter?

We had to porter from M--- village to Th'Ay Hta.

How old is the eldest one who portered?

The eldest one who had to porter was 45 years old.

How old is the youngest one who portered?

The youngest one was 16 years old.

When did you go to porter for the SPDC Army?

We went to porter in February 2011.

What did you have to carry?

We had to carry rice for them.

Was there anything else you had to carry?

Nothing.

How much rice did you have to carry?

Two people had to carry one sack (50 kg. / 110 lb.) of rice between them.

When you went to porter did you go by yourselves?

No, we had to follow the SPDC [Tatmadaw] soldiers.

Which SPDC Army unit forced the villagers to porter?

I'm not sure of the battalion number but their army camp is based in Kler La village.

What is the officer's name?

I don't know.

How many soldiers went with you when you portered for them?

They were 70 soldiers who went with us when we portered.

Were there any other villages that faced forced labour?

There were four villages that had to go to porter. They are Sh--- village, Dh--- village, Wo--- village and Th--- village.

Where did you have to start portering?

We had to start portering from Dy--- to Th'Ay Hta.

How long distance between Dy--- to Th'Ay Hta?

The distance is three hours on foot.

When you were portering for them did they give you food to eat?

No, they didn't give us any, and we had to bring food for ourselves.

How heavy were the things you had to carry?

I had to carry 15 bowls (23.45 kg. / 51.58 lb.) of rice.

Was the SPDC Army based in your village?

No, they didn't come and live in our village.

Has the SPDC Army ever come to your village?

Yes, they did come.

What did they do when they came?

They did nothing, they just came and stayed by themselves

Did they take pigs or chickens to eat?

Yes, they did sometimes.

When they came to the village did they ask villagers to do anything for them?

Yes. They asked villagers to go and cut bamboo for them.

How much bamboo did they ask villagers to cut for them?

They asked villagers to cut 30 bamboo poles for them.

When did they ask villagers to cut bamboo for them?

They asked us to cut bamboo for them on January 12th 2011.

Do you know the [Tatmadaw] army battalion or their camp name?

No I don't know but the army troops who forced us [to porter] have their camp based in Kler La village.

Can the villagers travel *blay blay hsaw hsaw* [without disruption or restriction]?

No, sometimes they can't travel smoothly.

Do you have to get a permission document when you go to your farm or plantation?

Yes, we have to get the permission document to go to our plantation or farm.

How long does the permission document allow you to go work in the place where your plantation is?

It allows us to go work in our plantation only for one week at a time.

How much do you have to pay for your permission documents?

We have to pay 100 kyat (US \$0.13) each time.

If the villagers are sick at the time when the SPDC Army asks them to carry things, what do they do?

They have to pay money to them [Tatmadaw soldiers]. Each person has to pay 20,000 kyat (US \$25.58) to them for each day they can't go to carry things.

Did the SPDC Army kill any villagers?

Yes, the SPDC Army killed one of the villagers.

How old was he?

He is 45 years old.

Where did they kill him?

They killed him between Ma--- village and Sh--- village.

What time did they kill him?

They killed him at 8:00 pm [date not specified].

Why did the SPDC Army kill him?

They suspected him.

Why did they suspect him?

Because he was travelling at night time.

Who was going with him?

He was travelling alone.

Which soldiers killed him?

Soldiers on sentry duty killed him.

Do they allow villagers to travel at night?

They [villagers] are allowed to travel only until 9:00 pm.

Was he [the 45 year-old villager who was killed] married?

Yes, he was married and he had three children.

Did his family get any help from the military government?

No, they didn't get any help.

How many times did the SPDC Army ask for forced labour in 2011?

They asked for forced labour only once in 2011.

Did you have to porter for the SPDC Army in 2010?

We had to porter three times in 2010.

Which months did you have to go to porter?

We had to porter once in June and twice in August.

Where did you have to porter to?

We had to porter to Gk---.

How many villagers had to porter?

They asked for ten villagers to porter.

What did you have to carry for them?

We had to carry rice for them.

How heavy were the things you had to porter?

Each person had to carry five *viss* (8 kg. / 18 lb.).

How many other villages had to go to porter?

There were four villages that had to porter: Sh--- village, Dh--- village, Wo--- village and Mi--- village.

What did the other villagers have to carry?

The other villagers had to carry one big sack (50 kg. / 110 lb.) of rice.

Do they have a clinic in your village?

We don't have a clinic in my village.

Where do you go when you get sick?

We go to Kler La village when we get sick.

How long is it between your village and Kler La?

It takes about 15 minutes [mode of travel not specified].

What kind of common diseases [illnesses] do the villagers face?

The common disease that they face is *ta gkoh* [fever].

Do they have a school in your village?

They have a school, but only to grade four.

How many students does it have?

It has 15 students.

Who set up the school?

The villagers set up the school.

How many teachers does it have?

Sometimes they have two teachers, but other times the teachers don't always come.

How much does a teacher earn per month?

They earn 20,000 kyat (US \$26) per month.

How much is the school fee for each student?

They have to pay 3,000 kyat (US \$3.84) for each student.

How about children whose parents don't have money to pay for school fees?

Those children can't do anything and just stay at home.

Do they allow you to teach the Karen Language?

No, they don't allow it.

Do the students have a chance to learn smoothly?

No, the students aren't allowed to learn smoothly because the teachers don't always come to school.

For how many months do the teachers come?

They come for six months at a time.

What do the students do if the teachers don't come?

The students don't do anything.

Interview | Saw C--- (male, 30), L--- village, Te Naw Th'Ri Township, Tenasserim Division (Received in May 2011)³⁸

This report contains the full transcript of an interview conducted prior to Burma's November 2010 elections in Te Naw Th'Ri Township, Tenasserim Division by a villager trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. The villager interviewed Saw C---, a 30-year-old married hill field farmer who told KHRG that he was appointed to the position of village head by his local VPDC in an area of Te Naw Th'Ri Township that is frequently accessed by Tatmadaw troops, and in which there is no KNLA presence. Saw C--- described human rights abuses faced by residents of his village, including: demands for forced labour; theft and looting of villagers' property; and movement restrictions that prevent villagers from accessing agricultural workplaces. He also cited an incident in which a villager was shot and killed by Tatmadaw soldiers while fishing in a nearby river, and his death subsequently concealed; and recounted abuses he witnessed when forced to porter military rations and accompany Tatmadaw soldiers during foot patrols, including the theft and looting of villagers' property and the rape of a 50-year-old woman. Saw C--- told KHRG that villagers protect themselves in the following ways: collecting flowers from the jungle to sell in local markets in order to supplement incomes, failing to comply with orders to report to a Tatmadaw camp, and using traditional herbal remedies due to difficulties accessing healthcare. He noted, however, that these strategies can be limited, for example by threats of violence against civilians by Tatmadaw soldiers or scarcity of plants commonly used in herbal remedies. The following interview was conducted by a villager in Tenasserim Division who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. It is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.³⁹ This interview was received along with other information from Tenasserim Division, including 21 other interviews.⁴⁰

Ethnicity: Karen

Religion: Christian

Marital Status: Married

Occupation: Hill field farmer

Position: Village head

How many children do you have?

I have three children.

³⁸ KHRG cannot confirm the exact date on which this interview was conducted; however, based on content of this interview and other information submitted by this villager in May 2011, it was likely conducted between July and October 2010.

³⁹ KHRG trains villagers in eastern Burma 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.

⁴⁰ When these documents have been processed and translated by KHRG and when sufficient information has been compiled and analysed, a full Field Report on the situation in Tenasserim Division will be available on the KHRG website. Until then, KHRG's most recent analysis of the situation in Tenasserim Division can be found in the recent Field Report, "Militarization, Development and Displacement: Conditions for villagers in southern Tenasserim Division," KHRG, March 2011.

How old is your oldest child?

My oldest child is 13 years old.

How is your youngest child?

My youngest [child] is six years old.

How long have you fulfilled the village head's responsibilities?

I've fulfilled the village head's responsibilities for three years.

Who elected you to be village head?

I didn't want to be village head, but no one looks after my villagers, so the enemy SPDC⁴¹ appointed me to be village head.

What is [the title of] your position?

My position is VPDC [Village Peace and Development Council] village head.

How many households do you have in your village?

I have [*number censored for security*] households in my village.

How many villagers do you have in your village?

There are [*number censored for security*] villagers in my village.

What are the villagers' occupations?

The villagers work on their plantations, hill fields and do work for daily wages.

Do the villagers have enough food?

No, the villagers don't have enough food because the food [they have] isn't enough for the year.

What do the villagers do when they don't have enough food?

⁴¹ In Karen, the Burmese phrases *Na Wa Ta* (SLORC) and *Na Ah Pa* (SPDC) are commonly used to refer to the Burmese government or to Burma's state army, the Tatmadaw. Many older Karen villagers who were accustomed to using the phrase *Na Wa Ta* (SLORC) before 1997 continue to use that phrase, even though the SLORC has not officially existed since 1997. Similarly, despite the official dissolution of the SPDC in March 2011, many Karen villagers continue to use the phrase *Na Ah Pa* (SPDC) to refer to the Burmese government or to the Tatmadaw; see: "Mission Accomplished as SPDC 'dissolved'," Myanmar Times, April 4-10 2011. The term *Na Ah Pa* was used by the interviewer and interviewee, and "SPDC" is therefore retained in the translation of this interview.

They take odd jobs, and when they get the money they go and buy one or two milk tins of rice (0.195 – 0.39 kg. / 0.43 – 0.86 lb.) for each day.

Do the villagers have any income?

The villagers make an income by searching for flowers in the jungle [to sell in the market] and going and taking odd jobs. These are the villagers' sources of income.

How long has your village been set up?

Before my village was named Gkay but in 1997 the enemy [Tatmadaw] forced the villagers to move to the L--- relocation site.

Is it close to G--- Road?

Yes it is close to G--- Road.

Does your village face any problems?

My village faces many different problems.

What is the problem?

The problem is we don't have a chance to go and work outside the village because the enemy [Tatmadaw] doesn't allow us to go and work on our plantations and hill fields. We can work only [in places] near our village and this is why we can't get enough food for the villagers.

Do the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] soldiers ever enter your village?

Yes, the SPDC Army soldiers always come and go, but not the same battalions. They're different battalions. One troop goes and another troop comes.

Do they base their army camp in your village?

No, they don't base the army camp in our village, but they come and live in villagers' houses.

What do they do when they enter the village?

They loot the villagers' livestock. The villagers' [mature] livestock is no longer ever in the village because they [the Tatmadaw soldiers] loot the villagers' animals every time they come.

Do they harass the villagers?

Within the past few months, they haven't harassed the villagers, but they always threaten the villagers.

Why do they do that?

Because when they summon villagers to come see them, if the villagers don't go, they get angry and intimidate the villagers.

Do they pay any money when they loot the livestock?

Since they started to loot things in the village, I've experienced only one time that they paid for one pig. This was a very big pig, but they gave only 5,000 kyat (US \$6.90)⁴² to the owner. They looted a lot of things and livestock belonging to the villagers, so maybe they took pity on the owner [of the pig] and paid him 5,000 kyat.

Have the SPDC Army soldiers killed any villagers?

Recently they haven't killed any villagers, but in 2009 they killed one of the villagers.

Why did they kill him? Could you tell us?

This villager went fishing and the SPDC Army soldiers were stationed silently on sentry duty and they heard noise coming from the river, and when they saw him they thought this man was their enemy [a soldier from the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)] and they shot him. In our village, as this person had disappeared, we went and looked for him. We tried to investigate this villager's disappearance, but the SPDC Battalion Commander who was living in our village, he didn't tell us anything. They left him in the river and tied him to a rock [to weigh down the body]. We, the villagers, went and looked for him. When we looked for him we saw a bag, and in the bag I saw his fishing permit. So we found out about his death and the SPDC Army soldiers couldn't keep it secret any more. They told us that they mistook this villager for a KNLA soldier and that they'd shot and killed him.

How did they tell you?

They said they mistook him for a KNLA soldier so they shot and killed him.

Did he have a family?

Yes, he had a family.

What was his name?

His name was U M---

How many children did he have?

He had two children.

Did the SPDC Army help his family?

SPDC Army soldiers came and visited his family once and gave them 10,000 kyat (US \$13.79) and two sacks of rice (96 kg. / 211.2 lb.).

⁴² All conversion estimates for the Kyat in this interview are based on the fluctuating informal exchange rate rather than the government's official fixed rate of 6.5 kyat to US \$1. As of September 6th 2011, this unofficial rate of exchange was US \$1 = 725 kyat. This figure is used for all calculations above.

Do you have to porter?

Yes, I can't avoid portering for the SPDC Army.

Do they pay you when you porter for them?

They never pay us.

Do they give you food?

The rice that they feed the villagers with is bad rice that they've boiled and kept for two or three days.

When you've gone to porter, have the SPDC Army troops ever entered any villages?

From my village we went to the army camp called S--- and the SPDC Army entered T--- and K-- - villages.

What did they do when they entered K--- village?

They went to a villager's small shop and looted the cigarettes and snacks and such [things].

What did the village head [of K--- village] do after they looted the things from the villager's shop?

The Tatmadaw soldiers ordered the village head to pay for them and clear everything up for them.

Did the SPDC soldiers rape any women?

Yes, they raped one of the women. Before we went to K--- village, they entered W--- village and raped a woman.

How old was she?

She was over fifty years old.

Do you know her name?

Yes, her name is *Mu Ghar* [Aunt] P---.

Did they abuse any of the other villagers?

The SPDC Army soldiers came and abused villagers, looting, forcing villages to porter rations, and threatening the villagers in many different ways. They [villagers] have to pay money for permission to exit their villages, and that restricts movement too.

Do you have school in your village?

Yes, we have a school in my village.

How many grades does it have?

It only has four grades.

Who set up the school?

The school was set up by the SPDC government.

How many teachers does it have?

There are two teachers.

Who sent [hired] the teachers?

The SPDC Army paid for them to come.

How much does the SPDC government have to pay for the teachers?

The school principal earns 25,000 kyat (US \$34.48) per month.

Do the villagers have to give anything for teachers?

The SPDC Army soldiers ordered the villagers to give the school teachers one big tin of rice (16 kg. / 35.2 lb.), one *viss* of salt (1.6 kg / 3.52 lbs), one *viss* of shrimp paste and 10,000 kyat (US \$13.79) per month, per teacher.

How many students do they have in the school?

They have over 40 students.

Do the students have to pay a school [tuition] fee?

Yes, they have to pay a school [tuition] fee.

Who do they have pay the school fee to?

They have to pay it to the school principal.

Do the students have the chance to learn without disruption?

The number of students has decreased a lot. They had over 40 students before, but now there are only 20 or 30 students left.

Do you know why the number of students has decreased?

Some of the students' parents have health problems. I'm not sure, but maybe the teachers aren't good at teaching or nice to the students and so students are leaving.

Do they allow Karen language to be taught?

For teaching the Karen language, no one dares to mention this. If we do, I will get hurt a lot by the SPDC Army soldiers. I know they will hurt me.

Do the students get any support [for school supplies]?

No, the students have to buy everything by themselves.

Do you have a clinic in your village?

There's no clinic in my village.

Where do you get medicine when you get sick?

When we get sick we have to collect herbal roots, trees and bamboo that cure the diseases. Because we always use and collect the herbal roots, trees and bamboo, now we can't find them any more. Some villagers, they take the herbal medicine and, if it makes them get better, they get better, but if not, they will die. That's all.

Do the villagers have the chance to work without disruption?

No, they don't have chance to work without disruption.

How much does one big tin of rice (16 kg. / 35.2 lb.) cost?

One sack of rice costs 30,000 kyat (US \$41.38) and one sack contains three big tins of rice.

How much does one viss of meat cost?

One viss of meat costs 2,500 kyat (US \$3.45).

Does the SPDC Army develop anything for the village?

No, I've never experienced the SPDC Army develop anything in my village. The SPDC Army soldiers come to the village and only destroy things and demand things from the villagers.

What do you think about the KNU [Karen National Union]?

We see only good things from the KNU.

Does the KNU Army [KNLA] ever come to your village?

No, they never enter my village.

Why don't you contact them?

To contact them is hard for me because the SPDC Army soldiers threaten us a lot so I don't dare to contact them.

Do you want to mention anything about the questions above?

The last thing I want to mention is only that the SPDC Army soldiers harass the villagers.

What have you had to do for the SPDC Army for the 2010 election?

When they entered the village, they ordered me to provide the number [amount] and names of villagers eligible to vote.

Do the villagers have to go to vote?

No, the villagers don't have to go.

Do you want to vote?

I don't want to vote because this is the SPDC government's plan.

Did you take the villagers' name list on your own or did the SPDC Army soldiers force you?

I didn't want to make the villagers' name list, but the SPDC Army soldiers threatened me and forced me to collect the villagers' names.

Has the SPDC government told you about the 2010 election?

No, they didn't tell us about anything before they actually came to the village. Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) politicians, Tatmadaw Commanders and Captains, mostly they've come to my village and told me to collect the number [amount] and names of villagers eligible to vote. They came and asked me what the villagers need and I told them that in my village we need to repair the school. We informed them about the school.

Has the KPP (Karen Peoples Party) party come to your village?

Of the KPP, only Saw Khin Maung Shwe has come to my village. He said he's Karen and that the Karen people have to organise ourselves. I know he's Burmese, he just came and said he wanted to organise the Karen people and lied about himself to the villagers.

Which villagers did he organise [to vote for the KPP]?

He came and organised the religious villagers, using the pastor's house and the teachers' houses. He drew close only to religious people.

Has the USDP guaranteed villagers anything if the villagers vote for them?

Yes, when USDP representatives came to my village, they asked me what the villagers needed and asked me to inform them. But we haven't got any of the things we informed them that we need.

Have you heard if the USDP has helped any villages?

No, I have no experience [knowledge] of any villages they support.

Have you heard if they'll help the villagers?

No, I've never heard that they'll help the villagers in any of the villages.

Do you have anything to mention about the last set of questions about the election?

In my experience with the election, if it happens, I don't think the villagers will obtain freedom and independence. The SPDC government has said that if we help them with our vote, we'll get freedom in our country [Burma]. Like the news reports from other countries [say], I think if this election happens, the SPDC government will make their army forces stronger and stronger. We, the civilians, will face a lot of problems if they do.

Do you think the SPDC government will make the country free?

I don't think they'll free the country because the SPDC government's plan would never give us freedom. We've never experienced that they do good things for civilians, so it isn't good to agree with their election plan.

Interview | Saw B--- (male, 31), Ta--- village, Ler Doh Township, Nyaunglebin District (May 2011)

This bulletin contains the full transcripts of three interviews conducted by KHRG researchers in May 2011 with villagers from Ler Doh Township, Nyaunglebin District. The interviewees described the following human rights issues: forced relocation; threats to shell or burn villages; movement restrictions, including curfews, the requirement of travel permission documents and the restriction of river travel by boat; theft and looting; restrictions on the transport of medicine in civilian areas; arrest and enforced disappearance; killing of villagers; forced labour, including portering, camp and road construction and maintenance, the production of construction materials, and sentry duty; the use of villagers to shield Tatmadaw troops during foot patrols; and abuse by non-state armed groups. The villagers also raised concerns regarding food insecurity, access to livelihoods and access to health care, particularly while living in forced relocation sites. In order to address these concerns, the interviewees explained that villagers use strategies including: covert travel to agricultural projects to avoid curfews and movement restrictions; individual and collective negotiation, including with senior military authorities or non-military authorities; bribery; false compliance with relocation orders; submission of petition letters; and temporary strategic displacement to evade immediate human rights threats. These interviews were received in May 2011 along with ten other interviews with villagers from Nyaunglebin District.⁴³

The following interview was conducted by a KHRG researcher. It is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.⁴⁴

⁴³ When these interviews have been processed and translated by KHRG and when sufficient information has been compiled and analysed, a full Field Report on the situation in Nyaunglebin District will be available on the KHRG website. Until then, KHRG's most recent analysis of the situation in Nyaunglebin District can be found in the recent Field Report, "Livelihood consequences of SPDC restrictions and patrols in Nyaunglebin District," KHRG, September 2009.

⁴⁴ When conducting interviews, KHRG researchers use loose question guidelines and 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.

Ethnicity: Karen

Religion: Buddhist

Marital Status: Single

Occupation: Farmer

Position: *[censored for security]*

Can you tell us about the situation in your old village, as you have known?

The situation was, we couldn't work as we wanted. We had to face the SPDC government.⁴⁵ You could go [only] when they allow you to go. Like, to go and work in the fields, you had to go and take a travel permission document from them. You could go and work after you went and got a travel permission document. They'd blame [accuse] you when they see you going to work without a travel permission document, and problems would happen.

Did the Army [Tatmadaw] stay in the village?

The army base was in front of our village, in a village called Ka---. It was close to our village. It wasn't so far. It was *[distance censored for security]* miles from our village.

Did they always come to the village?

They always came. Before, an army unit came and stayed with us for a month in our village. They were from MOC #567.⁴⁶

How many households were in your village?

There were *[number censored for security]* households and over 300 people.

What did villagers do for their livelihoods?

Some people did daily work [day labour] and some people had small farms so they cultivated their farms. No one farmed hill fields. Some people farmed [flat fields] and some did daily work.

Did they face problems in their work?

Everybody had a problem in the village, because we lived in the same village.

Did they have enough rice to eat?

There was a barrier [to having enough rice] because you couldn't do what you wanted to do. People who did daily work couldn't go and work as they wished. They had to get a permission document from the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] to go and work. If the situation wasn't good, they

⁴⁵ The State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) was officially 'dissolved' on March 30th 2011; see: "Mission Accomplished as SPDC 'dissolved'," Myanmar Times, April 4-10 2011. The term 'SPDC' was used by the villagers interviewed for this report, and is therefore retained in the translations above.

⁴⁶ Note that there is no Military Operation Command (MOC) #567. The villager likely meant to say Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) #567.

wouldn't allow you to go outside [of the village]. It was very bad for villagers if they couldn't go and do their own work.

What were the human rights abuses that happened in the village, or that villagers had to face?

We needed to do our work but we couldn't because we had to work for them [the Tatmadaw]. They ordered us to go and build fences around their camp or roof their huts. It isn't good if you don't go and work for them [the villagers would have problems if they refused to work]. We did their work and we couldn't do our own work.

Did they come and make demands from the village head?

Yes, they demanded one person from each house from the village head. Each villager they asked for had to go and fence their camp. You had to bring ten logs, five bamboo poles and ten shingles of thatch with you. You had to go and work. It took two or three days. You had to go and clean the camp compound when the grass grew up. They call it *loh ah pay*.⁴⁷

Did they come and oppress villagers?

They came and demanded chickens. If the villagers didn't organize [the animals] for them, they'd steal them at night time. They took them when the villagers gave them, and they stole them when the villagers didn't give them. They'd still steal, even if the villagers didn't give them [what was demanded]. Their leaders tell them '*Don't steal*,' but their soldiers steal when their leaders can't see.

Did they do anything to women when they saw them?

No.

How about children?

For children, as I told you a moment ago, the Burmese Army [Tatmadaw] gives them trouble when they are seen and don't have documents. The soldiers fine them. Everyone has to carry a permission document. You can't go anywhere without a permission document.

Which armed groups are active in your area?

There was the DKBA Army in the past, but they all went back. I had to be village head when the DKBA Army was there. I was 20 years old at that time. Fighting with the KNLA happened beside our village. We knew nothing. They came and asked us. We told them that we didn't know. They said it wasn't true that we didn't know. They [DKBA soldiers] said we fed them [KNLA soldiers] but I told them '*No, we didn't feed them*.' They called me and punched and beat me for a little while. After that they called me back to their Battalion Commander and he interrogated me. Then they gave me punishment for a month. I had to build a pagoda.

⁴⁷ *Loh ah pay*; a Burmese term now commonly used in reference to forced labour, although traditionally referring to voluntary service for temples or the local community, not military or state projects.

Which DKBA unit was it?

They were from Brigade #777, a unit under Officer Taw Teh.

Did he come and arrest you?

It was one of his soldiers, under the command of Officer Pa Leh.

When did it happen?

It was over 14 or 15 years ago. I don't remember the exact date. There was just the DKBA. The Burmese Army [Tatmadaw] hadn't come yet. They [the DKBA] came and stayed with us once. It lasted five or six years. The Burmese Army never came at that time when the DKBA was there. The Burmese Army came after the DKBA went back. After one or two years, we had to move [relocate]. We had to move once.

Which SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] units came and stayed?

The unit that came and ordered us to move was [LIB] #439.⁴⁸ They were not an MOC. They were a battalion. They were from Kw---. They ordered us to move. We had to move within seven days. They wouldn't let us stay longer. We had to move within seven days. We had to move beside a village called Ka---.

Did you have to go and work when you stayed in your old village?

Yes, we had to go and do that [work].

Did the villagers have to flee because of the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] operations?

We had to flee when fighting happened. We came back after the fighting was finished. We fled twice from fighting. The fighting happened beside our village. We all fled to the jungle. Just the eldest people were still left. Everybody fled, including children. We came back after the Burmese [Tatmadaw soldiers] went back.

Did you remember the date when they asked you to move?

We moved [relocated] in August 2002. I don't remember the date.

Who demanded you to move?

It was [Tatmadaw] Army unit [LIB] #439. I don't know whether they were ordered from above or not. They decided it.

Why did they demand villagers to move?

⁴⁸ For previous KHRG documentation of forced relocation in Ler Doh Township in 2006 linked to LIB #439, see: "Forced Relocation, Restrictions, and Abuses in Nyaunglebin District," KHRG, July 2006.

They said we welcomed the KNU and fed them. They said they would separate us, so they ordered us to move beside their camp. They ordered two or three village tracts that were close to us to move also. They gave the order, and they came and waited at our village and ordered us to move within seven days. We could move people and food but we had to leave our houses. Later, they said we had to dismantle our houses. Some people dismantled their homes and some still kept their houses [intact], but those were destroyed by the rain because the houses had no roofs. Some people went and stayed [in the relocation site] for one or two years. Their workplaces [agricultural projects] were far from them. They couldn't come back and cultivate them [their agricultural projects], so some people sold their houses. People from the city came and bought them. We went and stayed there [at the relocation site] for three years, and then we came back and some people still had their houses but some didn't. To be able to come back and stay, we had to go and meet together with the village heads and [Tatmadaw] leaders. Each of us paid 10,000 kyat (US \$12.58)⁴⁹ to the [Tatmadaw] leaders. Then they let us come back and stay.

Did all the villagers go to the relocation site?

All of them. No one was left.

How many villages did they order to move?

There were three village tracts there. There were four villages in G--- village tract, three villages in our village tract and four villages in H--- village tract. All those villages have to move beside the [Tatmadaw] army camp.

What is the name of the place where you were relocated [to]?

The place where we lived they called Yo---, and the *su see*⁵⁰ [relocation site] was the place where G--- village tract was relocated to.

What does '*su see*' mean?

It means they want to make it become a big village tract [a village tract with a large population].

How many years did you stay at the relocation site?

Three years. We faced a big problem when we went and stayed there. To come back and work [in your agricultural project], you had to come back [pass] in front of their camp. You couldn't leave as you wish.

For three years, what did you do when you went and stayed at the relocation site?

⁴⁹ All conversion estimates for the kyat in this bulletin are based on the fluctuating informal exchange rate rather than the government's official fixed rate of 6.5 kyat to US \$1. As of June 28th 2011, this unofficial rate of exchange was US\$1 = 795 kyat.

⁵⁰ '*Su see*' is a Burmese term meaning 'to gather' or 'to collect'. The term '*su see ywa*' is often used by villagers to refer to a village designated as a relocation site.

We came back and worked at our workplaces [agricultural projects]. It was far, two miles away. They didn't allow us to sleep [at the agricultural projects]. We had to come back and sleep at the relocation site. We travelled on foot. Every villager came back to do his work. In the rainy season, the water arrived up to here [*the villager gestured to his knee*]. There was no place to work [in the relocation site].

What were the problems that you had to face when you stayed there?

Travel restrictions, like you couldn't go back to your village. You could go out [only] when they allowed you. You couldn't bring a basket [when leaving the relocation site to work]. You could bring only one pack of rice, [enough] for one person. You couldn't take extra. They fined you [for carrying extra rice]. They arrested one of our villagers. They said he was a member of KNLA, because they saw a mole on his face [and they had heard that one of the KNLA soldiers had a mole on his face]. People told them [Tatmadaw soldiers] '*No, he isn't [a KNLA soldier]*.' They still kept him, and we had to buy him back with money. We had to give 10,000 kyat (US \$12.58).

Did they abuse him?

They didn't beat him, but they kept him at *bpah kuh thoo* [a secret place]. We had to get him out by giving money. They didn't abuse him.

Did they feed him?

They fed him, and they detained him just for one night. They arrested him in the morning and people went and picked him up at night.

How was the situation different from your village when you were in the relocation site?

The difference was that you couldn't come back to work in your village as you liked. It was worse for poor people. They had to sell things that they had saved. Because their livelihoods weren't going well, people who had cows sold their cows, and people who had buffaloes sold their buffaloes. People who had houses sold their houses because they had no food to eat. You couldn't go back and work when you stayed there [at the relocation site]. You weren't free anymore. It was too far to go back and do our work, so some people sold their houses.

Did the SPDC [Tatmadaw] order you to go and work when you lived in the relocation site?

They called ten people [from the village], or one person from each house, to go and carry things for them when they went into the forest. Sometimes, it took six or seven days. They went around [patrolled] in the area [near the relocation site].

Did fighting happen when you went and portered for the soldiers?

They said they would kill us if fighting happened, so the KNLA didn't shoot at them. They had said it, and the KNLA heard it so the KNLA didn't do anything. They couldn't do anything until now. The SPDC [Tatmadaw] soldiers said '*You [villagers] will have to die if a landmine explodes beside your hut and you don't escape.*'

Were there landmines in your area?

There were no landmines. They [Tatmadaw soldiers] threatened the villagers, so the KNLA couldn't do that [plant landmines]. If they did that [planted landmines], we'd have been harmed. They [the Tatmadaw] told us we'd have to move if fighting happened beside our village.

Did they order you to work more when you moved to the relocation site?

Forced labour has decreased, but we have to go and work every year in their base. You have to go and make fences twice a year.

Did the village head go and meet with them?

Village heads met with them every day. They called village heads to meetings every day. They call us the KNLA's children. There were Burmese people [living] beside our village. The Tatmadaw didn't order them a lot. They didn't get any trouble, even if a mine exploded beside their village. The Tatmadaw treats Karen people especially badly. For Burmese people, they treat them especially well because they are their own people.

Were there Burmese people in the place where you were moved?

There were Burmese people who had to move. There were two villages in our village tract. We had to move and they also had to move. In the upper part of our village, about five miles away, there was a Burmese village but the SPDC Army didn't order them to do forced labour. They just ordered Karen people.

Has your village head ever gone to meet with SPDC [Tatmadaw] leaders about forced labour?

We always go and meet with them, but you can't ask them to reduce forced labour. You have to bring things for them when you go to them. You go one time and you have to bring things for that time. You have to bring one or two chickens when you go and meet with them.

Do they reduce the work [demands for forced labour] when you go to meet them and bring food for them?

No they don't reduce it.

Didn't they feel *ah na deh* [to do that]?⁵¹

No, they didn't feel *ah na deh*.

Was there a clinic in the relocation site?

⁵¹ The phrase *ah na deh*, for which there is no direct translation in English, is commonly used in both Karen and Burmese in a wide range of contexts. It can be used variously to signify embarrassment, obligation or restraint due to feelings of respect, delicacy, honour or a fear of offending. In this case, the researcher is asking if the Tatmadaw officers felt ashamed to accept the chickens while at the same time continuing to demand villagers to perform forced labour duties.

There was no clinic. There was a clinic in our old village. They [the Tatmadaw] set up a clinic. We had to go to He---, when we got sick [while staying at the relocation site].

How long was the trip?

It was seven miles from the place where we lived [at the relocation site].

How did people go?

We went on foot in the rainy season and with motorbikes or bicycles in the summer. You had to carry patients [because the roads were not navigable in the rainy season].

Didn't they [Tatmadaw soldiers] help?

No, they didn't help.

Do you have to spend your own money when you go to the hospital?

You have to spend your own money when you go to the hospital.

You said there was a clinic in your old village. Who set up the clinic?

The Burmese Army [Tatmadaw]. They just gave a teacher [nurse or medic] but they didn't provide medicine. The teacher bought medicine with her own money and treated villagers, but it wasn't for free. You had to pay money. You couldn't go and buy medicine by yourself. They'll arrest you when they see you carrying medicine. The teacher had to go and buy medicine.

Is there a school in your village?

Yes, it's a primary school. It goes up to fourth standard. There are three school teachers from our village and two from outside the village. In total there are five school teachers.

Who founded the school, villagers or the SPDC government?

Villagers set it up. For the school, they didn't order us to dismantle the school [when the village was ordered to relocate], like the Po--- school. We didn't need to build it again when we came back. We repaired it and we could use it. Students have increased, so we have to build a new one because it's a small school, but there are more students. There are over 100 students, maybe 140 or 150 students.

How do the school teachers get salaries?

The government comes and provides a salary to them. They get 28,000 or 30,000 kyat (US \$35 – 38). The students have to buy books and other school materials themselves. There's no support.

Do students have to pay money when they go to school?

Yes, they have to pay money. A small [young] student has to pay 500 kyat (US \$0.63) and a big [older] student has to pay 1,000 kyat (US \$1.26) for school admission, but it doesn't include buying books.

Do the school teachers receive food support from the government?

No.

Are there any issues that you want to raise but I didn't ask you about?

We want peace and equal rights, like that we can go as we wish [travel freely]. Like we can go to work as we wish. But now, they obstruct us and you can't go and do your work very well; for example if they allow you to go at 6:00 am, you have to go at 6:00 am [exactly]. You can't go as you want. In the rainy season, you need to be quick to go back and work on your farm in your village. You need a boat, but they don't allow you to travel by boat. You have to swim, so the women can't go. There were one or two rivers between our village and the relocation site. They stopped [obstructed] travel by boat, so you couldn't go. Just people who knew how to swim could go. People who couldn't swim had to stay. Some people travelled secretly by boat, and they were harmed when they were seen [by Tatmadaw soldiers]. It's good if we don't have those things happening. It would be different if we had freedom in our work.

Do they still call for forced labour since you came here [returned to your village]?

It still happens, until now, that they call for forced labour. They call four or five villagers when they need them, when they travel [patrol from] village to village. We have to carry their backpacks and they let [force] you to go at the front [walk in front of patrolling soldiers]. They do that so that the KNLA won't dare to shoot them. If the KNLA shoots, it will hit the villagers first. They patrol with 20 or 30 soldiers and they include 10 villagers with them. You have to walk between them [villagers have to walk interspersed with soldiers].

What about your trip here?

We came secretly. If they know that we come back here, they'll do something to us. We came secretly, and with understanding [awareness]. They'll take action against us if they know that we come here. They'll give you punishment if they know you come here. They'll kill you or demand money. They'll put you in jail if they don't kill you. They'll say we communicate with or meet with the KNLA. We're under their hands and they step down on our necks when we live there.

Do they stay in your village now?

They don't stay in our village. They live in Ka--- village in the *su see* [relocation] village tract, where we were staying at the relocation site.

What is the [Tatmadaw] Army unit that stays in Ka--- now?

They're [LIB] #--- [battalion number censored for security]. They're from Arakan State [under the Tatmadaw's Western Command].

Interview | Saw So--- (male, 52), Wo--- village, Ler Doh Township, Nyaunglebin District (May 2011)

The following interview was conducted by a KHRG researcher. It is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.

Ethnicity: Karen

Religion: Christian

Marital Status: Married

Occupation: Farmer

Position: [censored for security]

Please can you tell us about the situation in your old village?

We had to face many kinds of problems when we lived in our old village. The SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] oppressed us. I won't say the incidents that happened in 2007, 2008 and 2009. I will tell just the current incidents. In February 2011, the SPDC Army wanted to arrest me. They said I had contacted the KNU. I foresaw this, because my villager went and sent a message to the [Tatmadaw] army camp. He came back and told me that the SPDC soldiers had asked for me, and asked me to go [to meet the Tatmadaw commander]. He was asked to send a message back if I wouldn't go. So I asked him to go and report that I couldn't go. He went and reported that and then he came back, but I wasn't at home. So he told your auntie [Saw So---'s wife], and he went back again to the army camp and reported that I wasn't at home. I came back and your auntie told me that the soldiers had asked for me for this reason; she said: '*They asked you to go and meet with them. You can't refuse. You have to go.*' I thought and I told her, '*They don't know me, so why are they asking for me?*' She said, maybe they just wanted to meet with me. [But] If they just wanted to meet me, they could've asked me to meet next time. [I said] '*I think, there must be a reason.*'

I considered it, and I went to sleep in another place in the evening. They came and arrested my eldest son, who's 21 years old. They tied him up and took him back [to the Tatmadaw camp]. They told him, '*Your father cooperates with the koh per thoo [KNLA soldiers].⁵² He sends bullets [to the KNLA] and keeps may bpo [grenades or landmines] and walkie-talkies.*'. But my son told them that there were no such things: '*My father doesn't do those things. My father is a farmer.*' They said: '*That's not true, don't lie. If you'll lie, we'll kill you.*' They tied him up and dragged him [to the Tatmadaw camp]. [The soldiers heard] that people gave money [as a tax] from fishing and farming, and that I was a member of the committee [that collected the tax]. This information spread out to another village, and they said I had a bag of money so they [the Tatmadaw soldiers] asked my son. My son said, '*My father doesn't have money bags, weapons, bombs, bullets or walkie-talkies. If you don't believe, come and search our home. I'd see it sometimes, if he had those things, because I stay together with him in the same house.*' He called [brought] the SPDC [Tatmadaw] soldiers to my house.

⁵² The Karen phrase *koh per thoo* translates literally as 'black scarves'. It is used to refer specifically to KNLA commandoes with six months or more special training, or as a general euphemism for KNLA soldiers.

At that time, I avoided [hid from the Tatmadaw]. I went to Da--- [where senior Tatmadaw leaders were based]. I went and planned [negotiated] with a top leader in Da---. His name is Na---. He's Burmese. He's a leader of the [political] party called Ke---. He [Na---] talked to the upper [Tatmadaw] leader and he said, *'He [Saw So---] is not a person like this. [Maybe] His younger brother's name [makes it] appear like he does something like that. Actually, it's not true. He doesn't to meet [the Tatmadaw]. The Burmese [Tatmadaw soldiers] will take action against him, and kill him, if he lets himself meet with the SPDC soldiers. Now, the SPDC soldiers have arrested his son, and dragged his son to an army camp.'*

He [the senior Tatmadaw officer] went back and discussed with the LID Commander, and asked me to go and meet with the officer. He said he had already organised it with the LID Commander, that [he had said], *'My man isn't a bad person. He's a good person. If you do something like this [falsely accuse him], a good person can become a bad person [start to co-operate with the KNLA].'* He organised this and he asked me to go and meet [the Tatmadaw commander] but I didn't dare to go and meet, because people said different things, like *'They're just persuading you.'* Then they [the Tatmadaw] said, *'We'll release your son.'* Other people said, *'Your son is young. He isn't guilty and he's young so they won't kill him. They're just threatening you. Maybe they'll kill you when you arrive there.'* I considered it, and I didn't dare to go. Before, I went twice a day [to meet Na--- and the senior Tatmadaw officer]. The next day, he [the Tatmadaw officer] said, *'You can't stay here without going to meet them [the Tatmadaw LID Commander]. Go and meet them. I've already organized it. You go, and if something happens inform me quickly.'* I went to them, and they released my son. I went and met with them. I brought food like chicken. If we go once, we have to spend money each time. I went four or five times. I brought chicken – one viss (1.6 kg. / 3.5 lb.) of chicken is 3,500 kyat (US \$4.40) – and duck and beer.

How much did you have to spend?

I forgot. I had to spend more the first time. The first time, I had to spend 40,000 kyat (US \$50). The second time was 20,000 kyat (US \$25), and it was 13,000 kyat (US \$16) the last three times. Later, they let me go but I had to go and visit them once every two or three days. For those ones [meetings], it didn't cost a lot. It cost just 1,500 to 3,000 kyat (US \$1.89 – 3.77) or 5,000 kyat (US \$6.29) because when I went, I had to bring things like Landon [cigarettes], cigars, betelnut and beers, and we drank together. They always asked me to go and see them. If I didn't go and meet them, they'd say, *'You're going and meeting with the koh per thoo [KNLA soldiers].'* That army unit went back [rotated out] now. They were from MOC #10. Their battalion number was 567.⁵³ I wouldn't have arrived to this place [the location of interview] if they hadn't gone back. I couldn't come here if the soldiers hadn't gone back.

Can you tell us about the livelihoods in your old village?

⁵³ Note that KHRG has previously reported LIB #567 as being under Tatmadaw MOC #16, not MOC #10. See: "SPDC forces attack rice harvest to force villagers into 'new towns'," KHRG, November 2006. MOCs #10 and #16 were both documented as active in Nyaunglebin District in 2006 as part of the Tatmadaw's 2005-2008 Offensive in northern Karen State; see: "Forced Relocation, Restrictions, and Abuses in Nyaunglebin District," KHRG, July 2006. For background on the 2005-2008 Offensive, see: *Self-protection under strain: Targeting of civilians and local responses in northern Karen State*, KHRG, August 2010.

In 2006, we were relocated to Ka---. We had to go and stay there. We went and stayed there for three years. After three years, we came back. We gave them money when we had to go. We had to [were ordered to] move once in 2004. The elders gathered, and we went to Da--- [where senior Tatmadaw leaders were based]. Each village tract paid 500,000 kyat (US \$629). The five village tracts [combined] paid 2,500,000 kyat (US \$3,145). We went and gave them [Tatmadaw soldiers] money. They said, '*You don't need to move. You can stay.*'

In 2005, they started again. They said, '*You need to move.*' We couldn't do anything. They ordered us to go and build huts [in the intended relocation site]. We had to pay the money again. That time, we paid 200,000 or 300,000 kyat (US \$252 – 377), but each village tract paid differently. In 2006, we couldn't pay money anymore. We had to move. We delayed the time. We told them to wait, that we hadn't done our [agricultural] work yet. We collected money, over 470,000 kyat (US \$591). All the elders of the community gathered, and we went and bought golden necklaces [for the Tatmadaw officers]. We could do our work if we could stay in our villages. We couldn't do our work if we had to go and live there [in the relocation site]. We'd have had to face many problems. We wouldn't have been able to do our work. It [the relocation site] was far from our village. We collected money, and we got over 470,000 kyat. We gave one necklace to the Battalion Deputy Commander and a ring to the Battalion Commander. But they said no.

We all had to move after *Tah Law* [the water festival] on the first day of the new year. They ordered us to work when we went and stayed there. We had to build the road and make the fence. We can't tell all [the work] because it was a lot. We had to build the road and make the fence. We had to fence our houses, and build a road between each house. The place where we went and lived [the relocation site], it was the very worst. [In our village] if we keep [cultivate] 200 baskets of paddy grain, we can have enough food. When we lived there, we kept [cultivated] 250 baskets of paddy grain, but it wasn't enough. I don't know why. It was like you couldn't find food. You had to buy vegetables. You had to exchange [trade] for rice when you didn't have money. Some people had to borrow rice from other people who lived there. People had to go and borrow rice from them. They said, '*Find the way to be able to go back to your village.*'

Who told you that?

Villagers who were older than us. They're rich people. People who didn't have rice went and took rice from them. They also didn't have enough when they [first] went and stayed there [in the relocation site]. They told us to find a way to come back and stay at our village. We gathered, and we went to Da---. We collected money again there [in the relocation site]. We looked at the households and their living standards and the village, and people collected differently [the villagers pooled money according each household's resources]. I can't tell you all the details. But I can tell you that in my village we collected 6,550 kyat (US \$8.24) from each house. There were [number censored for security] houses. We collected money and sent it to them [the Tatmadaw]. But we couldn't come back and stay at our old village. We came back and stayed between Ha--- and Ko---. We had to stay in the farm fields. We had to build here and there [in specified places], and keep the road in the middle [of the houses]. We stayed there for three months, then we could come back to our village.

How many years did you have to stay in the relocation site?

2006, 2007 and 2008. Three years. We came back in 2008. We came back and did our work. Villagers have to work hard. [In the relocation site], you have to go to work on time. You can go

at 6:00 am. For us [now] we go when we want, for example at 4:00 am when there's moon light. For them [in the relocation site], they aren't the same. They have to go at 6:00 am [the villagers in the relocation site can't leave the village until 6:00 am]. All the people have to come back and stay in the [relocation] village by 6:00 pm. You can't stay at your workplace [agricultural project]. They [Tatmadaw soldiers] will punish you [for violating the curfew]. They'll ask you for chicken or money or ducks. So villagers face problems.

Is there forced labour?

Yes, there is. They ordered villagers to go cut down trees or clear plants and forest that are close to our village, in the early summer [dry season] this year. It was at the end of 2010, around November or December, at the time people have to harvest. The paddy plants became red [ready to harvest] but people couldn't harvest. Trees fell down on the farms, and paddy plants were destroyed. Many farms were [partly] destroyed, but not the whole farm. For example, one or two acres of a farm was destroyed if the farm had five or six acres. One or two acres of some villagers' farms were destroyed, but some villagers' farms were just a little [damaged].

You said there are over 50 households in your village. What about the village's population?

There are over 100 people.

What do villagers do for their livelihoods?

Some people are farmers and some people are daily workers. For the poorer people, they go to the jungle and find vegetables. They come back and exchange the vegetables for rice, and some people sell them to get money. They buy items like salt, chilli and others. They go and sell vegetables in the town. People couldn't do that when they went and stayed at Ka--- [the relocation site]. People faced a lot of problems. [As] I've said, there wasn't enough food even if we keep [cultivated] 250 baskets of paddy grain. This reason also was included [contributed to the food shortages]: people could go and get vegetables and sell them in the town when they lived in the old village. They could go all the time. They could go in the morning and come back in the evening. Sometimes they could go early and come back late. But when you go and stay in Ka---, they [Tatmadaw soldiers] limit the time. If you don't reach home when the time is over [before curfew], they'll give you punishment.

Did you have to face food shortages when you stayed in your old village?

No, there was enough. Poor people could go and get vegetables from the forest and sell them in the town. They could make their living. When you go and live in Ka---, you can't do like this. Just to come back for farming, they check you and said, '*Don't bring a packet of rice.*' They said we brought rice for the jungle. If you pack rice, it means you bring it for jungle people, the *koh per thoo* [KNLA soldiers].

Did villagers have to face human right abuses in your village, like rape and oppression?

There was no such thing.

What about forced labour?

For that one, it has happened. They asked for forced labour and called villagers to carry things when they arrived to the village. They demanded chicken. They stole the chickens at night if you didn't give them [meet the demands] but we didn't note down the exact dates. [Tatmadaw Light Infantry] Battalion #567, that already went back [rotated out], after I went and met them, they came to the village and the Battalion Commander stayed at another house. His soldiers stole the villagers' chickens, but he didn't see it. The Battalion Commander's name was Kyaw Ko Hteh. They are a Light Infantry Division [Battalion], under MOC #10. I had to go and meet him [the Battalion Commander]. If I didn't go and meet him, he'd have said I went to meet with the *koh per thoo* [KNLA soldiers]. He didn't believe me, so he came and stayed at my home. He stayed at my house but he spread his soldiers everywhere. His soldiers stole my duck. It was very close to my house, but the commander didn't see them. But they saw [in their eyes] I was guilty. I saw it [when they stole the duck] but I didn't inform him [the Battalion Commander]. I worried that if I told the commander, he'd feel bad and do something to me because I had already lost my reputation [by being accused of contacting the KNLA]. So I didn't say anything. I just stayed silently.

Because of the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] activities, have your villagers fled to other places?

No, only I had to flee.

Which armed groups were active in your area?

It was [Infantry] Battalion #242, under the command of MOC #10.⁵⁴ [Light Infantry] Battalion #567 came after #242, and now LIB #--- [*battalion number censored for security*] is active in this area.

When were villagers forced to move to the relocation site?

In 2006. I don't remember the month.

Who forced you to move to the relocation site?

[Light Infantry] Battalion #439, I forgot the Battalion Commander's name but the Deputy Battalion Commander was Aung Htay Win.

Why did they force you to move to the relocation site?

They said the *koh per thoo* [KNLA soldiers] had arrived to our village and that we were feeding them so they'd have strength and they'd fight [the Tatmadaw]. So they asked us to move to the relocation site.

⁵⁴ Note that KHRG has previously reported IB #242 as being under Tatmadaw MOC #16, not MOC #10. See: "SPDC forces attack rice harvest to force villagers into 'new towns'," KHRG, November 2006. MOCs #10 and #16 were both documented as active in Nyaunglebin District in 2006 as part of the Tatmadaw's 2005-2008 Offensive in northern Karen State; see: "Forced Relocation, Restrictions, and Abuses in Nyaunglebin District," KHRG, July 2006.

Did they send order letters or come by themselves?

They came and ate our animals. We didn't go when they gave the order. We still stayed. We did [acted] like we'd go the next day or the day after that. They came and they said if villagers didn't move, they'd burn down the village and shell the village.

What did villagers do when the Army [Tatmadaw] came to the village?

As I told you, when we received the order before, we gathered and discussed whether we could give money or not, like in 2004. We gave money in 2004 and 2005 [to avoid relocation]. In 2006, we couldn't pay so we had to move. So villagers faced problems. Some villagers didn't have carts. So they just went with people [on foot]. They went and stayed on the ground [without shelter]. They went and carried [their possessions] back [to the relocation site] after the people who had carts finished carrying their stuff. All the villagers moved there. No one was still left. Not only villages, but whole village tracts [relocated]. All the villages in G--- and K--- village tracts had to move.

How many villages are in your village tract?

De---, Ha---, Ko---, Wo--- and Ya---. In all there are five villages. In K--- village tract, there is Ta---, Gk--- and Le---. All three of these villages also had to move.

What is the name of the place where you were forced to move?

Ka---. I went and stayed there for three years.

How many houses were in the relocation site?

Many houses. I don't know how many. I thought there were over a hundred houses.

In the relocation site, which armed groups were active in the area?

There was [Light Infantry] Battalion #439, led by Aung Htay Win. The Battalion Commander's name was Zaw Tun.

What did villagers do when they lived there?

They came back and worked here [in their old village].

Did they have to get permission documents from the soldiers?

Yes, the villagers had to get them. They had to pay 500 kyat (US \$0.63) to get a document. The document gives permission for one month. You can't go back and stay there [sleep in the old village]. You go in the morning and come back [to the relocation site] in the evening. We left at 6:00 am and came back at 6:00 pm. They'd put you in stocks if you were late, and demand things from you.

How was the situation different, when you lived in your village and in the relocation site?

The situation was worse when we went and stayed there [in the relocation site]. You couldn't sleep at night. There were many insects. Some people were poor; they just had one mosquito

net for the whole family. [But] one family had to have at least two or three mosquito nets, [because] there were a lot of mosquitoes. For example, in the daytime, if you hung your clothes like this and you went and shake them, there would be a lot of mosquitoes. Diseases [illnesses] were caused because of this. Diseases like malaria, fever, and *tah her per hsah* [an illness that affects the stomach]. Five people from my village died when they went and lived there. They died because of [general] sickness and malaria. Two others died of 'elders' sickness' [of general infirmity associated with old age]. They wouldn't have died if they'd stayed in the village, because the space is large and we can get fresh air. But there, we couldn't get fresh air because the place was dense [densely populated].

Were villagers in the relocation site forced to do labour?

Yes, we had to build the road. You couldn't refuse. You have to go when they order you. Even if you don't have food, you have to go [villagers have to work for the Tatmadaw instead of for their own livelihoods, even if they don't have enough food]. You have to go and do what they order you to. If you don't go, they'll fine you. We had to build their camp and fence their camp compound. We had to go when they ordered us. We went and if we didn't finish, we still had to go next day if they ordered us. They'd fine you if you didn't go.

Did forced labour increase or decrease when you went and lived in the relocation site?

It increased, because we went and stayed close to them [Tatmadaw soldiers]. We had to build the road. We fenced their camp and fenced the village in one to three layers [rings of fences]. Then we had to fence our houses too. We had to make a way [path or road] between each house. We had to build a road through the village. We have to keep a way [path or road between] each row of five houses.

How did you plan to be able to come back and stay in your village?

We collected money, and we went to find the way to Da--- [where senior Tatmadaw officers were based]. We gave money [to the Tatmadaw] but we couldn't come back and stay directly at our village. We had to stay along the way for three months.

Was there a school in your old village?

Yes. It went up to fourth standard. The school was built by villagers. Later, the government gave their staff so it became a government school. They sent three school teachers. They give them salaries.

Do students receive support?

No, you have to pay.

Do they teach Karen?

No, they don't. But they teach it in nursery school. We have a nursery school in our village. The nursery school was built by [position censored for security]. They called it... an organization [the interviewee could not remember the name]. The school was built in [location censored for security].

How many students are in the school?

There are about 60 to 70 students, and three teachers. Two teachers are from outside and one is from the village.

Is there a clinic?

No.

Where do you go if you get sick?

We go to He---.

What about villagers who get sick, but not seriously?

They just buy medicine and go to the pastor and ... [audio recording inaudible].

Do you have to pay money to the pastor for the injections?

Yes. He has to buy them.

What's the current situation in your village?

The current situation is just like this. We haven't heard anything, because their leaders have changed.

Are there any other issues that you want to tell us about?

No.

Interview | Naw Sa--- (female, 26), T--- village, Ler Doh Township, Nyaunglebin District (May 2011)

This report contains the full transcript of an interview conducted by a KHRG researcher in May 2011 with a villager from Ler Doh Township, Nyaunglebin District. The researcher interviewed Naw Sa---, a 26-year-old villager who described human rights and humanitarian conditions in her village, in a mixed administration area under effective Tatmadaw control. Naw Sa--- cited the following human rights concerns: forced relocation and displacement; demands for provision of food; shelling of civilian areas, resulting in civilian injuries; arrest and detention of villagers; physical violence against detained villagers; forced labour, including sentry duty; and movement restrictions. She also explained the challenges to accessing medical care and adequate education for children faced by members of her community; and described how villagers returned to work covertly on their agricultural projects in order to protect their livelihoods, after they were ordered by the Tatmadaw to abandon their village. The following interview was conducted by a KHRG researcher. It is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save

for minor edits for clarity and security.⁵⁵ This interview was received in May 2011 along with twelve other interviews with villagers from Nyaunglebin District.⁵⁶

Ethnicity: Karen

Religion: Christian

Occupation: Day Labourer

Can you tell us about the situation in your old [original] village?

I've never stayed in a relocation site, but villagers in my village have. I went to live in Ler Doh Town when I attended Seventh Standard, but, I returned to work in our village. I will tell you as much as I know. Soldiers [Tatmadaw] continuously oppress the villagers when we live in our village. They discriminate [between] people who are Karen and Burmese. There are Karen and Burmese villages in the place where we live. There are more Karen people, but there are some Burmese villages. When something happens [fighting or other incidents], they always oppress the Karen people. They [Tatmadaw] don't oppress their own people [the Burmese] if there's an incident at their villages. They [Tatmadaw soldiers] force villagers to work when they come to our village. We have to prepare plenty of food to give them. They go around and beg for rice, even though they're given salaries and food. I haven't witnessed this, but my aunt and uncle in my village tell me about it.

Do you know how many armed groups are active in your area?

The DKBA have stayed here before. There were no Burmese [Tatmadaw] soldiers here at that time. The Burmese Army came after the DKBA went back to Pa'an. They [the DKBA] were here for four to six years, I don't remember exactly.

How many households are in your village?

There were over [number censored for security] households before they were forced to move. Now, there are just [number censored for security] households which have returned to stay in our village. There are also some households in neighbouring villages. Not all villagers have gone back to stay in their original villages.

Do you know how many villagers are in your village?

I don't know the village population.

What do villagers do for their livelihoods?

⁵⁵ When conducting interviews, KHRG researchers 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.

⁵⁶ When these documents have been processed and translated by KHRG and when sufficient information has been compiled and analysed, a full Field Report on the situation in Nyaunglebin District will be available on the KHRG website. Until then, KHRG's most recent analysis of the situation in Nyaunglebin District can be found in the recent Field Report: "Livelihood consequences of SPDC restrictions and patrols in Nyaunglebin District," KHRG, September 2009.

Most are farmers.

Do they face any livelihood challenges?

Yes, they face a lot of livelihood challenges. Some people's farms are very far away. They live in the village and they have to travel far to work. To travel to their farms, they have to get permission from the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw]. They can't go to work if they don't get permission. They receive permission, but it's only valid for a few days.

Do villagers have to face problems like paddy farms being destroyed by insects or rodents?

I don't understand.

Are the farms ever destroyed by natural causes, not related to the Burmese Army [Tatmadaw]?

Yes. This year it rained a lot, even during the harvest time. The rain destroyed the ground nut [peanut] plantations.

Do villagers experience human rights abuses committed by the SPDC [Tatmadaw]?

If something happens close to the village, they come and oppress the villagers.

What do you mean by '*if something happens*'?

Last year on October 5th, there was an incident. The incident didn't happen beside the village, it happened between two villages. The Burmese Army was in our village. In the evening, at about 5:30 pm, they went back to the Burmese village. The incident [likely a KNLA ambush; see testimony below] happened when some of the soldiers were on the way back to the Burmese village. They [the Tatmadaw soldiers] shelled back in the direction of the village. Some Burmese soldiers were still at KI--- [village] during the ambush. One of their soldiers got injured. They [the Tatmadaw soldiers] came with more people to carry the injured soldier. There was a shop at KI---. The shop owner was scared, and the Burmese soldiers took things from the shop. They shelled mortars at the village, and my cousin and a pig were hit.

Was the injury serious?

The injury wasn't too serious. She was only hit by a piece of mortar [shrapnel]. Close to the incident, there was a 17 or 18 year old boy who was cutting grass for his cows. After he finished, he was going to go back to the village. He kept one of his baskets beside [location not clear] and the other basket wasn't yet filled with grass. He put [the basket] on his bicycle. The Burmese [Tatmadaw] soldiers approached him after he filled his basket. They arrested the boy

and told the boy to follow them. Our village head was informed by the army that the boy was forced to return to the army camp with the soldiers.⁵⁷

What kind of incident happened? Was it a bomb blast?

Yes, it was a bomb blast and the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] and the KNU [KNLA] began to shoot at each other. There was nothing to connect the villagers to the fighting. They [Tatmadaw] went back to the village and claimed that the villagers provided support to them [the KNLA]. The boy they had arrested was tied up and questioned by the soldiers. They accused him of being involved [in the incident], but he wasn't. They took his bag. I heard that his ID card was in his bag. The boy was from our village, but he moved to stay in a Burmese village. He said that he was asked a lot of questions. He was a boy, and he knew nothing. He told the soldiers that it wasn't him. He said: '*I wouldn't have stayed at that place if I had known something bad would happen.*' After he said those words, he was beaten. Later, the village heads followed him [went to the place where the boy was detained] and he was released.

Also, villagers had to do sentry [duty] for them. Two men had to do sentry [duty]. These two boys were about 18 or 19 years old. They were arrested and the village head had to follow them and give money to the soldiers. Later, they were released.

Did they keep those boys in jail?

Yes, they put the boys in jail, but I don't know how many days they were kept in jail. I think they were imprisoned for up to ten days. They [Tatmadaw] dragged the chairperson with them, and they beat him. He had serious injuries. People said his legs and hands ... [audio recording inaudible].

Has your village been forced [to move] once?

They didn't force us to move to the *su see* [relocation site].⁵⁸ [But] We have to go and stay in different places when the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] makes us.

Do you remember the date when the villagers were forced to move?

I don't remember the date. All the villagers had to move. No one could stay in the village. The first time they forced villagers to move from the village, they said no one could return and stay in the village. If they saw people going back to the village, they'd kill everybody. At that time, I went back to stay, because we had to plant paddy in the rainy season. We didn't want to go and stay at other villages. We had to come back and work very early in the morning. So, we stayed and slept in the village. I went and slept at my aunt's house, because they have doors. We went and slept with three of my cousins, my aunt, her son and I. We were all women except my aunt's son. He was over 10 years old.

⁵⁷ This incident was also described by Saw My---, a 45-year-old villager from Ler Doh Township interviewed by a KHRG researcher in May 2011. See: "Nyaunglebin Interview: Saw My---, May 2011," KHRG, August 2011.

⁵⁸ '*Su see*' is a Burmese term meaning 'to gather' or 'to collect'. The term '*su see ywa*' is often used by villagers to refer to a village designated as a relocation site.

One night, people told us that the army [Tatmadaw] was coming from the east of the village. My cousin's house is on that side. Both of my female cousins were in the house. We heard that the Burmese Army was about to arrive. We didn't know what to do. We were very afraid because we had been told that they do anything they want when they see women. We closed the door. The soldiers came and called for people who had gone to sleep in their field huts. My uncle and cousin were in their field huts, and the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] brought them back to the village when they entered. One village organiser said: '*Don't be afraid, and don't go anywhere at night. Stay at your home.*' Some of the villagers arranged something with the Tatmadaw, and nothing happened to us. If they hadn't reached an agreement, we may have faced terrible things. At that time, they had forced the village to move; however, it was work season, so people went back and stayed secretly.

Where did you move after you were ordered to leave?

We went and stayed in different places. Some people moved to neighbouring villages and various other places. Some people moved to the city.

Did all the villagers come back after they were allowed to come back?

No, not all the villagers came back. There were over [number censored for security] households before the village was moved. Now, there are only [number censored for security] households.

Is there a hospital in your village?

No, there's no hospital. There's a small [government] clinic. Before, there were [also] two people [medical personnel] who looked after patients. We heard that one didn't want to work anymore. The other one was moved to another place.

Those two people were sent by the government?

Yes, they were from our government. Before, a [KNU] medical officer was given a chance [to work in the area] but it wasn't the same as for the [government] workers [who can travel and work without restrictions]. When you go to buy medicine in the town or city, you have to carry it secretly if you need to buy a lot. We don't go to the [government] clinic. We go to the [KNU] medical officer. Some people go to the hospital [in another town] when they are seriously sick. When the medical officer can't take care of their disease, villagers will go to the hospital.

How far do people have to travel to reach the hospital?

It takes two hours on foot.

Do you have to pay for your own treatment when you go to the hospital? Does the government pay for you at all?

No, they don't help.

Is there a school in your village?

There's a school in our village, and it goes up to Fourth Standard. You have to go and attend schools at other villages after you graduate. In other villages, schools go up to Eighth Standard.

For example, we are in H--- village tract, and Bo--- School goes up to Eighth Standard. If we go there, we have to walk for 30 minutes. Before, the road wasn't good, but now it's good.

Do you have to travel from your village to Bo--- School?

Yes.

Was the school supported by the government?

Yes. The government built the school, but the school teachers didn't want to come to the school. They were given the duty by the government, but they didn't go to school regularly. Some weeks, they only offered two days of classes. But last year, a teacher from Ka--- came to teach. He's Karen. Another person also came to teach in the school. They're friends, so they teach together at the school. They come to school regularly. The school principal and the two original teachers, who come from the city, don't come to school regularly. The children want to go to school, but they can't if no teachers are present.

Are there any other issues that you want to discuss?

No.

Interview | Saw S--- (male, 17), Ko--- village, Ler Doh Township, Nyaunglebin District (May 2011)

This report contains the full transcript of an interview conducted by a KHRG researcher in May 2011 with a villager from Ler Doh Township, Nyaunglebin District. The researcher interviewed Saw S---, a 17 year-old student who compared his experiences living in a Tatmadaw-controlled relocation site, and in his own village in a mixed-administration area under effective Tatmadaw control. Saw S--- described the following abuses: killing of villagers; forced relocation; movement restrictions; taxation and demands; theft and looting; and forced labour including portering, sentry duty, camp maintenance and road construction. Saw S--- also discussed the impact of forced labour and movement restrictions on livelihoods; access to, and cost of, health care; and constraints on children's access to education, including the prohibition on Karen-language education. In order to address these issues, Saw S--- explained that villagers attempt to bribe military officers with money to avoid relocation, and with food and alcohol to lessen forced labour demands; conceal from Tatmadaw commanders that villagers sometimes leave the village to work without valid permission documents; and go into hiding to protect their physical security when conflict occurs near the village. The following interview was conducted by a KHRG researcher. It is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.⁵⁹ This interview was received in May 2011 along with twelve other interviews with villagers from Nyaunglebin District.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ When conducting interviews, KHRG researchers 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.

⁶⁰ When these documents have been processed and translated by KHRG and when sufficient information has been compiled and analysed, a full Field Report on the situation in Nyaunglebin District will be available on the KHRG website. Until then, KHRG's most recent analysis of the situation in Nyaunglebin District can be found in the recent Field Report, "Livelihood consequences of SPDC restrictions and patrols in Nyaunglebin District," KHRG,

Ethnicity: Karen
Religion: Christian
Marital Status: Single
Occupation: Student

Where did you live before?

Ko--- village. We moved to Ka--- for three years, and we came back to stay [in Ko---] about two years ago.

Can you tell me about the situation in your old village, before you were forced to move?

When we lived in our village we worked, but the situation wasn't good. Sometimes, the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] came. They came and demanded things when they arrived at our village.

Did you go to school when you lived in Ko--- village?

Yes, I was a student at that time. I had to attend tenth standard. We went to attend school at He--- [town]. There is only a primary school in Ko--- so we had to go to He--- when we went to higher standards.

How far is it from Ko--- to He---?

[When we went to school in He---] we had to rent a house and stay there [in He---]. We couldn't travel because it took too much time. The trip took us about one or two hours on our bicycles.

How many houses are in Ko--- village?

There are [*number censored for security*] houses in Ko---. There are over [*number censored for security*] people.

What do villagers do for their livelihoods while they live in Ko---?

They farm, pan for gold, and plant peanuts. Ko--- is located in a flat area. It's close to He--- Town.

Do villagers face any disruptions when they try to work?

There are many kinds of disruptions. They can't do their work very well because *ta soon ta sa* [literally 'there is illness'] and the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] comes to the village with demands for food and money. You have to work the whole day. You have to start your work at 6:00 am in the morning, but your farm is very far away. You have to travel to your farm at sunrise, and return from your farm at 5:30 pm. It's noon time when you arrive at your work place, and you have to be back at the village before 6:00 pm. You can't work very well. If you come back later, the

September 2009.

Burmese [Tatmadaw] will punish you. Some farms are close to the village, but some are very far away.

Can people whose farms are far away leave at 5:00 am?

You can't go at 5:00 am. They have limited times. You can only leave for your farm after 6:00 am. Also, you have to arrive back to the village by 6:00 pm. If you don't follow [abide by] the limited times they will punish you.

Have they punished anyone?

Yes, villagers were put in stocks [wooden or metal restraints that lock around the legs] and forced to pay money. The only way to get them out of the stocks was to pay money.

How much money do they ask for?

If they demand 10,000 kyat (US \$12.80),⁶¹ you pay 10,000 kyat. If they demand 2,000 kyat (US \$2.56), you pay 2,000 kyat. They only release the person when you give them the money they demand. You also have to go and do *loh ah pay* for them.⁶² You have to go and clean their base. They force one person to *kaw gkay* [perform sentry duty] each day.

Do you have porter when you go and do *loh ah pay*?

Yes, we have to go and carry things for them [the Tatmadaw]. There are many kinds of *loh ah pay*. We have to carry rations for them, be sentries and clean up their camp. One person [from the village] has to do *loh ah pay* each day.

Can people refuse when they don't want to go do *loh ah pay*?

No, you have to go.

Can they pay money when they don't want to go?

You have to hire someone. People who are poor go and work [for you]. You give them money and they go to do *loh ah pay* for you.

How much do you have to pay if you hire people?

One day costs about 1,500 kyat (US \$1.92). The people who do *loh ah pay* [for wages] are poor. Other villagers pay them to go [perform *loh ah pay*] instead of them.

Do they demand things like logs and bamboo?

⁶¹ All conversion estimates for the kyat in this bulletin are based on the fluctuating informal exchange rate rather than the government's official fixed rate of 6.5 kyat to US \$1. As of July 28th 2011, this unofficial rate of exchange was US \$1 = 781 kyat.

⁶² *Loh ah pay*; a Burmese term now commonly used in reference to forced labour, although traditionally referring to voluntary service for temples or the local community, not military or state projects.

Yes, for example if you set up a log separating machine [a sawmill], they order you to pay a tax. You have to pay them once a week. You have to pay the tax when you go and get a work permission document. You also have to report to them if you go and catch fish in the river. You have to give them money to be allowed to catch fish. [If you want to catch fish], they make you come to the camp once a week to get a signed work permission document and they ask you for fish too.

How much do you have to pay once a week?

They order you to go and get a signed work permission document once a week. They ask you to bring them fish once a week.

How much [tax] do people have to pay for a log separating machine [sawmill]?

It depends on how many tons of logs you separate. You have to pay them according to the amount of logs.

Do they ask villagers to provide logs, thatch pieces and bamboo poles?

Yes. For example, if you go to the jungle to collect wood, you have to pay them 3,000 kyat (US \$3.84) per month.

Do you have to get a permission document to go outside [the village]?

Yes, you have to get a permission document and carry the document with you if you go to the city or anywhere outside [the village]. For example, we live in Ko--- and if we go and buy things in the city we have to get permission. We don't need to pay money for this because we receive it from the village head.

How many days can you stay outside [the village] with a permission document?

If you go and sleep outside for two nights, they will write a letter allowing you to go for two nights.

If your permission document is out of date, do you dare to come back?

Yes, villagers dare to come back [if that happens]. They [the Tatmadaw] don't know that you went to the city. Only the village head knows. The village head doesn't tell them, because the army camp and the village are separate. The army only occasionally comes to the village. When they come, they take chickens or ask for chickens, and you have to kill a pig and provide curry for them.

Do you know how many times you have to go and cut bamboo for the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] each year?

It depends on the timing [season]. Villagers cut bamboo during the summer time [the hot season], not in the rainy season, because during the summer people repair and build their houses. Some people have no money, so they cut bamboo to make money.

So they don't demand logs and bamboo poles to build their camp?

No, they just ask for money. They don't ask for logs and bamboo. They just ask for money. We go and do all the work by ourselves, but they demand money from us.

Does your family also have to pay money?

We have to pay money every month. We have to pay 3,000 kyat (US \$3.84) every month. This is the situation every year. There are [*number censored for security*] houses and each house has to pay 3,000 kyat. This is in Ko--- village. The Burmese [Tatmadaw] occupy Ka--- army camp. It takes a two or three hour long walk to reach Ka--- from Ko---.

What about killing? Have any people been killed?

There's no killing. But, if they hear that you are communicating with outside people, they kill you.

Have they killed anyone in Ko--- village?

Yesterday [in the last couple of months], they came and followed someone. His name was brought to the attention of the Burmese and they came to arrest him. He escaped, so he wasn't arrested. For example, if the Burmese knew that we were here [at the interview location], they would arrest us. We came here secretly. Yesterday [in the last couple of months] they killed one De--- villager in Ha--- village tract. His name is Sh---.

Why was he killed?

He came and worked in [*location censored for security*] and they [the Tatmadaw] found out.

When was he killed?

Not so long ago, maybe one or two months ago, during this year. He was in Ha--- village tract. It's near our village tract, beside Ko--- village tract.

Is Ha--- village close to Ko---?

It is the same village, but it is divided in the middle [into two parts].

Does he have a family?

Yes. He has a wife. His child is three years and four months old. He [Sh---] got married recently. He's poor, so he came to work in [*location censored for security*]. He went back and talked about stupid things when he *mey hay* [was intoxicated] and the Burmese [Tatmadaw] found out and arrested him. I don't know what date this incident happened on. I just heard people say he was killed. It's true that he was killed.

Can you guess the date?

I think it was in February, because people cooked sugar cane in February.

Do you know which army unit came to kill him?

I don't know which army unit it was. The army group went back and stayed at their base. Now, they have already rotated [out of the area].

How many armed groups are active in Ko--- village?

There are many armed groups, but just one group came and stayed near Ko---. One group came to occupy the land close to our village.

Was it the DKBA, the BGF, the KNLA or the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw]?

It was the SPDC Army. But, the KNU [the KNLA] comes occasionally.

Did the KNLA ever arrive at your village before your village was forced to move?

They always came and stayed.

Did they create any problems for villagers when they came?

No.

Did they demand things and abuse villagers?

No, we are the same ethnicity so they didn't abuse us.

How do they [the Tatmadaw] demand things? Do they write letters or arrive in person?

They write letters. You have to go and send the information to them every day. You have to go and tell them if the KNU came to you. There is a guard [a villager serving as a sentry or messenger], who has to go and deliver the messages back and forth between the village head and the Tatmadaw.

What do they ask people to go and carry, when they ask for porters?

People go and carry rations like rice, salt, and chilli.

How many people do they ask for at one time?

For example, if three people go one time, the next time another three people have to go. Ten people don't go at the same time. But if it's important, like when they order you to go work in their camp, every house has to go. When they ask for people to work in the camp, one person from each household must go each day. They have to go and clean up [cut down trees and clear brush in] the camp.

Do villagers flee to the jungle as a result of the fighting in the village?

Yes. People flee to the jungle all the time [when there is fighting]. In the early summer [hot season, between February and April], the Burmese Army [Tatmadaw] soldiers in our village tract began fighting. The fighting happened beside T--- village. It happened between T--- and Ky--- village. The SPDC [Tatmadaw] came and the KNU [the KNLA] attacked them.

What happened after the fighting?

The villagers fled. One person was arrested. People had to go and provide a guarantee [promise to take responsibility for his actions] and the person was released.

Did they [the Tatmadaw] abuse the villagers and burn down villages?

No, they didn't.

Was the fighting close to your village?

Yes. They punish the villages closest to where the fighting happens.

Do you remember the date when you were ordered to move [to the relocation site]?

I was in Fourth Standard and I was about to step up to [begin] Fifth Standard when we were forced to move. It was four years ago, in June 2006. I don't remember the date because I was young. People told us to move, so we moved.

Who came and ordered Ko--- village to move?

The SPDC Army [Tatmadaw]. I don't know who their army unit commander was. They occupied Ka---. That unit has already rotated. They [Tatmadaw Battalions] rotate once a year.

Do you know why they ordered villagers to move?

Fighting began in Th---, and the KNU [the KNLA] entered our area. The KNU came back to our village tract and [the Tatmadaw] saw that we were connecting [communicating or meeting] with the KNU. So, they ordered us to move close to their camp.

Did the KNU really come and stay in your village tract?

Yes. They came and stayed when they were patrolling.

Did [the Tatmadaw] write an order or come in person to order the villagers to move?

They came in person and notified us of the date when we had to move. They came and told the chairperson. They told the chairperson and the chairperson told us. We moved and we weren't going to dismantle our house, but they said that they would burn down our houses if we didn't dismantle them. After, we went back to our dismantled houses and built small huts.

Did all the villagers move immediately after receiving the order, or did they stay and pretend to *chet ta er nah* [literally 'pretend to be deaf']?

No, no one stayed. *Bpwa lu ler say* [literally 'people followed with money', meaning the village heads collected money to try to bribe the Tatmadaw]. We tried to pay the [Tatmadaw] leaders to stop the relocation process. We tried this but we didn't succeed. We had to move.

You said the village head had to go with money. How much money did the village head give to them?

This was based on their requests. For example, if they had demanded 400,000 kyat (US \$512) then we'd have had to pay 400,000 kyat. If they had demanded 500,000 kyat (US \$640), we'd have had to pay 500,000 kyat. But, they said no to our offer [to pay money to avoid relocation].

Did they still take money?

The lower-ranking commanders took money. The higher-ranking commanders didn't receive any money [so we had to move].

So you had to give money, and got nothing in return?

Yes. They [the Tatmadaw soldiers] stayed in their army camp and ordered people to move.

Does this mean that the lower-ranking commanders took the money and allowed the villagers to stay, but the higher-ranking commanders wouldn't allow the villagers to stay?

Yes. We didn't have enough money to give the higher-ranking commanders.

Did all of the villagers move to the relocation site or did they [some of them] flee to different places?

There were villagers who fled to different places. Villagers with successful businesses went and stayed in the city. Some people went and worked at other places.

Did more people go to the relocation site, or did more people flee?

Less people fled. Most people went and stayed in the relocation site.

Were there families who fled to the jungle?

Yes, some families fled. I don't know how many families went to the jungle.

Were other villages forced to move too?

Ha---, De---, Ko---, Wo---, Bp---, Gk--- and K--- villages were all forced to move to the same place.

What is the name of the relocation site?

The name is Ka---. It is known as the *su see* [relocation] village region. We all stayed there together, so they called it *su see* village.⁶³

Was there a village in Ka--- before your village was forced to move there?

⁶³ 'Su see' is a Burmese term meaning 'to gather' or 'to collect'. The term 'su see ywa' is often used by villagers to refer to a village designated as a relocation site.

Yes. There was Ka--- village and Su--- village.

How many years did you live in Ka---?

Three years. After three years, we came back to stay here [in Ko--- village].

Did the Army [Tatmadaw] allow you to come back and stay?

We bribed them with money. We gave them money and they allowed us to come back. Every house had to pay 20,000 kyat (US \$25.61).

How many households came back to stay?

Currently, there are [*number censored for security*] households. In Ko--- village, there are about [*number censored for security*] households that came back to stay. The total cost for the households [to return] was [*number censored for security*].

How many villagers from the seven villages were relocated?

I don't know. I can't guess.

How many armed groups were in the relocation site?

Just one.

Did you ever see the KNU [the KNLA] in Ka---?

No, [but] we occasionally see the KNU since we've come back here [to Ko--- village].

What kind of work did villagers at the relocation site do?

They came back [to Ko--- during the day] and did their farms here. They came to work here during the day and went back in the evening. But you had to get a permission document to do this. You had to pay 3,000 kyat (US \$3.84) per month. You couldn't stay and sleep here [in Ko---].

Is this [current] 3,000 kyat per month payment the same payment each house had to pay when you lived in Ka---?

We paid 3,000 kyat (US \$ 3.84) regularly to the local SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] authority at Ka--- to travel to Ko--- for work. We had to pay the 3,000 kyat to work around Ko--- village. The people who didn't come back and work in Ko--- didn't need to pay the extra 3,000 kyat. Some of the people who didn't travel to Ko--- to work sold goods in Ka---. These people who didn't leave Ka--- didn't have to pay the travel tax. When we moved back to Ko---, after negotiating an agreement, we still had to pay 3,000 kyat every month to live and work in Ko---.

How far is the distance from Ko--- to Ka---?

Two hours on foot.

You mean villagers got permission documents from the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] and came back to work in their village? How often did they have to pay, every month or week?

They had to pay the SPDC Army once a month. They couldn't sleep at their workplaces. If you came back late, you had to swim [across the lake, as punishment]. There was a lake in front of their army camp. You had to come in front of their camp to show yourself. You couldn't come back secretly behind the camp.

What are the other challenges that villagers faced in the *su see* [relocation] village?

It was very hard for villagers to do their daily work. The first year that we moved, it was during the rainy season and there were heavy rains. Because our houses had short legs [stilts], some houses were flooded and destroyed. We had to stay on the road.

Did you have to do *loh ah pay* in the relocation site?

Yes. We had to construct roads, work in the army camp, and repair the army camp. We had to do these activities every year.

Did other villages have to do *loh ah pay*, or was your village exclusively targeted?

All villages [that were forcibly relocated] had to do *loh ah pay*. They [the different villages] were sent to do work in specific places. [For example,] Ko--- villagers had to do work from here [gestures] to here [gestures].

When did you have to go and do *loh ah pay*?

I had to go, but I don't remember the dates. We had to go every day. It took a month to finish the road.

You went and stayed at Ka--- for three years. Which years did you have to do *loh ah pay*, the first year, the second year or the last year?

We just had to work on the road until it was finished.

Did you have to construct the road as soon as you arrived?

We had to build our houses immediately after arriving. Then, we had to construct the road. We had to dig a well and make a fence around our houses. Next, we had to come back and take bamboo from Ko--- village. We had to carry everything ourselves.

Did they provide food when you constructed the road?

They didn't. We came back and ate at our homes.

Did they pay you money?

No, we had to go and do it all for free. They came and watched, and if there was a need, they told you to do certain tasks. You had to go back at noon to eat. We began work again when they said it was time.

What time did you have to go?

We went in the morning after we ate rice. We had to go in the morning and come back at 12:00 [noon]. We came back and ate at home [in Ka---] because it was close [to the location where forced labour was performed].

What time did you stop working?

We stopped at 5:00 pm.

Did the whole village have to go?

Yes. Also, other villages like Ko---, K---, Wo--- and Bp--- villages had to go.

Was there fighting when you lived in Ka---?

No, there was no fighting. You had to fence your house while you lived there. If you didn't, the Burmese Army [Tatmadaw] would arrest and beat you. They gave you a deadline to build your fence. The fence had to be finished within two days.

Did they ever beat anyone?

Yes, they did.

Do you know the villager's name?

Yes, his name is W---. He is a Ha--- villager. They beat him, and demanded that he finish the fence.

Was the beating serious?

Yes, it was serious.

Did you know the person doing the beating?

He was Burmese. I don't know what army unit he was from. It was the army from Ka---.

Was the place you lived in Ka--- close to the Burmese Army [Tatmadaw] camp?

Yes, they were connected. The army camp was located in the middle [of several villages] and the villages were located on the outside perimeter. They ordered you to go and be sentries at the village entrance. They patrolled to see how we lived, and checked to see if we were digging a toilet. They'd beat you if you didn't finish [digging a toilet or building a fence]. They patrolled every day.

Is there any difference between the situation in Ko--- and the situation in Ka---?

Yes, there's a difference. We're happy living in our place [Ko--- Village]. We weren't happy to stay there [in Ka---]. The weather was hot and we had to build our houses in the farm. There were no trees or bamboo. It was very hot. There was no place to find vegetables. All around

were fields. It was hot because we stayed in the fields. [So] we came back to our village [Ko---]. People who didn't come back are still staying in Ka---.

You had to go and carry things, help build the army camp and pay money to the army when you lived in Ko---. Did the same things happen when you lived in Ka---?

Yes, we had to do the same things for the army in Ko--- and in Ka---. Before we came here [the location of the interview], we had to make three layers of fence around the camp for them.

When did this happen?

March 2nd 2011.

How many days did you have to go do *loh a pay*?

We had to do *loh ah pay* until we were finished. If we didn't finish the task, we were punished. We finished it within three days.

Were the logs or bamboo ready [for the fence construction]?

No. We had to come back to our village to cut bamboo, and brought the bamboo back to our houses. Then we carried the bamboo poles by cart when we built the camp for them.

Did they feed you rice when you were building the camp for them?

We came back home at 12:00 pm to eat. We went back at 2:00 pm and took a rest for a while before starting work again. All the villages which were relocated had to come and build the camp. They didn't give any money.

What age were you when you first had to go and work for the Tatmadaw?

We always had to go and work for them. I was in Sixth Standard when I first had to go and work for the Burmese [Tatmadaw].

Which place did you have to do more for the Burmese Army: in Ko--- or in Ka---?

We had to do more work when we were close to the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] camp at Ka---. They asked you to work and ordered you to meet with them. When we came back here [to Ko---] they ordered Ka--- villagers [to work] instead of us because we stay far away and Ka--- villagers stay close to them.

Do villagers find ways to reduce human right abuses?

No.

So, the villagers do as they are ordered?

Yes.

Do villagers ever go to the Camp Commander and offer a chicken or a bottle of alcohol?

Yes, we bring a chicken or beer when they order us to meet with them.

So, they don't ask you to work anymore when you bring them chicken and beer?

They do ask us to work, but their demands decrease. For example, if they ask you to finish the work within one day, when you bring them chicken and beer, they will give you another day to finish.

Do villagers plan to stop going to work for the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw]?

No, they don't plan this.

Is there a clinic in Ko--- village?

No. we go to He--- town when we get sick. When we can, we cure sicknesses in the village. But, if our sickness is serious, we go to the hospital.

Is there a health worker in Ko--- village?

Yes, there's a health worker. But you have to pay money for their services. They're Karen but they graduated from a Burmese medical school.

How much would you have to spend if you went to He--- hospital?

You'd have to pay about 100,000 kyat (US \$128) if your disease is serious.

Do people go to the hospital?

Yes.

Can you get treatment for free?

No. You can't get it for free.

How far is Ko--- from He---?

Some people go on foot, or by bicycle or motorbike. It takes two hours with a bicycle and one hour with a motorbike. Most people travel with bicycles. There is no waterway to travel on.

Is there a clinic in the relocation site?

No. The government comes from He--- once a month to give medicine injections for disease prevention.

Did you have to go to He--- if you got sick at the relocation site?

They had a clinic. You could get some cures there if your disease wasn't serious. If it was serious, you had to go to He--- town. If you couldn't be cured there, you'd have to go to Toungoo [Town].

Is there any support from the outside?

Yes, support from the outside has come once or twice. We're students, so our parents go to get the medicine. I went once when I was sick. I had to go outside the village.

Is there a school in the village?

Yes, there's a school but it only goes up to Fourth Standard. After we graduate Fourth Standard, we have to go to Bo---. It was a big village in the past. The villagers [in Bo---] were forced to move many times. There are about *[number censored for security]* households in Bo--- now. Villagers came back and stay in huts now. There's a big school in Bo--- which goes up to Eighth Standard. After graduating Eighth Standard from Bo---, you have to go to He--- town.

Who built the school in Ko---? Was it the villagers, the KNU or the government?

The government gave the order to build the school in our village. They provided bricks and cement. Villagers were on their own for the remaining materials and labour.

How many students are in Ko---?

There are about *[number censored for security]* students and *[number censored for security]* teachers.

Can the students learn Karen?

No. There's *[location censored for security]* in Wo---, beside our village. They teach Karen. There are a few *[information censored for security]* people in our village. Most villagers are *[information censored for security]*. We have no money to build a *[location censored for security]*. There are two *[information censored for security]* families in Ko---. I never learned Karen. I can't [read or write] Karen.

Are school materials provided?

No, we have to buy materials by ourselves. We receive no support from outside [the village].

Where do the teachers come from, the government or the village?

Teachers come from the village. They graduated Tenth Standard in the city and have come back to teach in their village.

What about the school teachers' salary?

Their salary is 60,000 kyat (US \$77) per month. It's provided by the government, so villagers don't need to pay.

Is there anything else that you'd like to say?

There are many things that I want to say. The situation isn't good. We have to move every time the fighting begins.

How many years have you stayed in Ko---?

Two years.

Does the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] come to your village?

They always come. The KNU [the KNLA] also comes.

Have you had to go and work for the SPDC Army since you came back?

Yes, we always have to go and work at the Ka--- army camp. We have to go be sentries every day.

Did the work you have to do for the army decrease when you came back to your village?

Yes, it decreased.

Do you have to go and work for the KNU [KNLA]?

No.

Who demands more: the KNU or the SPDC Army?

The Burmese Army.

What does the KNU ask for?

They ask for rice. Each house has to give one basket.⁶⁴ This happens once a year.

Do villagers face food problems in Ko---?

Yes, there are many villagers who face food problems. This also occurred in the *su see* village, but the situation was more serious in the *su see* village. We have more time to work in Ko---. We can come back at 7:00 pm instead of 6:00 pm.

Interview | Naw P--- (female, 40), Ta--- village, Ler Doh Township, Nyaunglebin District (May 2011)

This report contains the full transcript of an interview conducted by a KHRG researcher in May 2011 with a villager from Ler Doh Township, Nyaunglebin District. The researcher interviewed Naw P---, a 40-year-old farmer who described her experiences living in a Tatmadaw-controlled relocation site, and in her original village in a mixed-administration area under effective Tatmadaw control. Naw P--- described the following human rights abuses: rape and sexual violence; indiscriminate firing on villagers by Tatmadaw

⁶⁴ A basket is a unit of volume used to measure paddy, husked rice and seeks. One basket of paddy equals approximately 21 kg. or 46 lb; one basket of husked rice equals approximately 32 kg. or 70 lb. Saw S--- did not specify whether each household was required to provide one basket of paddy or one basket of husked rice to the KNLA each year.

soldiers; forced relocation; arrest and detention; movement restrictions; theft and looting; and forced labour, including use of villagers as military sentries and porters. Naw P--- also raised concerns regarding the cost of health care and about children's education, specifically Tatmadaw restrictions on children's movement during perceived military instability and the prohibition of Karen-language education. In order to address these concerns, Naw P--- told KHRG that some villagers pay bribes to avoid forced labour and to secure the release of detained family members; lie to Tatmadaw commanders about the whereabouts of villagers working on farms in violation of movement restrictions; and organise covert Karen-language education for their children. The following interview was conducted by a KHRG researcher. It is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.⁶⁵ This interview was received in May 2011 along with twelve other interviews with villagers from Nyaunglebin District.⁶⁶

Ethnicity: Karen

Religion: Buddhist

Marital Status: Married

Occupation: Farming

Position: [censored for security]

What is your name?

My name is Naw P---.

How old are you?

I'm 40 years old.

Which village, township and district you are from?

I'm from Ta--- village, Kyauk Kyi [Ler Doh] Township, Nyaunglebin district.

What is your occupation?

I'm a farmer.

Do you live in your old [original] village or do you live in a new village [relocation site]?

I live in my old village.

Can you tell us about the situation in your old village, and what are villagers' occupations?

⁶⁵ When conducting interviews, KHRG researchers use loose question guidelines and 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.

⁶⁶ When these documents have been processed and translated by KHRG and when sufficient information has been compiled and analysed, a full Field Report on the situation in Nyaunglebin District will be available on the KHRG website. Until then, KHRG's most recent analysis of the situation in Nyaunglebin District can be found in the recent Field Report, "Livelihood consequences of SPDC restrictions and patrols in Nyaunglebin District," KHRG, September 2009.

Some villagers are farmers and some don't have farms. They [villagers who don't have farms] work as day workers [for daily wages].

I mean how is the situation in the village?

Sometimes the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] comes to our village and we can't work smoothly [without disruption] because they come and ask for villagers to do sentry duty for them and to carry things for them. My village is big so each time they ask for ten or fifteen people to porter for them. When they [villagers] go to carry things, it sometimes takes them five days, sometimes 15 days and sometimes one month. Their family [members] which are left behind can't work, because they need the family head to lead the family. The SPDC Army camp is near my village so we have to go and fetch [porter] for their army camp.

What is the name of the army camp?

They call it Ka--- army camp.

What is the officer's name?

The officer's name? I'm not sure because the battalion changes all the time. Sometimes they're based in the village for three months, and other times for six months.

They change the battalions, but is [the Tatmadaw] still based in your village?

They change the battalion but the army [soldiers] rotates all the time. They never stop. They tell the village head to go to see them. They say 'We don't have food, so bring us food and chickens'. They ask villagers to go and guard their army camp [perform sentry duty] but if a person can't go they have to pay 2,500 kyat (US \$3.18)⁶⁷ for one day and one night.

Is that 2,500 kyat (US \$3.18) for one person?

Yes, for one person. In the morning the villager [who is a sentry] has to go and check the news for them [such as] 'Is the KNLA Army coming?' We have to write a report for them [about KNLA movements]. Villagers [who are sentries] have to stay at the army camp every day, to guard their camp for them.

How many villagers have to go each day?

Each day, three villagers have to go and stay at their camp. One villager has to go to find out how close the KNLA Army is to their camp. One has to send the news to the [Tatmadaw] Army leader, and one has to guard the army camp. So, it causes problems for the villagers' livelihoods because there's no time to do their own work. They [the villagers] often have to go and be a guard [sentry] for the SPDC Army, so they are too tired to work on their livelihoods.

⁶⁷ All conversion estimates for the kyat in this bulletin are based on the fluctuating informal exchange rate rather than the government's official fixed rate of 6.5 kyat to US \$1. As of July 21st 2011, this unofficial rate of exchange was US \$1 = 785 kyat.

How many households do you have in your village?

We have [number censored for security] households.

How many villagers do you have in your village?

We have [number censored for security] villagers.

What are the villagers' occupations?

Some of the villagers are farmers and shop keepers. Some sew and do agricultural work, such as raising pigs and chickens.

Does the village face food problems?

Yes, some [villagers] face a lot of food problems because they don't have their own farms, so they don't have enough food. Villagers have to go stand guard [perform sentry duty] at the army camp, and have no time to work for themselves. They have to go for forced labour many times, and some have small kids. When they go to guard the army camp they bring their kids with them.

How old are the children who have to go stand guard at the army camp?

If they're 16 years old, they have to go.

How about the children under 16 years old?

Children under 16 years old are students. Students have to go to school in Bo--- village and, when they go to school there, they have to go through [pass] the army camp. Sometimes they [the Tatmadaw soldiers] say to students: 'The situation isn't good, so you have to go on time and come back on time.' So, the students have to hurry to go to school.

Do you mean the SPDC [Tatmadaw] doesn't like the students to go to school?

No, they say the situation isn't good, so the students can't go to school. If the students have bicycles, it will take them one and a half hours to get to school. But, if the students don't have a bicycle, it will take them three hours to walk. Sometimes the situation isn't good and they [Tatmadaw soldiers] write a letter to the school and say the students have to come back home before school is finished.

Do you have a school in your village?

We have only a primary school. So the students have to go to Bo--- village for middle school. In our village there are 40 middle school students. They have to go to Bo--- village middle school.

What languages do they learn?

They learn Burmese and English.

Do the schools teach the Karen Language?

They do teach the Karen language, but not openly. The [information censored for security] people hide and teach the Karen language to their kids at [location censored for security].

What would they do if they found out [information censored for security] people were teaching the Karen language?

If they find out, we just lie to them and tell them we are only [activity censored for security]. We have to solve the problem in that way.

Which villagers' rights do they abuse?

They abuse the villagers' rights. They forced the villagers to move to a relocation site, and some people didn't have carts or oxen, and they couldn't move at the time they [the Tatmadaw] asked. The villagers had to sleep in their old village, and the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw soldiers] raped the girls. That battalion was LIB #440, from the army camp called Py---. The name of the officer [in LIB #440] was Bo Thu Kha. They said that if the villagers didn't want to move to the relocation site, then the most beautiful young girls had to marry [be like a wife to] the soldiers. The villagers asked the officer not to make us move to the relocation site. The villagers said: 'You ordered us to move and we will move, but if our children have to marry you, we won't let them marry you.' But, one young Karen lady kei taw b' yaw ta aw [literally 'became Burmese Army food']. The battalion officer [Bo Thu Kha] didn't rape her. Instead, he asked one of his soldiers who already had a wife and children to force this girl to marry him [Bo Thu Kha]. This girl believed [the soldier with a wife and children], and her parents also believed him, but she said she wouldn't dare marry [Bo Thu Kha]. The next day, the SPDC Army soldier [with the wife and children] called the girl to come see him at the school. She said she wouldn't go and he [the soldier with the wife and children] said to the girl: 'If you won't come, I'll arrest your mother.' She was afraid that the SPDC soldiers would come to her house again and he [the soldier with the wife and children] lied to her, saying: 'Don't worry, a few of your friends are at the school.' She was afraid and didn't have a choice, and she went to the school and the soldier [with the wife and children] raped her. The girl came back and complained to the KWO [Karen Women Organisation].

How old was she?

She was 18 years old.

They asked you to move to the relocation site, but you didn't, and you still lived in the old village?

No, they forced us move to Ka--- relocation site. They forced us to move right away but some villagers had many things to bring. They didn't have carts and oxen to carry things and there was no vehicle road. The SPDC Army threatened to burn all of their houses. We had to dismantle our houses in front of the SPDC Army. When we were forced to move to the relocation site, we weren't the only village. There were many more villages that also had to move.

Can you tell me the village names?

The village names are Ta---, La---, Ma---, Ye---, Ge---, Ka---, Ha---, Wa---, T---, Lu--- and Du---. These villages all had to move to the relocation site. There were 11 villages in total which had to move on the same day.

Which DKBA [Democratic Karen Buddhist Army] battalion's army troops were based in your old village?

I can't remember the DKBA Battalion's name, but they were based in my old village for three years. They were based beside the Hoh Nee [pagoda] in the Paya Gyi area. [If villagers had] a family member who had joined the KNU Army [KNLA], those villagers were forced to go and stay in Paya Gyi area, where the DKBA Army was based. For example, if my son had joined the KNLA troops, I would have had to go and live in Paya Gyi.

Was the DKBA based in the relocation site?

No, the DKBA wasn't based in the relocation site, only the SPDC Army was based there.

Did the DKBA make the villagers do forced labour?

Yes, the DKBA made the villagers do forced labour.

Was the DKBA more forceful than the SPDC Army?

The DKBA forced us like the SPDC Army forced us, because they were also SPDC a'bpwah [soldiers or members].

Did the DKBA rape the women?

No, they didn't.

Do the villagers hide in the jungle?

When they run to the jungle, the SPDC Army comes and arrests their parents. They have to talk to the SPDC Army a lot before they [their parents] are released, and they have to pay money for them to be let go.

Do they arrest them again?

Yes, they say: 'Your children went back and joined the KNLA and share information about the SPDC.' They arrest their parents, their brothers and sisters.

Do they set them free?

If you don't give them [the Tatmadaw] money, they won't set them free. If the children go to visit their parents, they have to bring some food for the village leader to solve the problem. You have to go and solve the problem with [bribe] both the big officers and the small officers [upper and lower ranking soldiers].

When did you move to the relocation site?

I moved to the relocation site between March and April in 2006.

Which battalion numbers forced you to move to the relocation site?

The battalion LIB #440,68 company #3 and the officer's name was Bo Thu Kha.

How did you come here?

From Ta--- village we came here. We had to go through [pass] the army camp. When we walked in front of their camp they asked for our ID documents. They asked me where I was going. I said, 'I'm going to farm.' Then they asked, 'Will you sleep there?' 'Yes,' I said, 'I'll sleep at the farm one night and come back.' They allowed me to go and sleep for only one night, and asked me to come back at the right time. They signed [a permission document] for me, and then I could go. When I came to [location censored for security] I didn't come in front of their camp again, I took another way instead. We slept at He--- one night, and in the morning we took a car and came to [location censored for security]. When we came here, we lied to them [the Tatmadaw] by telling them we were going to [activity censored for security].

How long have you stayed here?

I came here on [date censored for security].

What will you do if you go home and the SPDC Army finds out that you came here? Does anyone know you came here?

Yes, the elder people [village elders or leaders] know and when I go back I'll get a car from somewhere and I'll take a different way. If they ask, I'll tell them I had to go for [activity censored for security].

Did the SPDC Army come and tell you in person to move to the relocation site?

Yes, they came themselves and forced us to move to the relocation site. Then the eldest people asked them if they had an order letter. They [the Tatmadaw] said: 'It doesn't matter if we have one or not. We're telling you to move so you have to move. If you ask for an order letter, we'll kill you, so don't ask for an order letter. You only have three days to move, and you have to finish moving in three days. If you aren't finished moving in three days, we'll burn down all of your villages.' They threatened villagers like that. Some villagers were so law tha gk'nyaw [literally 'pitiful' or inspiring pity] because they didn't have a carts and oxen to carry things for them. Some villagers had big families and they had a lot of things to bring with them.

Do you live in your old [original] village?

Yes, I went back to live in my old village, but I had to pay them [the Tatmadaw] a lot of money for permission to go back and live in my old village.

⁶⁸ Note that KHRG has previously reported that in March and April 2006, LIB #440 was active in the area to the north of Ler Doh Township, in Mone Township in Nyaunglebin District and Tantabin Township in Toungoo District. Abuses by LIB #440 reported to KHRG at that time included forced relocation, destruction of rice barns and killing of villagers. See: "Forced Relocation, Restrictions and Abuses in Nyaunglebin District," KHRG, July 2006.

When the SPDC Army forced you to move to the relocation site, did the villagers say anything [complain] to them?

The villagers said: 'We'll move, but can you wait for a couple of days?' The SPDC Army said: 'No, you have to move now.' For example, they forced us to finish our move to the relocation site in only three days, even though we asked them to give us ten days.

What would the SPDC Army do to them [villagers], if they didn't finish moving [in the time required]?

The SPDC Army asked them to finish moving, and if they didn't finish moving they [villagers] couldn't do anything. They still had to move and leave their things [behind]. So, we couldn't bring all our things with us. One villager said 'If you want to burn our things, you can.' But the SPDC Army said: 'We're not going to burn your things. We'll burn you [the villagers]."

Did all the villagers go and stay at the relocation site?

Yes, all of them went to stay at the relocation site, but some villagers who had relatives in a different village ran to [their relatives] and stayed with them.

How many people didn't go to live in the relocation site?

About ten families didn't come to stay in the relocation site. Those villagers went to live with their relatives in other villages.

What was the name of the relocation site?

The relocation site was called Th--- village, in Kyauk Kyi [Ler Doh] Township Nyaunglebin District.

How many years did you stay in the relocation site?

I stayed in the forced relocation site for three years.

Do you know how many villagers were in the relocation site?

We don't know how many people were at the forced relocation site. We only knew that there were [number censored for security] villagers from our village at the site.

What occupations did people have at the forced relocation site?

[During the day] they went back to work on their farms in their old villages. They had to get a permission letter from the SPDC Army [that was valid] for five days. They could go to work at their farms [during the day], but they couldn't sleep at their farms.

Do villagers have to pay for the permission letter from the SPDC Army?

Yes, one permission letter covers three people, and each person has to pay 1,000 kyat (US \$1.27). Three people have to pay 3,000 kyat (US \$3.82). But, they can only go for five days or one week. My farm is in Se---, which is too far away. Sometimes, two people in my house go to our farm. They sleep there secretly for two or three days because if we don't stay like that we

won't have a chance to work on our farm for food. If someone in my house disappears [to stay at their farm], the SPDC Army comes and asks where those people have gone. So, I have to lie to them, and tell them they went to Na--- [town]. I had to send a message to them to come home, because the SPDC Army had come and asked about them: 'If you don't come back, they'll arrest your family members in their houses.' We have to work hard for our food. They set up travel times for the villagers, from 6:00 am to 6:00 pm. But, if you don't come back at the right time they'll shoot at you. One day, one of the villagers, a boy, came home at about 6:30 pm or 7:00 pm and he brought a light with him, but because the wind was too strong his light wouldn't work and he didn't have a lighter. When the SPDC Army saw him walk towards the village they shot at him and chased him. It was a villager and they shot him in his leg. So he didn't die, but the village head had to watch [keep an eye on] the villager boy for the SPDC Army. The village head explained everything to the SPDC Army and said: 'If you don't believe us, you can look at his family documents.'

What is name of the [Tatmadaw] army camp?

They came and lived in our old village for three years. But LIB #--- [battalion number censored for security] is still there. Sometimes, they're based there for three or six months, and then they rotate with LIB #--- [battalion number censored for security] army troops.

What's the most difficult problem the villagers face?

Some of the villagers are very poor, so they go to the jungle to collect vegetables to sell. After they sell vegetables and get money, they buy food to eat. Because [when] the SPDC Army forced us to move to the relocation site, the children couldn't go to school. The parents had no money to send them to school, and their mothers and fathers couldn't take care of the children because they both had to go for work. [If] in one family there are three children who go to school, when the family is low on money they can't go to school anymore.

Did the SPDC Army come and make the people at the relocation site do forced labour?

Yes, they came and forced us to build the road for their vehicles. We had to go to repair their army camp. We were forced to move to the relocation site, but we still had to go and stand guard at their camp every day. Every day two people had to stand guard, one person had to stay in the village and one in the relocation site, so two people had to go. At the army camp, one person had to guard on the right [side], and the other person guarded the other direction.

How about the villagers who didn't go?

You had to go, but if you didn't go you had to pay 2,500 kyat (US \$ 3.18) per person for each day.

How is the situation changing? Is forced labour decreasing?

The situation is never getting better. It's only getting worse.

To solve the problem, do villagers go to the SPDC Army camp and talk to them?

No, no one would dare to do that.

Did they have a clinic in that village [in the relocation site]?

No, they didn't have one. So if the villagers were sick, we had to bring them to the township clinic.

What kind of common diseases [illnesses] did people face in the relocation site?

The common diseases the villagers face are malaria and diarrhoea.

Where do they go for a clinic when they get sick?

They go to He--- clinic in He---.

How many days does it take to go to He---?

It doesn't take a full day. If you take a motorbike, it takes only three hours.

How about the relocation site? Did they have a clinic?

They didn't have a clinic. If they [villagers] got sick, we had to make herbal medicine for them.

How far is it from the relocation site to He---?

From the relocation site to He--- takes one day.

Do they cure you for free?

Nothing is free. You have to pay for everything depending on the diseases. The least you have to pay 10,000 kyat (US \$12.74) to go to the hospital in He---.

Did they have a school in the relocation site?

They only had a temporary school, and it only went up to grade four.

Who set up the school?

The school was set up by villagers and the village head. They also had a school teacher.

Did you want to say anything else?

I just want to say we are facing problems because of the SPDC Army, and we can't complain to anyone.

Interview | Saw Th--- (male, 37), Bo--- village, Ler Doh Township, Nyaunglebin District (May 2011)

This report contains the full transcript of an interview conducted by a KHRG researcher during May 2011 with a villager from Ler Doh Township, Nyaunglebin District. The researcher interviewed Saw Th---, a 37-year-old farmer and village elder, who described his experiences living in Tatmadaw-controlled relocation sites for over two years and in a village in a mixed-administration area, in which various Tatmadaw battalions and non-state armed groups operated. Saw Th--- described the following abuses: forced

relocation; movement restrictions; taxation and demands; and forced labour including forced portering and camp maintenance. He said he believed that forced labour demands have decreased due to media attention on the issue. Saw Th--- also explained that villagers pursued agricultural livelihoods activities secretly while living in forced relocation sites, to lessen the impact of movement restrictions; and used herbal medicines because medical infrastructure and access to medical care were inadequate. The following interview was conducted by a KHRG researcher. It is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.⁶⁹ This interview was received in May 2011 along with twelve other interviews from Nyaunglebin District.⁷⁰

Ethnicity: Karen

Religion: Buddhist

Marital Status: Married

Occupation: Farming

Position: Village elder

What is the name of your old village?

In the area controlled by *Na Wa Ta* [SLORC],⁷¹ my old village was called So--- village.

How was the situation in your old village?

The SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] made us move to a relocation site, but that was 16 years ago.

How many households were in your old village?

There were over a hundred households in my old village [So--- village].

How many households are there in your new village [Bo--- village]?

There are [*number censored for security*] households.

How many villagers are there [in Bo--- village]?

There are over [*number censored for security*] hundred villagers.

⁶⁹ When conducting interviews, KHRG researchers 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.

⁷⁰ When these documents have been processed and translated by KHRG and when sufficient information has been compiled and analysed, a full Field Report on the situation in Nyaunglebin District will be available on the KHRG website. Until then, KHRG's most recent analysis of the situation in Nyaunglebin District can be found in the recent Field Report, "Livelihood consequences of SPDC restrictions and patrols in Nyaunglebin District," KHRG, September 2009.

⁷¹ The State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) was officially renamed the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) on November 15th 1997. In Karen, the Burmese phrases *Na Wa Ta* (SLORC) and *Na Ah Pa* (SPDC) are commonly used to refer to the Burmese government or to Burma's state army, the Tatmadaw. Many older Karen villagers who were accustomed to using the phrase *Na Wa Ta* (SLORC) before 1997 continue to use that phrase, even though the SLORC has not officially existed since 1997. Similarly, despite the official dissolution of the SPDC in March 2011, many Karen villagers continue to use the phrase *Na Ah Pa* (SPDC) to refer to the Burmese government or to the Tatmadaw.

What are the villagers' occupations?

The villagers *ma hta nee aw hta nee* [literally 'work one day, eat one day', meaning that villagers work for daily wages which provides them with enough money to buy food for that day].

Whom do villagers work for when they do daily labour?

We work for Karen farm owners. They pay us at the end of each day. Some people who don't have money for food ask for loans from the farm owners. When they make enough money, they have to pay back the farm owners.

Do the villagers face food problems because they don't have enough food?

Yes, the villagers face many different problems because they don't have enough food.

Which villagers' rights have been violated by the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw]?

The abuses which occurred in the past are not the same as the abuses occurring today. Two or three months ago, the SPDC Army asked for food very often. They ordered villagers to bring them chicken and pigs. But, now it is getting better than before.

Did the DKBA have a base in your village [So--- village]?

Yes, the DKBA had a base in my village before [we were relocated].

Did the DKBA demand forced labour from the villagers?

Yes, the DKBA demanded forced labour from many villagers. The DKBA were worse than the SPDC Army. At first, we were happy when we heard the news that the Karen DKBA would be based in our village. We were so happy. But, when they came to our village they asked for food, tax money and for villagers to be porters. They did terrible things to the villagers and the villager leaders went to complain to the DKBA leaders. The village leaders went secretly to ask the DKBA leaders to move their soldiers from our village. If the soldiers knew that the villagers went to complain to their leaders, they would have killed the villagers. But, the villagers were able to get the soldiers out of the village.

When did you have to move to the relocation site?

We were moved to relocation sites from 1995 to 2005. We had to move to three different relocation sites. They forced us to move to three different places.

What are the names of the other relocation sites?

They were [in]: K--- village tract, L--- village tract, and G--- village tract. These three village tracts were where the SPDC Army forced villagers to relocate.

Who forced you to move to the relocation site?

The SPDC forced us to move to the relocation site. They didn't take us to the relocation site. We just had to follow the people who moved to the relocation site.

Why did they force you to move to the relocation site?

They said that we weren't supposed to share information with the KNLA. When they asked us about the KNLA, we didn't answer them and pretended to know nothing. So they said: *'If you don't tell us about the KNU, you'll have to move. Because your Karen people [the KNLA] come and do [commit] abuse, you'll have to move.'*

Did they order you to move in person, or did they send an order letter?

They came to give us the orders in person. They didn't send an order letter.

When the SPDC Army came and forced you to move, what did the villagers do in response?

The villagers just prepared their things to move. Some of the villagers who had carts and oxen took their things in carts. But, the villagers who didn't have carts and oxen had to carry their things on their heads. We all had to help each other.

Did the villagers who didn't want to move to the relocation site go to hide in the jungle?

Yes, I think two or three families who didn't want to move to the relocation site fled to the jungle. The families who hid in the jungle had to hide well, because the SPDC Army would have killed them all if they had seen them. The villagers who didn't want to go to the relocation site ran to the jungle and lived in the jungle.

Did the SPDC force other villages to move to the relocation site?

There were four village tracts at the relocation site in Ler Doh Township. But, if there were Burmese villages, the SPDC just passed them [allowed them to stay where they were]. They [the Tatmadaw] called a meeting at their base in the Na Thar Poe area. The SPDC Army threatened the villagers stating: *'If we hear that you welcome KNLA soldiers [into your villages], we'll kill all of you.'* After a few days, something happened next to their army camp: a bomb exploded. They asked villagers to take responsibility for what had happened. If something happened beside our houses, we'd take responsibility, but this incident happened next to their army camp. Who should take responsibility for that? We talked about this with our villagers, but we didn't mention anything to them [the Tatmadaw]. If we had gone and asked them that [who should take responsibility], they had guns and they'd have killed us.

How many villages were forced to move to the relocation site?

Eight villages were forced to move to the relocation site: Bo---, Wo---, Ko---, Ha---, Gh---, Lw---, Kh---, Ya---, Ta--- and Ma---.

What did they name the relocation site village?

They called it the *su see* [relocation] village.⁷²

Where are the relocation site villages located?

Some are located above Htaik Htoo village and some are located to the west of Htaik Htoo village. Villagers from our village tract were forced us to stay above the Htaik Htoo army camp.

How long did you live in the relocation site?

I lived in the first relocation, sites named Te--- and Ha--- for two years. But, we only lived in the new [last] relocation site [at Htaik Htoo] for a couple months. We sneaked back to our old village to farm when the soldiers weren't in their camp. If the soldiers came to check on us, we had to come back and stay in our relocation site, so they could keep an eye on us at all times.

How many people lived in the relocation site?

There were about 1,000 or 2,000 people in the relocation site. I guess if we look at households, there were about 300 to 400 households.

Was the DKBA based in the relocation site?

No, the DKBA wasn't based in the relocation site.

What were peoples' occupations at the relocation site [at Htaik Htoo]?

The people in the relocation site worked as day labourers.

What were the problems that people at the relocation sites faced the most?

The first step was that the SPDC Army restricted us; the second step [consequence] was that, because they restricted us, we didn't have a chance to work for our food.

Did they make the relocated people do forced labour?

Yes, they ask the relocated people to go and repair the army camp for them, but they don't force us to do the same labour they had in the past.

What is the [current] situation in the relocation site?

The situation in the relocation site is getting better now.

How do the villagers negotiate less forced labour?

There is less forced labour because the media [reports] about it in the news. The media news from above is helping us to reduce forced labour.

⁷² '*Su see*' is a Burmese term meaning 'to gather' or 'to collect'. The term '*su see ywa*' is often used by villagers to refer to a village designated as a relocation site.

What's the most common disease [illness] that the relocated people face?

They face many different kinds of common diseases, like malaria. When people get sick and don't have enough medicine, we have to take patients to Ler Doh Town clinic.

Do they have a clinic in the relocation site?

No, they don't have one.

If there's no clinic, how do the relocated people receive treatment when they get sick?

We have to use herbal medicine, like *thay hih wa sher* [a general term for the use of tree roots and bamboo to cure diseases]. Some Burmese people sell us medicine, and we can use it to get better. But if we don't get better, we have to go to Ler Doh clinic.

How long does it take to get to Ler Doh Town?

If we walk, it takes us three hours. If we take a bicycle or motorbike, it takes only half an hour.

How much does the clinic cost?

It depends on the disease. If you're only a little sick, it isn't expensive. But, if you are very sick you'll have to go to a big hospital and pay a lot of money.

Did they have a school at the relocation site?

Yes, they had only four standards in the school at my old relocation site, but outside the relocation site they have eight standards.

What languages did they teach?

They taught in Burmese, because most of the people there speak Burmese.

Did they teach the Karen language?

They don't teach the Karen language, because the Karen language is not used much [in the relocation site].

Who set up the school?

The SPDC set up the school in the old relocation site villages [at Te--- and Ha---]. But, we were only at this new relocation site [at Htaik Htoo] temporarily, so we didn't have a school.

Do you have anything else you want to speak about which we haven't asked you yet?

I wanted to mention something. In the time when the DKBA and *Baw Bi Doh* [literally, ‘short pants’]⁷³ were in control, the *Baw Bi Doh* soldiers came and killed one of the villagers. They killed a boy, and left his sisters. His sisters were still young: they were only 20 years old. One of the *Baw Bi Doh* soldiers ordered her [one of the sisters] to come over to him. The *Baw Bi Doh* soldier was so drunk and holding a knife. When the girl saw him, she knew this soldier would rape her, or do something to her. She jumped off her house onto the ground and ran away, and they never found her.

Interview | Naw Ka--- (female, 50), Me--- village, Ler Doh Township, Nyaunglebin District (May 2011)

This report contains the full transcript of an interview conducted by a KHRG researcher in May 2011 with a villager from Ler Doh Township, Nyaunglebin District. The researcher interviewed Naw Ka---, a 50-year-old villager who described the situation prior to and after her community was forcibly relocated by the Tatmadaw in 2007. Naw Ka--- cited the following human rights abuses in her testimony: forced labour, including sentry duty and portering; arrest and detention, including physical violence against detained villagers; forced relocation; and movement restrictions. The interviewee also described the humanitarian challenges people in her community have faced, including serious constraints on access to adequate education for children, healthcare, and food. In order improve their humanitarian situation, Naw Ka--- explained how residents of her village decided to return to their homes in 2010 without formal permission from the Tatmadaw, despite villagers' fears that this action entailed serious risks to their physical security. The following interview was conducted by a KHRG researcher. It is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.⁷⁴ This interview was received in May 2011 along with twelve other interviews with villagers from Nyaunglebin District.⁷⁵

Ethnicity: Karen

Religion: Christian

Marital Status: Married

Position: [Censored for security]

How many people are in your family?

⁷³ *Baw Bi Doh* (‘short pants’) is a term used by villagers to refer to the *Sa Thon Lon Dam Byan Pyauk Kya* (Bureau of Special Investigations Guerrilla Retaliation Units) that were first reported to be active in Nyaunglebin District in 1998. KHRG has previously reported that these units operated independently of other regular Tatmadaw battalions deployed to eastern Burma, and were tasked with carrying extrajudicial executions of individuals they suspected of having links with the KNU/KNLA; they were notorious among civilians in northern Karen areas for their brutality. For detailed background on these units, see: “Death Squads and Displacement: Systematic Executions, Village Destruction, and the Flight of Villagers in Nyaunglebin District,” KHRG, May 1998.

⁷⁴ When conducting interviews, KHRG researchers 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.

⁷⁵ When these documents have been processed and translated by KHRG and when sufficient information has been compiled and analysed, a full Field Report on the situation in Nyaunglebin District will be available on the KHRG website. Until then, KHRG’s most recent analysis of the situation in Nyaunglebin District can be found in the recent Field Report, “Livelihood consequences of SPDC restrictions and patrols in Nyaunglebin District,” KHRG, September 2009.

There are 21 people in my family. I have seven children. My daughter is married and has one child. I have a son in law.

Do you stay together?

Yes, we stay together but my son works on the Thai border at Mw---. And, two are working with organisations. One is working with a medical group, and the other is working for KORD [the Karen Office of Relief and Development] in the IDP areas.

Can you tell me about the situation in your old [original] village?

Before, I lived in Za--- village. We had to do sentry duty and go to work for the army [Tatmadaw]. We couldn't [do our own] work well. My father died and my mother asked me to come back and stay with her. On April 29th 1999, I came back to stay with my mother. I was ordered to work by the army [Tatmadaw], the DKBA and the *Pyauk Kya*.⁷⁶ We had to face this. We had to carry [porter] rice up the mountain; we had to hire someone [to porter for us] when we were afraid to go. We just got income from [our] farms [but] we had to hire people [to porter]. We had little income, but we had to hire people. We faced difficulties like [access to] food and education for our children. We faced those problems.

There was fighting in our village in 2006. Before the fighting, there was a worship ceremony [scheduled] and it was supposed to be in February. The SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] said we had to take responsibility that there would be no fighting during this worship ceremony. They'd do something to us [punish us] if any fighting occurred. So we had to sign [guarantee] that the KNU [KNLA] soldiers wouldn't come and do [anything] near us [during the worship ceremony]. We signed, and on February 22nd, 2006, some fighting happened. The fighting happened and the SPDC [Tatmadaw] leaders called the village elders to a meeting. They called the village elders, and beat them. They arrested them and they arrested a pastor. The pastor was [also] beaten, and he almost died. But, *gkaw koh kaw nah* ['the top leaders', in this case referring to senior religious leaders] came and one was a medic who worked for the government. She went to talk to the battalion commander, but the officer at the front wouldn't let her meet with the battalion commander. But, she asked for [and obtained] permission and went to talk [to the battalion commander]. If she hadn't [met the battalion commander] they'd have killed our pastor. The *gkaw koh kaw nah* came and gave a guarantee for him. He had already been questioned [interrogated] and they [Tatmadaw soldiers] had punched him each time he was asked a question.

On March 6th 2007, fighting occurred [again] on the mountain to the east, far away from our village. They [Tatmadaw soldiers] said our village communicated with and fed the KNU [the

⁷⁶ *Pyauk Kya* ('guerrilla'), is one of the terms used by villagers to refer to the *Sa Thon Lon Dam Byan Pyauk Kya* (Bureau of Special Investigations Guerrilla Retaliation Units) that were first reported to be active in Nyaunglebin District in 1998. KHRG has previously reported that these units operated independently of other regular Tatmadaw battalions deployed to eastern Burma, and were tasked with carrying extrajudicial executions of individuals they suspected of having links with the KNU/KNLA; they were notorious among civilians in northern Karen areas for their brutality. For detailed background on these units, see: "Death Squads and Displacement: Systematic Executions, Village Destruction, and the Flight of Villagers in Nyaunglebin District," KHRG, May 1998.

KNLA], and the KNU became strong, and many government soldiers were killed. So, they ordered our village to move on March 6th, 2007. We had to move everything in less than two days. People who didn't have carts had to carry things on their own. Some people asked the other villages to come help us. We felt shy [uncomfortable] when we had to ask for help from other villages. We had to move, but we weren't given a place to stay. We had to go and stay with people we knew, or on other people's land. We faced water problems [shortages]. To come back and work at our village, we had to walk for one hour.

We stayed for years and years [outside the original village]. They [the Tatmadaw] didn't allow us to come back. We had to travel for our work. Children couldn't go to school because we had to move. For health, there was no health worker. We had to pay 2,000 to 2,500 kyat (US \$2.58 to \$3.23)⁷⁷ when we went to have injections. So, we came back [to the village] family by family. We came back in March 2010. We came back even though we weren't allowed to by the military government. We did this with an understanding: we came back family by family, gathered with an understanding that nothing could happen [fighting or other incidents]. [We knew] if something happened, our village would be moved again. But, the villagers decided that we wouldn't move any more. We decided that we will face [whatever happens] bravely. If fighting happens and they kill us, they'll have to kill us all. That's our decision. To work now, we have to get a written permission letter if we want to go and do our work. For one permission letter, we have to pay 3,000 kyat (US \$3.87). You have no right to go and sleep [outside the village] if you don't get a written permission letter. We [also] have to get a written permission letter when we go to the jungle. We have to do this.

How many households are in your village?

There were [*number censored for security*] houses before we moved. When we had to move, some people went to stay at other villages, and others went to Ben Gklaw [Mae La refugee camp, in Thailand]. There are many people from 3rd Brigade [Nyaunglebin District] which stay there. The situation [in the village] wasn't going well, and we couldn't stay because some of us working with organisations [likely referring to the KNU]. We had to move [from place to place], so we couldn't work. You had to sell things that you owned [to survive], year after year. After they [some families] had sold everything, they couldn't do anything more [to survive], so they fled to Ben Gklaw. In the beginning, there were [*number censored for security*] houses in our village, but just [*number censored for security*] houses are left.

Do you know the number [population] of villagers in the village?

Now, there are [*number censored for security*]. In the past there were [*numbers censored for security*] villagers, but many people left the village.

Do the villagers face any problems with their work like flooding, or fields which were destroyed by animals?

We can't do [work] well if there's flooding, and we do face this kind of situation.

⁷⁷ All conversion estimates for the kyat in this bulletin are based on the fluctuating informal exchange rate rather than the government's official fixed rate of 6.5 kyat to US \$1. As of August 2nd 2011, this unofficial rate of exchange was US \$1 = 775 kyat.

What about human rights abuses? Has the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] committed human rights abuses against the villagers, like burning their paddy grain?

In 1974, the government army [Tatmadaw] didn't burn down our village. They just demanded forced labour. We had to go and do sentry duty all the time, and do *loh ah pay*.⁷⁸ We had to hire people [to replace us] if we were afraid to go.

How much did you have to pay the people you hired?

We had to hire them for 7,000 kyat (US \$9.03).

How many armed groups are active in your village?

It's not only the government army [Tatmadaw]. In 1999, we were [living] in fear and no one would dare be a village head. So, we had to organise [a system], and we had to have two village heads each month. There was the government army [Tatmadaw], the *Pyauk Kya* and the DKBA: we had to live under these three groups.

What is the 'Pyauk Kya' group?

People called them 'Pyauk Kya'. Their responsibility was to kill people who communicated with the KNU, and especially people who were popular [prominent individuals suspected of links to the KNU]. [For example] now, if they knew what we're doing [participating in a human rights interview], they'd kill us. They just went around and killed people.

How many years did you have to stay at other villages?

We went and stayed there for three years.

Did you have to come back and work at your village?

Yes, we went to stay in another village, but we had to come back and work in our village. We had to walk very far; it took one to two hours' walk. It caused big problems for us, so now we've decided that, no matter what, we'll come back and stay in our village. We'll die if they [want to] kill us. People looked down on us when we went and stayed in the other village. So now we've come back to stay in our own village.

Do you remember the date when you were forced to move?

As I told you, we started moving on March 6th 2007.

Did the government army [Tatmadaw] order you to work for them when you went and stayed there?

⁷⁸ *Loh ah pay*; a Burmese term now commonly used in reference to forced labour, although traditionally referring to voluntary service for temples or the local community, not military or state projects.

Yes, we had to [work]. Currently, a LID [Light Infantry Division] has come from Yay Th'Cho. People call it an MOC [Military Operation Command].⁷⁹ They're transporting [rations or military equipment] from Shwegyin Town to N--- [village tract] by trucks. They will use humans to transport things from [Gw---, in N--- village tract] into the mountains. If they send 100 bags to Gw--- village, then N--- villagers have to go and to carry all the bags. If the villagers don't finish [portering], they can't come back to their villages.

How long does it take to do the work [portering] for them?

When you go, the trip takes a whole day. You have to go to work each time they ask; we don't just have to go once a month [labour is demanded as needed, not according to a fixed schedule]. They call you when they need you. There's no time limit.

So, only the government army [Tatmadaw] orders you to do forced labour?

Yes, the village head tells the villagers the orders from [issued by] the army. The army sends an order letter with a signature and a date. We have to go on that date. The village head is scolded if we don't go.

Did all the villagers go when they were forced to move [relocate]?

Yes, they all had to leave the village. They [Tatmadaw] said they'd come and burn down our village if we didn't move within two days.

But not all of them [the villagers who moved] came back?

No, some people stayed in other villages and others moved to refugee camps. They moved to wherever they could move.

What did you do when you went and stayed in another village?

We couldn't do anything. We sold the things that we owned like cows, pigs and goats. Little by little, more was gone each year. We were left with nothing.

Did the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] demand more or less forced labour in the place you were relocated, compared to the situation in your [original] village?

It decreased.

You mean you had to do more forced labour for the SPDC when you lived in your [original] village than in the relocation site?

⁷⁹ Military Operations Commands (MOCs) typically consists of ten battalions. Most MOCs have three Tactical Operations Commands (TOCs) of three battalions each. A Light Infantry Division (LID) also consists of ten battalions.

It was the same. There was no difference. We still had to do the same things as in our village, even we moved to another village.

Do you go and discuss with them [the Tatmadaw] when you aren't free to go and work for them?

They don't want a pot with a hole; they want the pot full of water. Sometimes village heads go and discuss with them, but they [Tatmadaw soldiers] say they don't need a pot with a hole. They just want a pot full of water. Even if there aren't enough people [available to work], you have to go as they demand. You have to work until you've done all their work.

Is there a clinic in your village?

Currently, there's no clinic. Before we had to move, the government came and set up a clinic and sent a medic. Now she's gone to stay in Lo--- [village]. But, now she wants to return [here]. So, we collected 10,000 kyat (US \$12.90) from each household to build a house for her. However, it isn't finished yet because we don't have enough money.

Did the government come and set up the clinic, in the past?

No, the villagers had to stand up and built it themselves. The government sent the medic for us.

Did the government provide her with medicine?

No, the government didn't provide her with medicine. Even though they sent us a medic, we have to pay when we go and receive treatment: [we have to pay] 1,500 kyat (US \$1.94) or 2,500 kyat (US \$3.23) for one injection.

Was there a clinic in the villages where you [villagers] were forced to relocate?

No, there was no clinic. If people were sick, they had to go to the village where there was a medical officer placed by the government.

How far did you have to go?

Not far. It was [near] the place where we [our household] were forced to move. It took five or eight minutes to get there.

Was there a school?

Yes, there was a middle school which went up to Fourth Standard.

Where did students go after they graduated?

They went to N--- village tract. In the past, the government gave us a school which went up to Eighth Standard. Because of the fighting we had to move, so N--- village tract took our school. First they asked to use it temporarily, but now they've upgraded it to a high school. Meanwhile, our school is still only four standards.

Does the government provide teachers?

Yes. The government gives us full-time teachers.

Did the government come and build the school?

Yes, they came and built the school.

Do you have anything else that you want to say?

You've come and asked us about the labour that we've had to do for the government army [Tatmadaw]. We want you to report it, in order to decrease it, but don't show our names. [We want] you to report it and help us decrease forced labour.

Interview | Saw My--- (male, 45), Ta--- village, Ler Doh Township, Nyaunglebin District (May 2011)

This report contains the full transcript of an interview conducted by a KHRG researcher in May 2011 with a villager from Ler Doh Township, Nyaunglebin District. The researcher interviewed Saw My---, a 45 year-old farmer who described his experiences when he was forced to leave his village in a mixed-administration area and live for two years in a neighbouring village, including specific incidents in which Tatmadaw soldiers fired small arms at children in school uniforms, forced women to serve as human shields for Tatmadaw columns during patrols, and ordered villagers at gunpoint to leave their homes and possessions during the rainy season. He further cited the following abuses: movement restrictions; forced labour; and arbitrary taxation and demands. Saw My--- also highlighted the difficulties his village currently faces accessing health care and education, but explained that villagers counter these difficulties by using traditional medicine and by hiring and supporting local teachers. The following interview was conducted by a KHRG researcher. It is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.⁸⁰ This interview was received along with other information from Nyaunglebin District, including twelve other interviews.⁸¹

Ethnicity: Karen

Religion: Animist

Marital Status: Married

Occupation: Farmer

Position: [Censored for security]

Can you tell us about the situation in your village?

⁸⁰ When conducting interviews, KHRG researchers use loose question guidelines and 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.

⁸¹ When these documents have been processed and translated by KHRG and when sufficient information has been compiled and analysed, a full Field Report on the situation in Nyaunglebin District will be available on the KHRG website. Until then, KHRG's most recent analysis of the situation in Nyaunglebin District can be found in the recent Field Report, "Livelihood consequence of SPDC restriction and patrols in Nyaunglebin District" KHRG, September 2009.

The village situation and the villagers' suffering happened because fighting took place in T--- and Ky--- villages. An SPDC [Tatmadaw] officer told us that he loves his people, and the Karen people aren't his people. He also said: '*Your Karen people gku [a Karen term which approximates to 'plotted against' or 'conspired to kill'] us two or three times.*' In the past, there were several [incidents of] fighting near the upper village and it seemed to him like we knew the people [the KNLA] who were attacking them. Actually, we knew nothing. He blamed us. As he saw it, we knew.

The fighting happened and there was shelling and shooting in the village, and it hit a woman. Villagers didn't dare to stay in village, because they [the Tatmadaw] shelled and shot in the village. They shot at people when they saw them. We ran away because we didn't dare to stay in the village. We ran and they followed us. One day, there was fighting and a child [a young man], who was harvesting grass for his cows, didn't know that there would be fighting. They [the Tatmadaw] said that young guy knew that there was going to be fighting and that he had not informed them. He said he didn't know there was going to be fighting: '*If I had known, I wouldn't harvest the grass there.*' But they [the Tatmadaw] said that he had known. That guy was Karen, so they blamed him.

The next morning after the fighting, they came to our village. They called the village head [to their camp] and they tied him up and beat him. He [a Tatmadaw soldier] said the village head *gku* [plotted against or conspired to kill them] in a clever way. They [the Tatmadaw] didn't dare to come to the village. They called the village head to come to them, and they arrested him and beat him. Because of the fighting, the villagers had to move [relocate]. Villagers came back and stayed in the village sometimes [after relocating] but they could only stay temporarily. They [the Tatmadaw] also patrolled, and forced the young people to walk in front. The Tatmadaw soldiers pointed at them with guns [while they walked]. Just the women went. There were no men because the men were afraid, and they all fled. The Tatmadaw soldiers forced the women to walk in front, and they pointed at them with their guns because they [the soldiers] didn't dare to go in front [walk first]. So they took cover behind the children and the women. After they went and cleaned the place [patrolled], they came back [to the village] and saw students who were going to school. They shot at them. I thought the fighting would happen again. We didn't dare to stay in the village. Later, people said they shot at the students. The students wear white and green school uniforms in Burma. They all got dirty. Their rice was overturned, but no one was hit.

How many households are there in your village?

There were [*number censored for security*] households in my village before we were forced to move. Now, there are just about [*number censored for security*] households, maybe about [*number censored for security*] households.

Do you know the village population?

The total number of villagers is [*number censored for security*] women and [*number censored for security*] men living in the village. This is the number after we came back [since being relocated]. Before we were forced to move, there were over [*number censored for security*] villagers, including men and women.

Do you face any hardship when you live in your village?

There are no problems. We work one day and eat one day. We just do things like this. Villagers can buy a sack of rice when the support groups come and give support there. For the rest of the money, villagers buy other things that they needed for their houses. So, the villagers' food situation is a little bit better.

Which support groups come?

People who supported us were from the Karen National Union (KNU). I don't know the organisations' names.

Do you experience SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] abuse when you live in your village?

There's nothing so serious that we can't suffer it. But they [the Tatmadaw] do discriminate against Karen people. [When] He [the Tatmadaw officer] said he loves his people and doesn't love Karen people, we didn't dare to say anything back. We just had to be silent.

Are villagers forced to do work, such as portering, for the Burmese Army [Tatmadaw]?

Yes. We have to go and do things like build their camps. We have to go when they call us. If they order us to bring them two pieces of bamboo, ten small logs and ten shingles of thatches, we have to go and do as they order.

Did the villagers have to go stay in a relocation site?

They didn't tell us the place where we had to stay when they made us move. We had to go and stay at people's houses, like under their huts.

Do you remember the date when you were forced [to move]?

I don't remember, but I think that guy [*indicating another villager*] will know because he was the village head at the time. I think he'll know about this, and answer you when he's asked.

Why did they force villagers to move?

They [the Tatmadaw] saw us like this: sometimes, we didn't send them messages when the KNU Army [KNLA] came. They said that we kept secrets from them. So they didn't want to be friends with us. They said: '*They [the KNLA] are your people, your relatives.*' We couldn't respond when they talked to us like this.

Did all the villagers move when they were forced to leave?

If you didn't move, they'd come and guard you with guns in the village. They stayed in our village. We had to go and sleep at the [new] places where we were going to stay, even if we hadn't been able to take all of our belongings [yet]. We didn't dare to sleep in the village; they [Tatmadaw soldiers] slept in the village. We had to come back and take our things in the morning. At first, we didn't move and just stayed in the village. But they came to our village with guns and they forced us. They asked us whether we were going to move or not. We said we were going to move. Then we moved.

Did all the villagers move to the same place?

We went and stayed with people we knew, like relatives or friends, because they didn't tell us exactly where we had to stay.

Was just your village forced to move or were others villages forced to move as well?

All of the villages had to move at that time. All of the villages in Ler Doh Township.

How many years did you have to go and stay at another village?

It took more than two years [before we could return].

What did you do [for work] when you stayed at the other village?

We farmed. We came back to our farms during the day. We went back and slept [in the other village] at night time. They [the Tatmadaw] didn't allow us to stay and sleep at our farms. They only allowed us to go back and work during the day time. We can go to our farms at 6:00 am and have to come back before 6:00 pm.

Do you have to get a travel permission document [to travel]?

We have to get travel permission documents, but we can get them from our village head.

Do you have to get a new travel permission document each day?

If they give us [the document] once a week, we get it once a week. After one week, we go back and change [renew] it. We can't stay and sleep [at our farms]. They [the Tatmadaw] will give you trouble if they see you.

Do you have to pay money when you go and get a travel document?

We don't need to pay, because we get it from our village head. We have to pay if we went and get it from them [the Tatmadaw]. Even though we don't need to pay money to our village head, we have to pay them [the Tatmadaw] if they sent an order letter. If they demand 1,500 kyat (US \$ 1.94),⁸² we have to pay 1,500 kyat, and if they demand 3,000 kyat (US \$ 3.87), we have to pay 3,000 kyat.

Do you know which army units are active in your area?

At that time [when we had to move], it was #439. They were an IB [Infantry Battalion]. They were based near Mone. They were just a battalion. Their battalion headquarters were close to Mone.⁸³

⁸² All conversion estimates for the kyat in this bulletin are based on the fluctuating informal exchange rate rather than the government's official fixed rate of 6.5 kyat to US \$1. As of August 3rd 2011, this unofficial rate of exchange was US \$1 = 775 kyat.

⁸³ For previous KHRG documentation of forced relocation in Ler Doh Township linked to LIB #439, see: "Forced Relocation, Restrictions, and Abuses in Nyaunglebin District," KHRG, July 2006.

What's the [villagers'] relationship with the different battalions?

There's no difference, because they're from the same battalion [they are all Tatmadaw soldiers] and they all do what they're ordered to do. The first officer came [to issue a relocation order] and it was the rainy season. It wasn't easy for us to travel. We told him that, and he listened to us. But he was removed [rotated to another location] directly. Another one [officer] came and they told us to move at gunpoint. We knew it was the rainy season and it'd be difficult for us to move. Another thing was that [if] we had to move, we'd have to stay under people's huts; so it wasn't possible. But the last group [battalion] who came, [they] entered the village with their battalion commander and we didn't dare to stay anymore.

Did they bring a letter from their commanders, or did they just come with soldiers and give an oral order?

They didn't send a letter. They gave an oral order. When they gave us a letter, we didn't move. We stayed in the village. But we didn't dare to stay any more when they came and guarded us with guns in the village. They asked us whether we were going to move or not. We didn't dare to stay anymore and we moved. We moved to a Burmese village, Ky---, east of our village. We moved there because they didn't tell us where we had to move.

How many village tracts moved to Htaik Htoo?

There are three village tracts that had to move to Htaik Htoo. Some villagers from H--- [village tract] went to Htaik Htoo. For our village tract, they just forced us to move separately, and let us go where we wanted to go. Some people whose relatives lived near them went and stayed with their relatives. They [the Tatmadaw] didn't us [to go to] a place like Htaik Htoo.

How often does the army rotate in a year?

Sometimes, they rotate once every four months. [Battalions] #60, #351, #599 and #590 all stay in our area. They are like the *mee kin tat* [literally 'mother army', likely implying that these battalions are permanently stationed in the area, and do not rotate to other districts].

Are they IBs [Infantry Battalions] or LIBs [Light Infantry Battalions]?

They're IBs. Most of them are IBs. There's one LIB: #351. For IBs, there are #60 and #73. They came and arrived [rotated in] to Kyauk Kyi [Ler Doh Township].

What MOC [Military Operation Command]⁸⁴ are they from?

The MOC never arrived [rotated in] before, but they arrived this year. They stay for a long time when they arrive [rotate in].

⁸⁴ Military Operations Commands (MOCs) typically consists of ten battalions. Most MOCs have three Tactical Operations Commands (TOCs) of three battalions each. A Light Infantry Division (LID) also consists of ten battalions.

Is the [villagers'] relationship with the guest army [temporarily-stationed Tatmadaw soldiers] and the local army [permanently-stationed soldiers] different?

The guest army is a little more evil. The local army aren't sharp when they give orders. It isn't good to hear what the outside soldiers say to us. They say things like '*Your people*' and he [a Tatmadaw officer] said: '*I love my people*.' He doesn't love his people [but] we couldn't say anything back to him. We just had to look at his face.

How is the situation different between your [original] village and in the other village [Ky---]?

It's different. We're happy in our village. We had to listen to other people when we went and stayed in the other village. We can travel freely when there's support [security] from the KNU [KNLA] when we stay in our village. We had to travel secretly when we went and stayed in the other village. We had to inform them [Tatmadaw authorities] where we were going and what we were going to do. Sometimes it [work] takes two, three or four days. We had to lie to them.

Does the KNU [KNLA] give trouble to the villagers?

No. They come and say they want to support villagers, but they can't support them. They don't cause trouble. They're friendly when we go to them but we have to be careful because we worry that people will know [that villagers met with the KNU/KNLA]. They're good. But we don't dare to report [about the KNU/KNLA] to the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw]. We have to keep it secret.

Was there a clinic in the village [Ky---] where you had to move?

No, there wasn't a clinic.

Where did you go when you got sick?

We went to Ler Doh when we got sick. It was very far.

How long does it take to get to Ler Doh?

Ler Doh is about [*distance censored for security*] miles away. But we can say it isn't the same as our village. In our village, we're close with organisations [providing health and other support] and we have an uncle [village elder]. Before, he [the elder] used to work with the KNU, but now he just stays in the village. He knows about medicine. When we get sick, we go to him and he writes down the name of a medicine for us. We go and buy the medicine and he treats us. This became a problem. Later, the government came and stationed a medic in the village.

What do you do now when villagers get sick and can't get treatment in your village?

When they get sick and can't get treatment in the village, we carry them to Ler Doh.

Does the army give you trouble when you go to Ler Doh with a sick villager?

No, they don't. Whether it's night-time or daytime, they don't interrupt villagers if it's a health issue. They let them go. They don't ask questions when we tell them a patient is travelling with us.

What about carrying medicine in and out [of the village]?

We can't do that. If you carry medicine, you have to carry it secretly. We can't carry it publicly.

What if you carry the medicine back yourself?

They don't like that. Definitely, you can't carry it [yourself]. If you carry it, you have to carry it secretly.

Why don't they allow you to bring medicine?

I don't know how they see villagers and why they don't allow us to carry medicine. Maybe they think we're bringing it back for the KNLA. I thought of this because the KNLA lives in the jungle and doesn't have medicine. They [the Tatmadaw] will think about this. That's my opinion.

Is your village close to an army camp?

No. They're separated by about three miles. We live in the He--- [area] and the army camp is in Ka---. He--- and Ka--- are about three miles apart.

Do villagers go and ask for treatment at the army camp?

No. They don't go and ask for treatment.

Do their medical officers ever come to the village and give treatment to the villagers?

No, the medical officers stay in the army camp. We're far from the camp, so villages that are closer may receive treatment.

What kind of diseases do villagers usually face?

I know two people who were suffering from disease [tuberculosis] in two families, one person from each family. They had to take medicine for five or six months. They went to the hospital for a month. People [medics or doctors] gave them medicine there. There are one or two families like this.

What about other diseases?

There are no other diseases. We have fevers and other illnesses, which can be cured with tree roots [traditional medicine].

What about headaches, diarrhoea and other illnesses?

Sometimes they [medical officials] come to give treatment [for those illnesses].

Do they come and give you vaccines?

They give vaccines to pregnant women and children.

What kind of vaccines do they give?

I don't know what they are called.

An uncle [older male villager] said two villagers were killed. Do you know where this happened? Do you know their names?

There was an incident when a mine exploded close to their [the villagers'] sentry hut.⁸⁵ That's the only case I know.

Is there a school in your village?

Yes, there's a school. The school goes up to Fourth Standard. After they graduate Fourth Standard, they [students] have to go and study in Ler Doh. If they don't go to Ler Doh, they have to go to Bo---. There is a middle school in Bo---.

Do the students come back and help teach in their villages after they graduate?

Not yet. They haven't come back yet. They will come back. They'll come back to teach for two years. We need to collect money to pay them a salary.

Was the school built by the government?

Yes. They provide enough support to the teacher, but the teachers don't come. They come when they want to come and they don't come when they don't want to come. For the school principal, mostly he or she doesn't come. For the teachers, when they do come they have to teach a lot of students. Sometimes he [one of the teachers] complains and says he can't take care of the children because there are many children. He doesn't dare to say that to the school principal, because he's under [subordinate to] the school principal. He's alone and there are many students. He can't take care of everything alone. He said he'll leave if one or two more teachers are not added. For the principal, sometimes he or she comes, and sometimes he or she doesn't come.

Don't villagers complain to the government?

You can't complain to the government about the principal or teachers, because it's their [the government's] staff. They organise something, and it's done [there is no more support]. We've complained many times. In our village, there are fewer teachers from the government. The teachers would rather teach in other villages.

Do villagers find another way to educate the students, without disruption?

There's one teacher we asked to help us with the students. She teaches middle school. So, if students have graduated four standards she can work with them. But, if students haven't

⁸⁵ This incident was also mentioned by Saw L---, a 53-year-old villager from Ler Doh Township who was interviewed by a KHRG researcher in May 2011. Saw L--- said that the villagers in question were detained by Tatmadaw soldiers in August 2010 after a bomb was detonated near a hut where they were performing forced labour as sentries for the Tatmadaw, and that the men had '*disappeared since they were arrested.*' See: "Nyaunglebin Interviews: May 2011," KHRG, June 2011.

graduated Fourth Standard, they'll go to another teacher. He teaches the students step by step. So, we need both of these teachers to help with the students.

Sometimes villagers gather and collect money or rice, and they find a teacher to come and teach in their village. Does your village do anything like this?

This kind of thing happened in the past. [The teacher said] her mother and father were old and she said she would help her village [by teaching]. So we supported her.

Has support from the border [from organisations operating cross-border from administrative offices in Thailand] ever arrived to your school?

No.

Would you dare to come and take [accept] it, if there was support like school materials?

The paper isn't the same. The paper from there [Thailand] is good quality, but the paper quality here isn't good. They [the government] would know directly [that we had accepted outside support] if we brought it back.

We've asked you a lot, but is there anything else that you want to say?

There's nothing else special. For the books that you mentioned, we need them, but we don't dare to bring them, because they aren't the same [paper quality]. Something like clothes is different here and there. They know directly when you see that you wear clothes from there. When they ask, we have to say we bought them in Myawaddy.

Interview | Saw L--- (male, 53), T--- village, Ler Doh Township, Nyaunglebin District (May 2011)

The following interview was conducted by a KHRG researcher. It is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.

Ethnicity: Karen

Religion: Christian

Marital Status: Married

Occupation: Farmer

Was your village ever forced to move before?

Starting in 2003, we were ordered to move.

So now you've gone back and stay in your village?

Yes. We weren't ordered to go back and stay. But our villagers are poor. [When] They went and stayed at other people's places they couldn't do anything [livelihoods]. So they came back to their own place.

What made you become a Baptist?

My mind changed. I found a true God who could help and give us salvation. Because I found God, there's a benefit to what we've faced. I found through [the experience] the gospel and proclamation of God. Even though we experienced many [bad] things, the gospel became a benefit for us.

What do you mean it has been a benefit of what you've experienced?

When we were animists, we had to face war, burning of our houses and death. My father, my parent-in-law, my son and finally my wife have died. Because our worship wasn't correct. So we were fed up.

What do you do for your livelihood?

My sons do *htoo sih* [flat paddy fields] and *gker* [peanuts].

What are the different [agricultural] activities for *htoo sih* and *gker*?

Htoo sih is activities to farm paddy in flat fields, and *gker* is activities to farm peanuts.

How many people are there in your family?

I have three sons and a daughter. One [of the sons] is my son in-law. And two [grandchildren], a grandson and daughter. In total there are seven people, including me. We live in the same house.

How do you manage food for your family?

We have to experience difficulty. Even though it's difficult, we can still survive because my sons and daughter are in good health.

How many houses in T--- village?

There are [*number censored for security*] houses.

Can you tell us about the situation in your village? What do villagers do for their livelihoods or education?

There are about 15 houses that have plantations and animals. Most people are workers earning a bare [subsistence] living. They work one day, and they eat one day.

Why do more workers earn a bare living?

Because we don't have farms, carts and cows. This thing has happened because of the forced demands. Because of debts, to be able to have food this year, they have to borrow from other people. It becomes like they work the whole year, but they get nothing because they have to pay back all of their debts. In March, many Burmese [Tatmadaw soldiers] came and stayed in the village. They entered and stayed seven or eight days. Villagers counted after the Burmese Army [Tatmadaw] left, and some people lost 3,000 or 4,000 kyat (US \$3.77 – 5.03). They had to

give food [to the Tatmadaw soldiers]. They had to pay the cost, because the Burmese came and stayed.

What do you mean? The Tatmadaw came and ate things in your village and the villagers had to pay the cost when they went back?

Yes. It [food] was collected from the villagers.

How many armed groups are active in your area?

The armed groups are the Karen [KNLA] and the Burmese [Tatmadaw].

Does the DKBA Army arrive there?

No. they don't arrive [currently]. In 2000, they came and stayed in our area. They stayed until 2005 or 2006.

What do these active armed groups do in your area?

They said they'd come and teach civilians. But it has become like they come and find their enemy and get information from villagers. It becomes a problem when fighting happens and there's suffering of civilians. Those kinds of things. Because the KNLA is our people [of the same ethnicity], they [the Tatmadaw] look down on us. If something [KNLA activity] happens, they [Tatmadaw soldiers] say, *'Your relatives, you went and gave them food. You're hiding them.'* Mostly, we have faced this.

Who told you that?

The Burmese Army [Tatmadaw]. If something happens in a Burmese village, they [Burmese villagers] are the same ethnicity, so they face fewer problems. Mostly, Karen people have to face more of this.

Does the Karen Army often go there [to T--- village]?

They often go, because we live at the foot of the mountains.

Do they make trouble for villagers when they go?

No, they don't make trouble for villagers.

Do they take free food from villagers when they go?

They do take food for free from villagers. Mostly they pay the cost. Sometimes, because of villagers' kindness and organising, they feed them.

What about taking by force?

No, there's nothing like this.

What about the Burmese Army [Tatmadaw]?

Yes, they do [take by force]. They go around and beg for things. They ask for alcohol and are unruly. They threaten villagers and say lies.

What do workers earn [do] for a bare [subsistence] living?

They plant paddy and harvest groundnuts [peanuts]. They do hired jobs [day labour] from day to day.

How much do they get per day?

If you work one day you get 1,500 kyat (US \$1.87).

Can they eat with 1,500 kyat?

No.

For how much do people sell a bowl of rice (1.56 kg. / 3.44 lb.)?

It's 600 kyat (US \$0.75). It depends on the quality. Some are 600, 700 (US \$0.88) or 800 kyat (US \$1.01).

How many problems do you think villagers face in their jobs?

The problem they have to face the most is disturbing by the Burmese Army [Tatmadaw]. They're ordered to go and do sentry duty, carry rations and send messages. They have to face those things.

What about travelling?

They have to face [problems] too. Sometimes, the news isn't good. We don't dare to travel when we hear that they [the Tatmadaw and the KNLA] are close to each other. The fighting happens mostly between our villages. In 2008, this incident [fighting] happened in the lower village, and it happened in the upper villages in 2010. We've faced this.

You want to mean two parts of the village, the upper and the lower parts?

The Burmese Army entered the village and the Karen Army heard the news, and the Karen Army went and shot at them. The Karen Army attacked them [the Tatmadaw] when they went back. We have to face this problem in our area. They [the Tatmadaw] arrested us and we had to pay money. They left the village and the Karen Army attacked them on the way, so they arrested us and we had to pay money. The villagers were afraid and they had to flee. In September, the incident happened and villagers were afraid so they fled. They went and stayed with other people in other villages, but the people didn't welcome them because they worried that the Army [Tatmadaw] would give them trouble. They [the Tatmadaw] kept [viewed] our village as a KNLA village.

You mean villagers from other villages didn't welcome villagers from here?

Yes. They didn't welcome them. It was the time when I went and was a [occupation censored for security] in He---. Villagers went to He--- [to avoid the Tatmadaw]. People from there didn't dare to welcome then. I had to go and organise, to explain to them [He--- residents] that my

villagers are not bad people. [I said] *'They're good people. If you don't dare to accept them, I'll give my guarantee for them.'*

How many villagers fled?

Around one or two weeks after the fighting, men in the village didn't dare to stay in the village. Just women stayed behind. One or two households gathered and stayed together. When I went back and saw it, it looked like a group of chickens that gathered together. They [the Tatmadaw] went and cleared up the place. They shot students and people they saw, and shelled the village.

Who shot them?

The Burmese Army shot them.

How long ago did it happen?

In September 2010.

Did any villagers get injured when they shot?

One woman was injured.

What happened to villagers who fled to He---?

They stayed around, and came back when the Army [Tatmadaw] didn't go [near the village]. They [the Tatmadaw] didn't go close to the village after the fighting. They were scared. The villagers knew about that, so they went back to the village.

Did they all flee to He---?

Some fled to He--- and to other villages. They fled and stayed everywhere. They didn't dare to face them [Tatmadaw soldiers].

Why?

They [the Tatmadaw] said, *'You do that [cooperate with the KNLA], because the fighting happens close to your village.'* The Burmese soldiers said *'You did that to me [were responsible for the KNLA activity].'* We have to face this problem.

Yesterday, you said that two villagers were killed. Can you explain to me about the incident?

It was in August 2010. Two people [villagers] were killed. A bomb exploded beside their sentry hut. It was their turn to go and do sentry duty, so they went and did sentry duty. The bomb exploded. The Burmese [Tatmadaw soldiers] came to the village and asked who was on duty. People told them the guys' names. The Burmese Army went and arrested them and killed them. They accused them of doing it [detonating the bomb]. They asked no questions.

Do you know these two people's names?

I know one. His name was M---. He was a Gy--- villager. He was Karen. He was around 60 years old. I don't know the other one. They stayed in the same village.

Why did the Burmese Army kill them?

They were accused of making the explosion.

How do you know that those people [the Tatmadaw] killed them?

I don't know. But they've disappeared since they were arrested. We think they were killed. They've disappeared since then, until now. I just guess. If something happened like this before, they [people who disappeared after being arrested] were killed.

Have any other incidents like this happened?

In September, a man was killed by a landmine. We don't know who made the explosion. Villagers were arrested.

Do you know the guy's name?

No, he was a Hs--- villager. It was in September 2010. He also disappeared. I don't know whether he was killed or not. Another was in Ga---. He went and worked in A---. His parents-in-law went and had treatment in N---. His wife is a [*occupation censored for security*]. He brought medicine and money for his parents-in-law to pay the treatment costs. People [Tatmadaw soldiers] saw the medicine and arrested him. He was arrested, and we didn't know how to find him. He disappeared. They detained him and didn't let us see him. They harmed him on the same night [he was detained] and they didn't dare to show us. We heard he was killed. We held a worship ceremony [funeral] for him.

What [Tatmadaw] army unit is active in the T--- area?

I am a [*occupation censored for security*]. I don't know the army units.

When did it happen?

In September 2010. I forgot his name. I don't remember. His father-in-law's name is Thara H---.

Do you know the army unit that did it [arrested Thara H---'s son]?

No.

What do you think? Why did the Army do this thing?

In my opinion, I think they make civilians poor. They threaten civilians until villagers don't have food to eat, can't think about their livelihoods and no time to think about education. They threaten us not to have contact with our resistance group. For our *poe lee* [literally 'children and grandchildren', here used in reference to the KNU/KNLA] to become weak, that's their purpose. [So] They make us poor. Because of becoming poor, we can't *maw htaw koh* [lift up our heads]. We just have to struggle with our livelihoods.

Where did you move when your village had to move?

I was the headman. I was chairperson. We went and negotiated. Villagers gathered together and discussed it. We said, *'How we are going to organise it if we have to move? We'll have to dismantle our buildings and they'll be destroyed. It'll cost us if we build them up again. If it only costs one household 10,000 kyat (US \$12.58) not to move, [let's] try to discuss and negotiate not to move.'* For this reason, we, the elders, gathered and we went and organised.

How did you organise it?

At that time, the intelligence hadn't been removed [it was prior to 2004].⁸⁶ We went and negotiated with them, about how they could find a way for us [to stay in the village]. Because we went and negotiated with them, they demanded from us [to pay] 500,000 kyat (US \$629) for one area, and we could stay for one more year. When next new Tatmadaw unit came [rotated in] the next year, they did the same thing.

How do they [Tatmadaw units] rotate?

Once every six months. During the time when I served as village head, for five years, they ordered us to move five times. It's a way [for the Tatmadaw] to make money. When we organised some money, villagers could stay. They said we could stay and they said they'd report that the village had already moved. Another group [Tatmadaw unit] came and ordered us to move. We asked them why we had to move. We asked them, *'Can't we deal with you? Is it because we deal with people in the forest [the KNLA]? Aren't the villagers able to deal with you? Please tell us your difficulties, so that we can explain to villagers why we have to move.'* Then they [Tatmadaw soldiers] said, *'It's because the village heads aren't good.'* Then we replied to them, *'In the past, we paid 500,000 kyat for one area and they said that we could stay, but why this is happening to us again? It creates a problem for us.'* But they said we had to move. Then we had to go to the designated area and build one or two houses and take pictures and say we had already moved. But to be able to do that, we had to pay money to them. I did that five times. You had to go and build huts and take pictures to show that you had moved.

Did you have to do this every year?

Yes, every year. It became a big problem to villagers.

It means they did it in this way so the information [that villagers had not relocated] never went up to the upper levels [of the Tatmadaw]?

Never. For the first time as I told you, I went to N---. I went and met with [occupations censored for security] and they interviewed me because they heard about the news. I went to worship at C---. It was on a Sunday. They asked me and I spread the news to pray for people who were facing problems in Ler Doh Township. They asked me: *'How many villages, mosques, schools and churches are there in the area?'* and *'Who's ordering you to move?'* and they gave us

⁸⁶ In October 2004 General Khin Nyunt, then-Prime Minister and chief of Burma's intelligence corps, was removed from his post and the intelligence apparatus under his control subsequently dismantled. For extensive background on the dismissal of Khin Nyunt and its implications for the country, see: Kyaw Yin Hlaing. "Myanmar in 2004: Why Military Rule Continues," *Southeast Asian Affairs* (2005), pp.230-256.

knowledge [advice] after they asked us questions. [They said] '*Villagers can prosecute if they have evidence and you will get more [should collect evidence].*'

What do you mean villagers can 'prosecute?'

If they [villagers] know the damage to their houses when they dismantle them, they can collect [assess] the cost of the damage and report to a court. People who do this will have to go and face [present] the case in the court. [The court will ask details] Like '*Who ordered you to do this?*' If the village head said the Burmese Army, it wouldn't show evidence, [because] it was just an oral order. So it would harm the villagers.

You said you organized five times [to avoid relocation]. Were they all successful?

Yes, we could stay in the village. The last time, they moved other villages. My village is located close to the road, so they left my village to stay. My village, the *su see* village [relocation site] and He--- are located close to the road, so we didn't need to move our village. For them [the Tatmadaw], they can travel easily [to T--- village] because the village stays close by. For others villages, they all had to move to Ka---.

How many villages had to move?

G--- and K--- village tracts. There are five villages in G---. They are Ha---, De---, Ko---, Wo--- and Ya---. In K--- village tract, there are Ta--- and Gk--- villages. In total it was seven villages.

What is the situation in Ka--- now?

In the last two years, since 2009, they [villagers who were relocated] organised it with money. They gave money and they were allowed to go back and stay in their villages. Now they've gone back and have been staying for two years in their villages.

So they don't live in Ka--- anymore?

No, they don't stay there anymore or in a *su see* [relocation site].

How were the villagers' livelihoods in Ka---?

They [the Tatmadaw] wanted to make it like an ideal [model] village. They constructed a road and places for houses. They built a clinic and school. They established it like a city.

How did villagers work when they went and stayed there?

They had to go back and do their work at their old villages. They had to get permission documents [to travel]. They had to give money [for the permission documents].

How does it work with permission documents?

[A document is valid for] Five days in a week. They [villagers] have to give 500 or 1,000 kyat (US \$0.63 – 1.26). They can't sleep at their workplaces for the five days if the news is not good [if the security situation is unstable]. It's in their [the Tatmadaw's] hands for this one.

Do villagers have to inform them [the Tatmadaw] if the villagers want to sleep [at their workplaces]?

Yes, villagers have to inform them. If they want to sleep there, they have to include it [in the permission document].

Is the cost different for the documents that let you sleep or not sleep [outside the relocation site]?

Yes, they cost is different. For example if you want to sleep, you have to pay 3,000 kyat or 4,000 kyat (US \$3.77 – 5.03). The price they have to pay for permission documents and huts are different. Each Army unit isn't the same. Some units demand 1,500, 2,000 and 3,000 kyat for each hut.

Do you see any strong points about what they do in the *su see* [relocation] village, like they built the clinic and school?

I don't see any strong point. They do that just to control people, and for those people not to communicate with outside people [the KNU/KNLA].

Did villagers have to face any special issue during the time when they went and stayed in the *su see* [relocation] village?

The problem they faced was flooding. During flooding, the children had to face diseases [illnesses] like diarrhoea.

Was there no *loh ah pay*?

They had to do *loh ah pay*, like filling water, carrying wood and sentry duty. They had to do the. They had to do it every day. They had to build roads. They had to prepare everything.

Do you know the Army units which are active in the Ler Doh [Township] area? What MOC or LID?

They all are [under one] LID [MOC], but I don't know their unit. I'm not a village head anymore so I don't know.

Do you think do they have any other objectives in relocating these villagers?

The other objective was about paying tax. So people wouldn't be able to pay them [the KNU/KNLA] and to cut off their [villagers'] communication with outside people. They [KNU/KNLA] will become weak if there are no people to encourage them.

What do you mean by 'they?'

People from the jungle.

The KNU?

Yes, the KNU.

Do they [the Tatmadaw] usually come and tell villagers or give orders when villagers have to move?

They call the village head.

Do they write a letter or give an oral order?

They don't normally write a letter. They order *set tha* [a messenger]⁸⁷ to come, and inform the village head.

Do they give order letters to the village head that your village has to move?

No, we don't have this kind of [letter]. We go [to meet them]. They tell us, and we come back and we move.

Why don't they give you an order letter?

I don't know. I think they're afraid because in the order letter, it includes the person who gave the order. They worry that the information will spread out to above and it'll become a problem. I wrote a letter when I was a village head. When villagers had to move, it was the rainy season and the time for children to go to school. Villagers can't move in the rainy season. I wrote a petition letter, and I wrote it to ask them to allow us to move in the coming summer [dry season]. [I said] We'd move at that time if they extended the time for us. We included how many villages, households, residents, monasteries, farms, and schools were in the area. We wrote and we signed it. We requested to them. They knew about it [the letter] and they stopped it. It became a problem. He [a Tatmadaw officer] said '*I ordered with my mouth, and you [should] solve [respond] with your mouth.*' They didn't like it when I did that [responded] with a letter. We don't have education so we can't overcome them. They don't like it, even if you are a little greater than them.

Is there any *su see* village in your area now?

No, but there is *ywa bpyet* [abandoned village], like villagers from Ne--- and Lu---, they moved and they didn't come [back]. They went and lived in other villages. For example, four or five houses in one village and another [village]. They didn't dare to come back because there's no person to lead them.

Did those villagers leave behind their materials in their villages, like villages [homes] and coconut plantations?

Since *pya ley pya* [the 'four cuts' period],⁸⁸ fighting happened [in that area] and they [villagers' plantations] were all cut down. They moved in 2007 and they never came back. At that time,

⁸⁷ '*Set tha*' is a Burmese term for forced labour duty as a messenger stationed at army camps or bases and serving as a go-between to deliver orders from army officers to village heads, but also involving other menial tasks when no messages are in need of delivery.

⁸⁸ *Pya ley pya* was designed to cut armed opposition off from sources of "*food, funds, intelligence and recruits*" and, in practice, referred to an extensive scorched earth campaign widely credited with enabling the Tatmadaw to take

heavy fighting happened in their village and they were ordered to move, but the whole village tract also had to move. If they didn't move, they were shelled. I talked to the village head and they fled to T--- village tract. They left their property, like farms and others.

Do they come back and do their work in their workplaces?

Yes. They can't go and work in other places if they don't come back and work [in their agricultural projects near their old villages].

How many *su* see villages were there when you served as village head?

Just Ka---. There were none in the other areas.

How many people [had to] move to Ka---?

Seven villages, and there were about 600 households.

Currently, do you hear anything about relocation?

We don't hear it, but the Burmese Army [Tatmadaw] threatens us like [by ordering]: '*No fighting can happen.*' If fighting happens, we'll have to move and they'll kill us. They threaten us, like: '*You live there, and you have to take responsibility to stop the fighting from happening.*' They'll take action on us and give us punishment and give us trouble. People who live in the village have to take responsibility [for what happens around the village].

Why has there been a change?

There's been a change because of our news [information we reported]. We see that forced labour has decreased. Democracy groups stand up on the other side [in opposition] and they send the information that happens, and our Karen organizations are also working on it. It [forced labour] was sometimes stopped because of this.

Do you see that villagers do this [kind of] thing by themselves?

Yes, we do these things.

Is there any difference when it changes to a different Army unit [when Tatmadaw units rotate]?

control of much of the country beginning in the 1950s. See: Martin Smith. *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999, pp.258-262. Though official references to the four cuts strategy have ceased, overwhelming evidence indicates that Tatmadaw forces continue to employ tactics targeting civilians, particularly in Nyaunglebin, Papun and Toungoo Districts. See, for example: "Attacks and displacement in Nyaunglebin District," KHRG, April 2010; *Self-protection under strain: Targeting of civilians and local responses in northern Karen State*, KHRG, August 2010; "Tatmadaw attacks destroy civilian property and displace villages in northern Papun District," KHRG, April 2011.

It's different. Some enter the village and stay peacefully. They don't restrict us from travelling. Some are *kyan* [literally 'rough', used in this case to contrast with 'peaceful'] when they enter the village, but they become good before they go back. It's different. They have different policies.

Do you have a clinic or hospital in your village?

There's no hospital but there's a small clinic. I founded a clinic but when people moved, the clinic stayed right there.

What do you mean people moved? You said your village didn't need to move?

They moved because I did [something] and my *poe lee* misunderstood me. They came and arrested me in 2007. The villagers didn't dare to stay so they moved. They fled for one year. They came back after I went back.

Who went and arrested you?

The KNU.

They went and arrested you?

Yes.

For what reason did they arrest you?

They misunderstood me. You can't do things that all people agree with. I made a mistake. I served as village head for five or six years, but no fighting happened. So people saw me as a *kyaw yoe* [literally 'back bone', in this case meaning one who supported the Tatmadaw]. But they [the KNLA] didn't harm me. They took care of me very well. I came and stayed peacefully. They sent me back after one year and one month. It means I had to deal with both sides [the Tatmadaw and the KNLA]. I had to stay in the middle. I don't have education so I prayed. Because of the praying, I could overcome the obstacle... [audio recording inaudible]... Fighting happened when I came back. It happened beside the village. Since the beginning, people didn't trust me. They thought people would kill me. I married [performed a marriage ceremony for] two or three Karen soldiers who were friendly with me. They said they didn't like me. I told them, '*My responsibility is done when I die. I will do God's work if I don't die.*' They didn't do anything to me.

Is there person to look after your small clinic?

No.

You said you have health staff, where did they graduate from?

They attended training from the Burmese government side, not the KNU side.

How do they treat people?

They just give medicine and injections because it'll cost more if you go and have treatment in the city. It's very helpful for villagers.

How many health workers?

Two health workers. They're male.

Do you have to pay money when you go and take medicine?

Yes, you have to pay.

Doesn't the government provide [medicine] for free?

No, they [the health workers] have to buy [medicine] themselves and treat patients in the village.

How is it different to have treatment in the village and in the city?

The difference is, you can have treatment even if you don't have money in the village. If you don't have money, you can't go to the hospital. This is the difference. It's helpful.

What about if the disease is serious?

If the disease is serious, they send them to the hospital.

Is there any support from outside?

It could reach here if they supported, but people [in the village] don't dare to accept it. It's not easy if people beside you [neighbours] see you. You have to do it secretly if you want to accept [outside support]. You can't do it openly.

Villagers from the village also don't dare to go?

No.

How many schools are in your village tract?

There were four schools, but one school closed when people moved in 2007.

Do those schools receive support?

There's support from the government.

What kind of support do they give?

They just send school teachers to come and teach.

Do villagers have to support the school teachers?

No, we just have to go and fence their houses.

What about food?

We give if we want to give. For money, they collect it from the students, like the amount each student has to pay and how much for sports. We have to pay a school entrance fee, books fee, sports fee, building fee and cleaning fee.

How much does a student have to pay for the sports fee?

500 or 1,000 kyat (US \$0.63 – 1.26).

What's about support from the KNU? Do they go and give support like books?

No, it doesn't reach [the village]. They'll give it, but we don't dare to go and take it.

Is there anything that you want to say that I didn't ask you?

I think you asked almost everything.

For example, any issue that you have suffer or that your villagers feel good about?

Most villagers, one out of two [half the villagers], have to deal with food problems and insufficient food. Some people can't eat regularly. They go and work. They come back at night time. They do have rice to cook at night [after working for a day]. Mostly, this problem has occurred since we came back to our old village.

For what reason does this happen?

It happens because of the [Tatmadaw] operations.

How far is their old village and the place where they had to relocate?

They had to move to different places. Not the same place.

Do some people flee to the jungle?

Mostly, no.

Interview | Saw P--- (male, 36), Ky--- village tract, Te Naw Th'Ri Township, Tenasserim Division (May 2011)

This report contains the full transcript of an interview conducted during May 2011 in Te Naw Th'Ri Township, Tenasserim Division by a villager trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. The villager interviewed Saw P---, the 36-year-old head of a village in which Tatmadaw soldiers maintain a continuous presence. Saw P--- described the disappearance of a male villager who has not been seen since February 2010 when he was arrested by Tatmadaw soldiers as he was returning from his hill plantation, on suspicion of supplying food assistance to Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) troops. Saw P--- also described human rights abuses and livelihoods difficulties faced regularly by villagers, including: forced labour, specifically road construction and maintenance; taxation and demands for food and money; theft of livestock; and movement restrictions, specifically the imposition of road tolls for motorbikes and the prohibition against travel to villagers' agricultural workplaces, resulting in the

destruction of crops by animals. Saw P--- also expressed concerns about disruption of children's education caused by the periodic commandeering of the village school and its use as a barracks by Tatmadaw soldiers. He explained how villagers respond to abuses and livelihoods challenges by avoiding Tatmadaw soldiers, harvesting communally, sharing food supplies and inquiring at the local jail to investigate the disappearance of a fellow villager. The following interview was conducted by a villager in Tenasserim Division who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. It is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.⁸⁹ This interview was received along with other information from Tenasserim Division, including 21 other interviews.⁹⁰

Ethnicity: Karen

Religion: Christian

Marital Status: Married

Occupation: Owner of betelnut hill plantation

Position: [censored for security]

How many children do you have?

I have four children.

How old is your oldest child?

My oldest child is 13 years old.

How old is your youngest child?

My youngest child is seven years old.

How long have you fulfilled the village head's responsibilities?

I've fulfilled the responsibilities as village head for about five years already.

What are the village head's duties?

My duties are to follow the orders from the local SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] soldiers⁹¹ and their demands for food and money, provision of livestock, like chickens and pigs, and also porters,

⁸⁹ KHRG trains villagers in eastern Burma 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.

⁹⁰ When these documents have been processed and translated by KHRG and when sufficient information has been compiled and analysed, a full Field Report on the situation in Tenasserim Division will be available on the KHRG website. Until then, KHRG's most recent analysis of the situation in Tenasserim Division can be found in the recent Field Report, "Militarization, Development and Displacement: Conditions for villagers in southern Tenasserim Division," KHRG, March 2011

⁹¹ In Karen, the Burmese phrases *Na Wa Ta* (SLORC) and *Na Ah Pa* (SPDC) are commonly used to refer to the Burmese government or to Burma's state army, the Tatmadaw. Many older Karen villagers who were accustomed to

and to send them to the H--- Township office, the SPDC office and the VPDC office. These are my duties.

What is [the title of] your position?

My position is VPDC [Village Peace and Development Council] village head.

Who elected you to be village head?

I didn't want to be village head myself and the villagers also didn't vote for me, but the VDPC leaders [public officials] came and appointed me.

What has been your experience as village head?

When the SPDC Army soldiers come, I have to go and answer their [questions], and when the Operations Commanders come, I have to stay with [accompany] them everywhere. When the patrolling army units come, they summon me because they don't trust the [other] villagers, so I have to go with them. These patrolling army units, they hide in the jungle for a week or so. And, they call me to the Township office and ask me about the village situation, the KNLA [Karen National Liberation Army] situation and many different kinds of things about our village, like: '*Are any of the villagers in contact with the KNLA,, sending pictures to the KNLA or sending news about internally displaced people to the KNLA?*' I always have to face the SPDC Army soldiers, patrolling army units and the Operations Commanders when they come to the village and question me a lot, and I have to be the guarantor for all the villagers.

What is your village's name?

My village's name is N--- *ywa thit* ['new village', a term used to refer to a relocation site].

How many households does it have?

There are [*number censored for security*] households.

How many villagers does it have?

There are [*number censored for security*] villagers.

What are the villagers' occupations?

The villagers farm hill fields.

Do the villagers have enough food?

using the phrase *Na Wa Ta* (SLORC) before 1997 continue to use that phrase, even though the SLORC has not officially existed since 1997. Similarly, despite the official dissolution of the SPDC in March 2011, many Karen villagers continue to use the phrase *Na Ah Pa* (SPDC) to refer to the Burmese government or to the Tatmadaw; see: "Mission Accomplished as SPDC 'dissolved'," Myanmar Times, April 4-10 2011. The term *Na Ah Pa* was used by the interviewer and interviewee, and "SPDC" is therefore retained in the translation of this interview.

My villagers are very poor and they don't have enough food. Some villagers have to farm far away from the village. When the SPDC Army soldiers come to the village, they don't allow the villagers to go outside the village, and the villagers don't have time to go [to their own workplaces] because they have to do forced labour. Their rice fields have no one looking after them, so the buffalo come and eat them and destroy the rice fields. This year the villagers will suffer more than last year because they [Tamadaw and KNLA] had battles in the summertime [dry season, November through February] and the villagers didn't dare to farm so the animals came and ate the rice fields. When they harvested the paddy, they got only ten or 20 baskets (209 kg. / 460.8 lb. or 418 kg. / 921.6 lb.) total, and some didn't get enough food and will have to take odd jobs for daily wages.

What do the villagers who don't have enough [food] do?

The villagers who don't have enough food help people clear their fields of grass for planting, and help other people pound [thresh] the rice. They collect vegetables and eat them plain for their daily meals.

Do the villagers have an income?

They don't have any income because they are very poor. Only some villagers sell *brinjals* [aubergines] and they get some money, but not enough for everyone. Some villagers are pastoralists, raising pigs and chickens for a living. We face a lot of problems and I could never describe them all.

Do SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] soldiers come to your village?

Yes, don't even ask if the SPDC Army soldiers come because, you know, they're based in our village. We have an army camp and also we have a police camp. There are SPDC Army soldiers based in my village all year long. They never leave and we have to feed them all the time.

Do you remember when they came and started to base at the army camp [in your village]?

They came in 2003 and they've never moved from our village. The police have since imposed a motorbike toll for villagers riding through the police checkpoint.

What have the soldiers in your village done?

The soldiers in my village have stolen the villagers' ducks, pigs, chickens, cats and dogs. When they can't find anything to steal, they shoot and eat the livestock villagers are raising. The villagers don't dare say anything and just have to let them do this.

They've done many things to the villagers.

Yes, they've done many things to the villagers, but I mention only some of the things to you now. I don't dare to mention everything now because I'm afraid of them [the Tatmadaw soldiers].

We're talking secretly and you're still afraid?

I don't know. Someone might hear when we are talking, so I'm afraid.

Do they pay for the livestock they take from villagers?

For livestock, it's hard to say that they pay for them because they've taken them ten times but paid for them only once. They paid this villager only 1,000 kyat or 1,100 kyat (US \$1.23 or \$1.35 respectively).⁹²

Have the SPDC Army soldiers killed any villagers?

Before, the SPDC Army soldiers killed one of the villagers.

What was the villager's name who was killed by the SPDC Army soldiers?

His name was Saw A---.

When did it happen?

It happened in February 2010.

Can you tell us, why did they kill him?

This villager was coming back from his workplace on a plantation and he encountered [Tatmadaw] LIB [Light Infantry Battalion] #559. When he came back he brought vegetables with him and the soldiers stopped and asked him: '*Where are you coming back from?*' The villager said: '*I'm coming back from my plantation site,*' but the SPDC Army soldiers didn't believe him. The SPDC Army soldiers said: '*You brought food to the people who're hiding in the jungle [KLNA] and we don't believe you.*' The soldiers said: '*We don't believe you and we have to interrogate you a little bit,*' so they took him with them. When on the day the SPDC Army soldiers took him and no one saw him, we went and looked for him in the town jail, but we didn't see him anymore, so everyone thinks he has died and many people have looked for him but no one's seen him again. So we think he has been killed.

Do you ever run from the SPDC Army soldiers?

No, how can I run once the SPDC Army soldiers are in my village? But sometimes, if I see them coming from far away, I run away for a few hours, but never for the whole day.

Do you have to porter for the SPDC Army soldiers?

I never porter for them, but I have to follow [accompany] them from place to place very often.

Do they give you a gun?

⁹² All conversion estimates for the Kyat in this interview are based on the fluctuating informal exchange rate rather than the government's official fixed rate of 6.5 kyat to US \$1. As of September 27th 2011, this unofficial rate of exchange was US \$1 = 815 kyat. This figure is used for all calculations above.

No, they don't give me a gun because they don't trust me. They say: '*The Karen people are people we can't trust.*'

Do they give you food to eat when you follow them?

They give me food because I follow them closely, but it's very difficult for the villagers who are portering to get food because they don't give food to them.

Do they pay you?

They don't pay us and we also have to bring food for ourselves. We have to bring two milk tins of rice (0.5 kg / 1.1 lbs) for each villager.

When you follow the SPDC Army soldiers, do the SPDC Army soldiers enter any other villages?

No, they don't enter the villages. They [the soldiers] just go on paths in the jungle and we have to clear a trail for them until we get to O---.

Do they enter any villages when you follow them?

When I went with them, the commanding officer ordered me to guide them to the E--- area in Th--- village.

What did they do when they entered the village?

When they entered the village they went to the store and demanded that the village head buy food for them.

When you've gone [to accompany Tatmadaw troops], have there been any battles?

The soldiers' from [Tatmadaw Infantry Battalion] #203 fought once and also one time in Gk--- village.

Do the SPDC Army soldiers abuse you in any other ways?

They harass the villagers by forcing them to cut grass and to clear and build a vehicle road for them. We also have to cut grass in rubber plantations. They abuse us in so many different ways, I can't mention everything.

Do you want to share your opinion with us about the enemy's [Tatmadaw soldiers'] abuse?

The enemy plans to develop their communication [scanning and receiving] systems. The local SPDC Army soldiers said they will set up communication [scanning and receiving] systems in every part of Burma, so the KNLA soldiers can't escape from them anymore because they'll be able to track their activities and communications inside the country and foreign countries. We heard they said that, but we don't know for sure if it's true or not. We know our KNU [Karen National Union] leaders have more knowledge than us, so we hope the KNU will protect the villagers from the SPDC Army soldiers by having the best strategy to protect the villagers.

Do you have a school in your village?

We have a school, but it only has four grades and the grades never go up [there are never classes for students above the fourth grade].

When was the school set up?

The school was set up during the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League [AFPFL] era.⁹³

How many teachers do they have in the school?

There are four teachers in the school.

Where are the teachers from?

These teachers were sent by the SPDC government and they're government workers.

Do you know how much the teachers earn?

The school principal earns 35,000 kyat (US \$43) a month. Ordinary teachers, they earn 30,000 kyat (US \$37) a month.

How many students do they have in the school?

I don't know for sure, because the teachers haven't made the student name list yet.

How many students do they have if you had to guess?

I guess about between [*numbers censored for security*] students.

How much do the school students have to pay for school fees?

The students have to pay 1,500 kyat (US \$1.84) each per year.

Whom do they have to pay?

They have to pay the school principal.

Do the students have a chance to study without disruption?

⁹³ Originally called the Anti-Fascist Organisation (AFO), which was formed in August 1944 as a coalition of Communist Party of Burma (CPB), People's Revolutionary Party (PRP) and Burma National Army (BNA) members, the AFPFL was not officially outlawed until 1962, despite being effectively destroyed by a factional split in April 1958 and by the subsequent inception, in October 1958, of the military 'caretaker' administration under the leadership of Ne Win. See Smith, *Burma: Insurgency and the politics of ethnic insurgency*, pp. 60 – 87; 175 – 80; 195 – 206.

The teachers are absent all the time. Sometimes they say their parents called them and they have to go home or they have to do their own personal errands, so the teachers don't come to school regularly. The students don't have the chance to study without disruption.

Do the students have the chance to study the Karen language?

No, they don't. We don't dare to talk about it.

Do the SPDC or KNLA soldiers come and disturb the school?

No, they don't come and disturb the school, but when additional SPDC Army units come to our village with so many soldiers the students can't go to school because the soldiers use the school as their barracks. Sometimes they stay at the school for one or two weeks and without leaving, so the school principal has to ask them to move to other places, but when they have to move they complain that they don't want to [move].⁹⁴

Do the students have to pay for anything at school?

The students' parents have to pay for everything. Nothing's free for the students.

Do you have a clinic in your village?

No, we don't have a clinic in my village. The female village elders provide traditional treatments, but they don't have any formal education. So we don't have a clinic.

Where do the villagers go when they get sick?

My villagers go to the P--- town clinic.

What common illnesses do the villagers face?

The common illnesses the villagers face are: fever, coughing, knee and elbow pain, eye infection, diarrhoea and stomach pain. They're prevalent at the end of the rainy season.

Do the villagers have the chance to work without disruption?

They villager don't have the chance to work without disruption. The villagers aren't allowed to go outside the village when USDP politicians plan to visit the village. Sometimes, [additional] SPDC Army soldiers come and stay in our village for two or three weeks. They don't allow the villagers to go outside the village to tend to their farms. So as I mentioned truthfully above, when they [Tatmadaw soldiers] go to fight [the KNLA], they don't allow the villagers to work their hill farms for about one month. The villagers don't have enough food to eat and some villagers have to borrow rice from other villagers. We have to follow the soldiers' orders because we don't dare to question them.

⁹⁴ Notably, the United Nations Security Council, as part of its agenda to improve protection for children affected by armed conflict, has explicitly urged parties to armed conflict to '*to refrain from actions that impede children's access to education*'; see: Resolution 1998, S/RES/1998, July 12th 2011, paragraph 4.

Do the villagers have enough food?

Don't even ask if they have enough food. As you know, at least some have many children and they don't have enough food and money, so they have to take odd jobs. If they really don't have any food, they have to borrow a basket of rice (32 kg. / 70.4 lb.) or a bowl of rice (2 kg. / 4.4 lb.) from their friends.

Do the villagers have to buy things to eat?

They have to buy everything to eat, like salt, sweet powder [MSG] and so on.

How much does one big tin of rice (16 kg. / 35.2 lb.) cost?

We [normally] buy a sack of rice (48 kg. / 105.6 lb.).

How much does one bag of rice cost?

One sack of rice costs 25,000 kyat (US \$31), and one sack of rice contains three big tins.

How much is one viss of meat?

If the meat is from a large pig, one viss (1.6 kg. / 3.52 lb.) costs 3,000 kyat (US \$3.68). One viss of pork is normally 3,500 kyat (US \$4.29). Beef is cheaper than pork. One viss of pork costs 2,000 kyat (US \$2.45) and one viss of buffalo meat also costs 2,000 kyat. Karen people don't eat beef or buffalo much. Only Muslims will come and buy a cow. We don't buy visses of beef.

Do the SPDC Army soldiers develop anything in your village?

They said they'd give us zinc to build new roofs for our houses, but in the end they demanded 4,000 kyat (US \$4.91) from each villager and the villagers didn't get the zinc. For the school, they said they'd provide bricks to repair the school, but they demanded money from the villagers, three or five baht (US \$0.10 or \$0.17) per brick.

Do they repair the vehicle road for the village?

They have the public service personnel to repair the road, but we don't know if they repair it or not. We only see them travelling back and forth.

What do you think about the KNU?

I don't think the KNU is bad, I only think the KNU is struggling for freedom for our Karen people. I also worry for them because the enemy [Tatmadaw] has plans to destroy them, and we hope they'll struggle to get freedom soon.

Have you ever attended KNU [military] training?

No, I heard about it from my aunts and uncles⁹⁵ and when Captain S--- was alive.

Do you have any last things to mention?

I don't have much else to mention, but I have one thing to say for my villagers and that is to get freedom, to have the chance to work without outside interference and to develop our Karen people's livelihoods, we hope the KNU political leaders will reach a peaceful resolution to stop persecution and abuse [by Tatmadaw forces]. We also need suggestions from our KNU political leaders to encourage us to face the problems [we encounter].

Interview | U Sa--- (male, 50), Pa--- village, Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District (July 2011)

This report contains the full transcript of an interview conducted by a KHRG researcher in July 2011 with a villager from Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District. The researcher interviewed U Sa---, who described how his family and other residents of Pa--- village faced threats and abuses from Tatmadaw soldiers after local DKBA forces captured a Tatmadaw soldier at his home on June 15th 2011. U Sa--- described the following abuses: threats to burn or shell civilian areas; shelling of civilian areas; indiscriminate use of small arms in civilian areas; the taking of civilians as hostages; threats to kill civilians; and the imposition of movement restrictions, including threats to shoot villagers violating restrictions on sight. U Sa--- explained that he and his family fled Pa--- on June 16th to avoid these threats; as of July 3rd, they did not yet feel safe to return to their home. This interview was conducted by a KHRG researcher in July 2011; other details on the situation in Pa--- village after June 15th, including a general situation update, one incident report, and three photographs were submitted by a different KHRG researcher in June and July 2011. The following interview was conducted by a KHRG researcher. It is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.⁹⁶



⁹⁵ 'Aunt' and 'uncle' are familiar terms of respect attributed to older women and men; they do not necessarily signify here any actual familiar ties between the 'aunts and uncles' and the interviewee.

⁹⁶ When conducting interviews, KHRG researchers use loose question guidelines and 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.

Ethnicity: Pa-o
Religion: Buddhist
Marital Status: Married with three children
Occupation: Shopkeeper

This photo, taken on July 1st 2011, shows U Sa--- (b: right) with his wife (back left) and three children, aged 16 and 18. The family fled Pa--- on June 16th 2011 after Tatmadaw threats and abuse after the capture by the DKBA of a Tatmadaw soldier on June 15th. [Photo: KHRG]

Why did you flee to Ka---?

I came here because the DKBA captured a Tatmadaw soldier named T---, who is 52 years old and has one chevron [holds the rank of Lance Corporal]. It was at the time when that soldier came to use the phone. After that, the Burma Tatmadaw came and scolded and threatened villagers and village leaders that they'd burn our Pa--- village [Pe--- village in Karen] and that they'd shoot [at] our homes and beat our villagers if they didn't get their soldier back. They called the village leaders to go to the place that they specified, at a pagoda at the western exit gate of the village, by 2 pm, and if we, the villagers, didn't arrive there, they'd shell mortars into our village. And [then] they did shell the mortars into the village after 2 pm. The Tatmadaw soldiers often came and used the phone at my house.⁹⁷

When did it happen?

The DKBA captured the soldier on the 15th [of June], and the Tatmadaw told the village leaders to go and meet them on the 16th at 2 pm. I fled on June 16th 2011.

How many bullets did they shoot on the 15th [of June]?

They shot a lot of small guns at Saw R---'s parents' house.⁹⁸ The whole group of soldiers shot at Saw R---'s parents' house. They also shot guns in the street. On that day they arrested Saw R---'s mother. At the time when they fired guns at Saw R---'s parents' house, there were three of Saw R---'s brother's kids in the house, inside a bomb shelter. Only the three kids were in the house, because after they arrested Saw R---'s mother [earlier that day] there were no older people [adults] in the house.

Did they arrest only Saw R---'s mother?

Yes, because at that time only Saw R---'s mother was in the house. His father went to his field. On the 16th [of June] the Tatmadaw shelled two or three mortars into the village. First they shelled mortars, and after that they shot small guns. Then I didn't dare to stay in the village any more, so I fled. None of the villagers were injured by the shelling.

⁹⁷ A KHRG researcher in Dooplaya District that spoke with local sources about conditions in Pa--- village after June 15th explained that U Sa---'s family had installed a telephone landline connected to Thai networks in their home, which villagers and soldiers could use for a fee. The researcher also reported that two different Tatmadaw battalions were active in Pa--- and the surrounding area in June 2011; the specific battalion numbers have been omitted from this bulletin for security.

⁹⁸ A KHRG researcher in Dooplaya District that spoke with local sources about conditions in Pa--- village after June 15th explained that Saw R--- is a local DKBA officer holding the rank of *thu sghay koh*, or 'Platoon Commander', who led the detachment of soldiers that kidnapped Tatmadaw soldier T---.

Did they [Tatmadaw soldiers] come into the village after the shelling?

After the shelling, they called the village leaders and went around the village together with them, and then came into the village.

When did you start to flee?

I started to flee when the Tatmadaw soldiers started shelling. At that time, I fled alone. I ran across the La--- River. After about half an hour or one hour, my wife followed me and I told her not to go back [to Pa--- village]. [I said] *'Because I ran, they [the Tatmadaw soldiers] will give you trouble. For our children, we can ask someone who's going back to the village to tell our children to follow us.'* That night we started to leave our village. Starting from the riverbank, we slept one night at Ha--- village, and the next day on the 18th we arrived at Re--- village. We slept [at Ha---] on the 17th and the next day we arrived in Re---.

So you started to leave on June 15th?

No, on that day, I hadn't fled yet. On the 15th, the DKBA captured the soldier and the Burma Army [Tatmadaw] arrested Saw R---'s mother. On that day they shot small guns, and on the 16th they shelled mortars into the village, so I fled that day. In the evening on the 16th my whole family gathered together [and fled].

How many nights did you have to spend on the way to Re---?

We spent two nights on the way before we arrived at Re--- village. We arrived in Ka--- yesterday. We had to spend some days in Re--- village because we didn't know how to come to Ka---. I waited for my friend, and when I found my friend I followed him to Ka---.

Could you carry your belongings with you?

We couldn't carry anything with us. The things that I left at my home are one car, one motorbike, and one 22 horsepower machine [generator], and the phone that I set up in my house. These are [just] the expensive things. And there are still other belongings [left behind], such as household materials.

What difficulties did you face on the way [to Ka---]?

On the way, we travelled by foot and we asked one little boy to send [guide] us. We couldn't come by ourselves. We had to travel on the forest paths.

What about other villagers in the village? Did you [personally] face any special threat?

Yes, because the thing [the capture of the Tatmadaw soldier by the DKBA] happened at my house. They [the Tatmadaw soldiers] thought that I was contacting the rebel groups and contacting the DKBA.

How do you know that they thought like this [about] you?

Because of what has happened in the past.⁹⁹ They've always threatened villagers like this. And we've always heard what they've said to the villagers.

This time, what caused you to run away?

This time it [the threat] was a little bit more serious, and what happened [the capture of the Tatmadaw soldier] happened at my house, and they said that if they didn't get their soldier back then they'd kill me. So for me, I fled at the time when I had the chance to flee.

Who told you about this threat?

They [Tatmadaw soldiers] talked about it when they came into the village.

When did Saw R--- capture the [Tatmadaw] soldier?

It was at 8:20 am, before school started.

How is the situation in the village now?

There's no chance that it'll be better. The situation will become worse.

How far is the Burma Army [Tatmadaw] camp from your village?

It's not very far. If I have to say, it's *t'aw tha* [literally 'one shout'; a Burmese expression similar to the English expression 'within shouting distance']. If you had to walk, it'd take ten to twenty minutes.

We've heard that the DKBA arrested a police officer and they arrested one soldier. Do you know [about] that?

For the policeman, it wasn't an officer. His name is M--- and the DKBA didn't arrest him. He was just sitting in a tea shop, and the DKBA came to him, frightened him, and asked him '*Where is the police officer?*' And the policeman told them '*The camp officer is at U Sa---'s house,*' because the DKBA frightened [threatened] him that if he didn't tell them, they'd capture him. But when the DKBA came to my house, they saw the soldier and captured him. The soldier's name is T--- and [he is] 52 years old. After that they let the policeman [M---] go. At that time, the camp officer wasn't at my house.

⁹⁹ For previous examples of detention and violent abuse, including killing, of villagers accused of having contact with Karen armed groups, including violent abuse and killing, reported to have been perpetrated by soldiers under Tatmadaw LID #22 in Kawkaik Township, see: "SPDC soldiers arrest and kill villagers on allegations of contacting KNU/KNLA," KHRG, January 2008. See especially the testimony of Saw B---, who described how his brother was arrested and killed, and his family forced to flee amid accusations of contact with the KNLA, after KNLA soldiers captured a Tatmadaw soldier near his home. Tatmadaw battalions under LID #22 are active in the current conflict in Dooplaya and Pa'an districts; specific battalion numbers mentioned by local sources interviewed by KHRG researchers have been omitted from this bulletin for security.

How do you know that this happened?

The tea shop owner, whose name is Y---, came and told my wife that the policeman told the DKBA that. For the DKBA capturing the soldier, I saw it with my own eyes because they captured him at my house.

Why do you think they arrested the soldier and didn't arrest the policeman?

I think they'd have arrested whoever they saw. They wouldn't have thought only to arrest soldiers but not the police. For the policeman [M---], in the past he had a good relationship with the DKBA [soldiers], like they drank and ate together.

Did [all] that happen on the same day, or on different days?

Yes, it [all] happened on the same day. It happened on the 15th [starting] at 8:20.

What time was it when they came and fired on Saw R---'s house?

It was because they couldn't capture Saw R---. So they [Tatmadaw soldiers] came down [to the village], and before they arrived at Saw R---'s house they started firing. Then the whole group fired at Saw R--- house and ran up to the house. At that time, I was on the street and while they ran up to the house, I dared to watch it, and went up into my house. It happened right in front of me. I could see it. When the soldiers were firing at the house, inside the house there were three kids, inside the bomb shelter.

How do you know that the kids were in the house?

The kids are Saw R---'s brother's children, and Saw R---'s brother, Saw G---, came and told me himself that at the time when the soldiers fired at the house, the kids were in the house and it was lucky that none of the kids were injured.

Why you didn't flee on the first day [on June 15th]?

On the first day, I talked to my *hsan ain moo*¹⁰⁰ and I told him I didn't dare to stay, but he told me '*U Sa---, don't flee. If you flee, you'll have a bigger mistake [the mistake will appear bigger to the Tatmadaw soldiers].*' So I didn't run away. But on the 16th, when they shelled the mortars, I didn't dare to stay anymore.

You said the Tatmadaw soldiers came and threatened you. Can you tell us what they said to you?

The officer came and told [asked] me, '*Why didn't you come and tell me when they [the DKBA] came and captured the soldier at your house.*' And I told him that, because the policeman already went back [was released], I thought he'd go back and report it. It wouldn't have been good for me to go and give information about this [incident]. He [the Tatmadaw officer]

¹⁰⁰ Literally, 'Ten households leader'; a Burmese term denoting a position below 'Section leader' within a village administration.

continued, *'If that's the case, I'll arrest all the village leaders, the village chairman and Saw R---'s parents.'* Then I told him that the soldiers had already taken Saw R---'s mother.

At the time when the soldiers fired at Saw R---'s house, where had his parents gone?

His mother had been taken to the [Tatmadaw] Tactical Operation Command camp before the firing started, and his father was in his field. After that, Saw R---'s father came back to the village at the time when the Tatmadaw brought Saw R---'s mother down to the village. They talked to Saw R---'s father, and told him to go and get their soldier back from his son. The officer wrote two sentences [for Saw R---], which said: *'Return the soldier by tomorrow. If you do not find the soldier by tomorrow, come and get your mother's body here.'* I could see those two sentences.

Did they actually kill Saw R---'s mother?

The next morning, I could see that Saw R---'s father had come back, but the soldier didn't come back with him. So I was very sorry about that. I could see them [the Tatmadaw] talking to Saw R---'s father. But they didn't kill Saw R---'s mother. At about 1:10 pm they came down, and asked the village leaders to gather at the pagoda at the exit gate of the village. At first, they asked [everyone] to gather at my house and I went around to tell the village leaders. But not all of the village leaders were at home, and I came back and told them [the Tatmadaw soldiers] that not all of the village leaders were at home. Then, they didn't look at me when they talked to me; they said that if everyone didn't go there [to the meeting at the village gate] by 2 pm, they'd shell mortars into the village.

Did they restrict villagers from going outside?

Before I left my village I heard that they were already restricting villagers from going to other villages. They only allowed villagers to go to their workplaces during the daytime, between 6 am and 6 pm. After that [6 pm], villagers couldn't go outside the village. They [Tatmadaw soldiers] said that if they saw [anyone] after 6 pm they'd shoot them. Yesterday, I met with one villager from Pa--- village, and he told me that at the time when this happened, the villagers couldn't sleep in their houses and they had to go and sleep in the monastery. Two or three days ago, the situation [started to] become better and villagers started going back and sleeping in their houses. I think the villagers had to sleep in the monastery for ten to twelve nights, because the villager I met told me that the villagers [only] started going back and sleeping in their houses in the last three days.

Now, has the DKBA released the Tatmadaw soldier already?

I heard that the DKBA has already released the soldier, but I don't know for sure.

The villager told you that the situation is getting better now. Why do you think the situation is getting better?

I think [the situation is improving because] the DKBA hasn't entered and attacked [Pa--- village]. Also, the first village chairman, U Mo--- has come back now. And villagers have more courage now. Another one [reason] is that the Burma Army [Tatmadaw] officer who threatened me isn't there currently, and he went to Ti--- army camp. I don't know the troop commander's name.

During the incident, why wasn't the village chairman at home?

Two or three days before the incident, the chairman went to N--- or W---. I don't know, but I heard that he went to arrange for his children to go to college. When this incident happened, people phoned him and he tried to come back. Now he's also called my children to go back, because I have two children that study in grade ten. But I don't dare to let them go back.

How many households are there in Pe--- [Pa---] village?

At the time when I served as *hsan ain moo* [literally 'ten households leader'], there were [number censored for security] households. We have [number censored for security] sections in the village. This incident affected [number censored for security] sections, but the last section is [located] a little bit outside [the village] so it wasn't affected by this incident. The village is called Pa--- in Burmese, and Pe--- in Karen. Pa--- is becoming a sub- township of Ba--- Township. The first [sub-township] is Ba---, and then Pa---, and then Do---.

When they [the Tatmadaw] shelled the mortars, where were they based?

They were based at a pagoda that's outside our village; [it happened at] about 2:10 pm. They shelled a mortar first, then fired small guns, then they shelled a second mortar, and then I fled. I heard that two mortars landed in the village. One hit U No---'s house, and broke the roof. But the house was recently-built and no one was staying in the house. I don't know where the other shell landed. They shelled about three or four mortars, but I didn't count them. Starting then, I didn't go back [to Pa---] anymore. When my wife saw someone, she asked about me and people told her that I had run across the river; then she followed me.

What are you planning for the future?

We have to stay like this. I don't know what to do now. With this situation, currently I don't dare to go back yet.

Interview | Saw K--- (male, 30), Backpack (BPHWT) medic, (August 2011)

This report contains the full transcript of an interview conducted by a KHRG researcher in August 2011. The KHRG researcher interviewed Saw K---, a 30-year-old medic with the Backpack Health Worker Team (BPHWT), an organisation that provides health care and medical assistance to displaced civilians inside Burma. Saw K--- described witnessing a joint attack by Tatmadaw soldiers from three different battalions on a civilian settlement in Ma No Roh village tract, Te Naw Th'ri Township, Tenasserim Division in January 2011. Saw K--- reported that mortars were fired into P--- village, causing residents and Saw K---, who was providing healthcare support in P--- village at that time, to flee. Saw K--- reported that Tatmadaw soldiers subsequently entered P--- village and burned down 17 houses, as well as rice barns and food stores belonging to villagers, before planting landmines in the village. According to Saw K---, the residents of P--- have not returned to their homes, and have been unable to coordinate to restart the school that was abandoned in P--- because most households now live at dispersed sites in the area. The

following interview was conducted by a KHRG researcher. It is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.¹⁰¹

Ethnicity: Karen

Occupation: Backpack (BPHWT) medic

***Thara*¹⁰² could you tell me about the situation, as I want to know about who burned down the IDP (internally displaced persons) village, when it happened, and as much other detailed information as you can?**

It happened when I was staying at P--- village [IDP hiding site] and looking after patients. The SPDC Army [Tatmadaw]¹⁰³ soldiers came and fired mortars at the place we stayed. At that time, during the mortar attack, we all ran up to the mountain, including the children. While we were running, KNLA [Karen National Liberation Army] soldiers who were nearby received the information that the SPDC Army soldiers had come [to P--- village], and so they came back [to the area]. When we arrived at the top of the mountain, there was fighting in the village because the KNLA soldiers had come back. When the [Tatmadaw] soldiers attacked and we ran away, the SPDC Army soldiers came and burned down the villagers' houses and rice barns in P---.

Do you know what the SPDC Army soldiers' battalion number was, *Thara*?

I noticed one battalion was #224. I noted down another battalion in my notebook, but I didn't bring it [with me]. If you want to know it, I can check later. There was also another one, Battalion #349.

Do you remember the date that they came and burned down the village?

They burned it down on the 27th. I've noted this down in my notebook, but I didn't dare to bring it [with me now].

Do you remember the month?

It was January.

¹⁰¹ When conducting interviews, KHRG researchers 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's most recent analysis of the situation in Tenasserim Division can be found in the recent Field Report, "Militarization, Development and Displacement: Conditions for villagers in southern Tenasserim Division," KHRG, March 2010.

¹⁰² *Thara* is a Karen term used for a teacher, pastor, or any person to whom the speaker wishes to show respect. The interviewer uses this phrase throughout this interview when speaking to the interviewee.

¹⁰³ In Karen, the Burmese phrases *Na Ah Pa* (SPDC) and *Na Wa Ta* (SLORC) are commonly used to refer to the Burmese government or to Burma's state army, the Tatmadaw. Many older Karen villagers who were accustomed to using the phrase *Na Wa Ta* (SLORC) before 1997 continue to use that phrase, even though the SLORC has not officially existed since 1997. Similarly, despite the official dissolution of the SPDC in March 2011, many Karen villagers continue to use the phrase *Na Ah Pa* (SPDC) to refer to the Burmese government or to the Tatmadaw; see: "Mission Accomplished as SPDC 'dissolved'," Myanmar Times, April 4-10 2011. The term *Na Ah Pa* was used by the interviewer and interviewee, and "SPDC" is therefore retained in the translation of this interview.

Of this year, 2011?

In January 2011. It was on the 27th [I think], but I'm not sure. If you want to be sure, I can check it.

Did all the villagers leave?

They all ran up the mountain.

How many households were there in the village [at P---]?

Altogether, there were over 30 households.

How many schools did the village have?

It had only one school.

Was it a primary, middle or high school?

It was a middle school.

How many grades did the school have?

It went up to grade five or grade six, but it was a middle school.

Do you know how many students the school had?

I don't know because I didn't note this down as it [the school] was connected to the KED [Karen Education Department].

Did the SPDC Army soldiers come to the village [at P---] and burn it down it or did they shell it with mortars?

They shelled the village with mortars, and when the mortar shells fell we were shocked and ran away with nothing [without possessions]. At that time, they [Tatmadaw soldiers] entered and burned the village. The KNLA soldiers heard about this, came back, and began fighting the SPDC Army soldiers.

Did the villagers dare to go back to the village [at P--- after this attack]?

They didn't dare to go back.

So the school and village still remain like that [burned and abandoned]?

They remain like that because the fires burned all the houses down.

Did the SPDC Army soldiers burn down all the houses?

The SPDC Army soldiers didn't burn them all. They burned 17 houses.

Did they burn the school?

They didn't burn the school because the school was on [exposed] flat ground and there was fighting [taking place], so the SPDC Army soldiers didn't dare to go near the school. [The school] wasn't near the houses. It was on flat ground and it wasn't easy to burn during the fighting. They didn't dare to burn it because the KLNA soldiers would have shot them.

How do you know this information?

I stayed there [at P---].

So you saw these things happen?

I suffered them myself. I had to run and pull the children up the mountain.

Did you also stay in the village at P---?

Yes, I looked after patients there.

So it happened when you looked after patients in that village?

Yes.

So this place was P---?

Yes, it was P--- [an IDP hiding site].

Do you know which village tract or township the village was in?

Yes.

Could you tell me?

Mergui-Tavoy District [Tenasserim Division], Te Naw Th'Ri Township.

How about the village tract?

It was in Ma No Roh village tract.

So the villagers didn't dare to go back to P---?

Yes, they didn't dare to go back.

Did the SPDC Army soldiers stay in the village for a long time?

Yes, nearly a week.

In the village itself?

Yes, we hid for nearly a month. They stayed in the village for about a week, and they stayed near the village for a month, so we had to hide for a month.

If I report these events, can I say that *Thara* is a Backpack (BPHWT) medic?

Yes, a Backpack (BPHWT) medic.

Did *Thara* live in P---? Or did *Thara* just go and provide medicines?

Yes, I don't live there. I just travel around.

The school went up to grade six?

Yes.

How many teachers did the school have?

Now, the teachers were Tharamu G---, Tharamu P---, Tharamu W--- and another one, [but] I don't know her name. In all, there were four teachers.

Did they have a clinic in the village?

No, they didn't have a clinic, only Backpack medics who would come around.

How old are you?

Thirty years old.

***Thara*, do you have anything else that you want to report about a school or clinic burning?**

I don't have anything else to report, but now the villagers don't stay there [at P---] and there's also no school. I couldn't continue [providing health awareness] training because people started living separately [in hiding]. Some stay here and some stay there, so it hasn't been easy to build up a [new] school. At this time, they can do nothing.

Where did the villagers resettle? Did they stay separately like that?

They stayed separately like that. They stayed around there [by the old village].

There's no school?

They don't have a school. You can't see if anything's there, because it's all [overgrown with] bushes.

There are bushes in the village?

Yes, it's all bushes. Even I was afraid to go.

Are the SPDC Army soldiers still active there, in the area?

They stayed for only one month because they suffered a lot of injuries fighting.

The SPDC Army soldiers who burned the village [suffered injuries]?

Yes, those SPDC Army soldiers. Now they've all gone back. The KNLA soldiers said they [the Tatmadaw soldiers] had been shot and suffered a lot of injuries, so they'd gone back.

After they went back, didn't the villagers go back [to the village]?

They didn't dare to go back because the SPDC Army soldiers had placed landmines. Even me, I didn't dare to go back.

So the SPDC Army soldiers placed landmines in the village?

Yes, they placed landmines.

Who told you this?

We heard the [KNLA] soldiers say this.

Did the KNLA soldiers return to and inspect the village?

Yes, the KNLA soldiers returned and inspected the village because fighting had happened there and the [KNLA] soldiers stayed active in the area. The soldiers notified us not to go back because the SPDC Army soldiers had placed landmines.

So the villagers didn't dare to go back?

Yes, they didn't dare to go back.

Did the KNLA soldiers inspect the village after the fighting?

Yes, the [KNLA] soldiers stayed active there. As for us, we'd already run away.

Interview | Saw F--- (male, 55), W--- village, Than Daung Township, Toungoo District (November 2011)

This report contains the full transcript of an interview conducted during October 2011 in Than Daung Township, Toungoo District by a villager trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. The villager interviewed Saw F---, a 55-year-old resident of W--- village who fled his village and hid in the forest during a joint attack by soldiers from Tatmadaw Infantry Battalion (IB) #92 and Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) #603. According to Saw F---, on October 12th 2011, following a clash with Karen National Liberation (KNLA) soldiers at a location 45 minutes on foot from W---, Tatmadaw soldiers fired approximately 50 mortar rounds into W--- and nearby civilian areas and then entered W---, where soldiers fired small arms deliberately at villagers' houses, the Roman Catholic church and religious and cultural items; killed villagers' animals; and looted or damaged villagers' property including food stores, clothing, roofing materials and money. Saw F--- also reported that W--- villagers have had to provide forced labour delivering bamboo poles to Tatmadaw camps on multiple occasions in the past year; that the W--- school has been forced to close twice due to Tatmadaw accusations that villagers are communicating with non-state armed groups; and that villagers face obstacles in accessing healthcare due to their distance from the nearest health facility and the cost of travel. A full account of the attack on W---, including photo

documentation and excerpts of this interview, is available in the bulletin "Tatmadaw soldiers shell village, attack church and civilian property in Toungoo District," published by KHRG on November 25th 2011. The following interview was conducted by a villager in Toungoo District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. It is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.¹⁰⁴ This interview was received along with other information from Toungoo District, including three incident reports, seven other interviews, three situation updates and 204 photographs.¹⁰⁵

Ethnicity: Gkebar Karen
Religion: Roman Catholic
Marital Status: Married
Occupation: Farmer

How many children do you have?

I have five children.

How old is the oldest one?

The oldest one is 30 years old.

How old is the youngest one?

The youngest one is 24 years old.

What is your responsibility in your village?

As I am a [position censored for security], I have to [activities censored for security].

How many households do you have in your village?

There are 20 households in my village.

What do the villagers do for their livelihoods in your village?

After the water irrigation system was set up, the villagers have been working on agriculture.

Do the villagers have enough food in this village?

¹⁰⁴ KHRG trains villagers in eastern Burma 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.

¹⁰⁵ When these documents have been processed and translated by KHRG and when sufficient information has been compiled and analysed, a full Field Report on the situation in Toungoo District will be available on the KHRG website. Until then, KHRG's most recent analysis of the situation in Toungoo District can be found in the recent Field Report, "Attacks on cardamom plantations, detention and forced labour in Toungoo District," KHRG, May 2010.

The villagers have many kinds of food problems. Each day they have to work for daily wages. Because there are many different kinds of problems happening in a year, villagers never have enough food.

Do other villages also face food problems, or is it only your village?

It's not only my village. The other villages also face food problems like us.

Can you tell us the names of the other villages?

They're: Kler Mu Kee, Hoh Thaw Ploh, Tha Ba Rah, K'Leh Pa Loh, Meh Taw Preh, Nga Loh Daw Gka, Pa Yah, Gk'Ta Say, Maw Kee, P'Yay Kah, Ta Boh Sih, Gk'Ma Gkay Poh Lee, Ma Yaw Poh Lee, Ler Mu Kyoh, Plah Du Kaw, Say Kah Thaw, Yoh Kan Klo, Ma Sa Koh, Ya Meh Poh Lee, Thay Bpa Kyoh and T'Gkaw Htih.

What do the villagers do when they don't have enough food?

They have to struggle in many ways to have food for each day and they have to go look for work in other villages.

Do the villagers work as porters for daily wages?

No, they don't do that.

Where does the village get income?

The income the village gets comes from the cardamom fields.

How long has your village been set up?

The village was set up a very long ago.

Do you experience any problems in your village?

We don't experience any problems and we can work smoothly.

What problems do you face?

I don't face any problems.

Does the SPDC [Tatmadaw]¹⁰⁶ enter your village?

¹⁰⁶ In Karen, the Burmese phrases *Na Wa Ta* (SLORC) and *Na Ah Pa* (SPDC) are commonly used to refer to the Burmese government or to Burma's state army, the Tatmadaw. Many older Karen villagers who were accustomed to using the phrase *Na Wa Ta* (SLORC) before 1997 continue to use that phrase, even though the SLORC has not officially existed since 1997. Similarly, despite the official dissolution of the SPDC in March 2011, many Karen villagers continue to use the phrase *Na Ah Pa* (SPDC) to refer to the Burmese government or to the Tatmadaw; see:

Yes, they do very often.

When do they enter?

Sometimes they come into the village, but sometimes they just come [patrol] around the village and then go.

What did they do the last time they entered your village?

When they entered the village, they did many different kinds of things. They took the villagers' clothes, killed villagers' chickens and pigs, and destroyed the church. They took money, gold necklaces and, moreover, they broke the cooking pots and took villagers' sandals. They took anything that looked new or good.

Did you note down the day they came and destroyed things?

The last time they came, I noted it.

Could you tell us the date and what else they did?

I'll tell you as much as I can. On October 12th 2011 at 6:20 am, the SPDC LIB [Light Infantry Battalion] #603 and IB [Infantry Battalion] #20¹⁰⁷ combined together and entered W--- village. They destroyed the statues of Mary and the church. The things the SPDC took are as follows:

1. Saw B---: one box of things and 500,000 kyat (US \$649).¹⁰⁸
2. Saw W---: 16 bags of cardamom and 400,000 kyat (US \$519).
3. Saw D---: 50 pieces of zinc [roof panelling] and 600,000 kyat (US \$779).
4. Saw R---: 40 viss (64 kg. / 140.8 lb.)¹⁰⁹ of cardamom seed and 400,000 kyat.
5. Naw N---: six bags of [ardamom pods and 100,000 kyat (US \$130).
6. Saw M---: five pairs of clothes and 200,000 kyat (US \$260).
7. Saw F---: two bags of cardamom pods and 100,000 kyat.
8. Naw Na---: 10 pairs of clothes and one bag of rice.
9. Saw Ht---: 25 viss (40 kg. / 88 lb.) of cardamom seed and 200,000 kyat.
10. Saw Dt---: two muskets and 25 viss of cardamom seed.
11. Saw Th---: one musket, 5 viss (8 kg. / 17.6 lb.) of cardamom and 50,000 kyat (US \$64.94).
12. Saw A---: one musket.

"Mission Accomplished as SPDC 'dissolved'," Myanmar Times, April 4-10 2011. The term *Na Ah Pa* was used by the interviewer and interviewee, and "SPDC" is therefore retained in the translation of this interview.

¹⁰⁷ This interview was conducted in S'Gkaw Karen with a third-party interpreter translating questions into Gkebar Karen. While the interpreter translated the Infantry Battalion number as '20', two villagers other villagers trained by KHRG who submitted documentation of the October 12th attack on W--- indicated that LIB #603 and IB #92 were the Tatmadaw units that carried out the attack.

¹⁰⁸ All conversion estimates for the Kyat in this report are based on the fluctuating informal exchange rate rather than the government's official fixed rate of 6.5 kyat to US \$1. As of November 21st 2011, this unofficial rate of exchange was US \$1 = 770 kyat. This figure is used for all calculations above.

¹⁰⁹ A viss is a unit of weight equivalent to 1.6 kg. / 3.52 lb.

13. Naw Hs---: 200,000 kyat.
14. Naw T---: 200,000 kyat, two large clay jars, one box and 50 pieces of zinc [roof panelling], six cubits (nine feet / 2.74 m)¹¹⁰ long.
15. Saw G---: 15 pieces of zinc [roof panelling] and 100,000 kyat.
16. Saw Pa---: 50 viss (80 kg. / 176 lb.) of cardamom.
17. Saw K---: one house destroyed, two bags of rice and one musket.
18. Three goats of [belonging to] W--- youth [organisation].
19. Killed one pig [belonging to the W--- Church], destroyed the church pictures, one clock and a Mother Mary statue.
20. Saw He---: 500,000 kyat
21. W--- village youth group's television, inverter and speaker

Did they enter the village or did they shoot from outside?

They entered the village during the night. They don't travel in the daytime. They only go [patrol] outside the village during the night time. The SPDC entered the area at about 4:00 am or 5:00 am and they arrived near W--- village at about 6:15 am. They met with soldiers from the KNLA [Karen National Liberation Army] and they started to fight outside the village. The SPDC soldiers who fought with the KNLA soldiers were from the same troops that entered the village. The other troops shelled mortars from the mountain peak.

What kind of mortar rounds did they use when they shelled the village?

I don't know what kind of mortar rounds they shelled into my village. When I heard the sound of mortar shelling, I ran away.

How many mortar rounds did they fire into the village?

They shelled about 50 mortar rounds, I guess.

Did any villagers get injured?

When the SPDC fired the mortars, all the villagers ran away, so no one got injured.

When they fired the mortars, did they [mortar rounds] fall on the villagers' houses?

The mortars fell on houses and many were damaged.

How many mortar rounds fell on villagers' houses?

There were four or five mortar rounds which fell on villagers' houses.

When the SPDC soldiers entered the village, did they shoot at the houses?

When they entered the village, they shot at every house.

¹¹⁰ A standard measurement of the length of bamboo poles commonly referred to in Karen as the length from one's finger tips to one's elbow, about 18 inches / 45.7 cm.

You said the fighting was outside the village, so did soldiers on both sides [KNLA and Tatmadaw] suffer injuries?

Yes, but the SPDC soldiers had the most injured.

Did they arrest the villagers to be guides?

I don't know whether they arrested villagers or not, but when they came, they started to fight during the night.

Why did they destroy the village? Did they suspect the villagers had contact with the KNLA?

It's because the SPDC suspected our villagers had contact with the KNLA that they came to my village.

Why did they destroy the villagers' place of worship if they suspected the villagers were contacting the KNLA?

They not only suspected our villagers [had contact with the KNLA], they also wanted to kill our villagers. Because they didn't kill any villagers, they destroyed our place of worship and our cultural items in the village. Moreover, they broke the statue of Mary into three pieces and shot all over the pictures on the wall.

Have you heard anything about the SPDC killing villagers?

When they entered the village, they didn't kill any villagers. In the past, they've come and met with KNLA soldiers and fought. Because of that, until now, they've been unhappy with the villagers.

Does the SPDC recognise this village as a black, shoot-on-sight area¹¹¹ or an SPDC-controlled area?

They recognise this area as a black, shoot-on-sight area.

¹¹¹ Tatmadaw insider Maung Aung Myoe explains that Tatmadaw counter-insurgency doctrine views territory as black, brown or white according to the extent of non-state armed group (NSAG) activity. He explains that "black area" denotes "*an area controlled by insurgents but where the Tatmadaw operates*"; "brown area" denotes "*a Tatmadaw-controlled area where insurgents operate*;" while a "white area" is territory which has been "cleared" of NSAG activity. See: Maung Aung Myoe, *Neither Friend Nor Foe: Myanmar's Relations with Thailand since 1988*, Singapore: Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies Nanyang Technological University, 2002, p.71. The use of the term "shoot-on-sight" by the interviewer and interviewee, meanwhile, alludes to Tatmadaw practices employed in the most difficult to control "black" areas which treat civilians, villages, food supplies and essential civilian property as legitimate military targets, in violation of international humanitarian law (IHL). For a comprehensive explanation of these practices, and analysis of relevant norms of IHL, see: *Self-protection under strain: Targeting of civilians and local responses in northern Karen State*, KHRG, August 2010, pp.22-46, 101-108.

Did the SPDC soldiers stay in the village or go ahead after they destroyed the church and other things in the village?

They came and rampaged in the village and destroyed things and after that, about 30 minutes later, they left.

Does this SPDC unit have a fixed army camp base or are they *loht shah a'pweh* [an active mobile patrol troop]?

As I'm only a villager, I don't know where those soldiers come from. I don't know which SOC [Strategic Operations Command] controls them.

Does the SPDC order forced labour from your village?

Yes, sometimes we have to do forced labour. We have to bring them bamboo poles and carry rations.

Have you had to do forced labour in 2011?

Yes, the villagers have done forced labour. They've cut bamboo poles and carried rations in 2011.

Was it only your village that had to do forced labour?

All the villages had to do it in this area.

How many people did they ask to do forced labour?

From each household, one person had to go.

Do you remember the date?

I didn't note it down because it's happened so many times, I haven't had time to note it all down.

Which army camp did you have to carry bamboo to?

I brought bamboo poles to Htee Tha Saw army camp.

Do you know the LIB #603 commander's name, as you mentioned that unit above?

I don't know the officer's name.

Do you have a school in your village?

My village is big, but we don't have a school. We have to rely on ourselves.

How many students are there?

There are 20 students.

Where do you get the school supplies?

The students buy school supplies in the shop.

Does the SPDC disturb the school?

They did disturb us twice and, because of this, the students can't study smoothly [without disruption].

Why did they come and disturb the class?

The SPDC said: "*Why did you build the school by yourself? It's illegal to do so without the approval of Burmese public authorities. It's because you were in contact with the KNLA, that's why you could build the school by yourself illegally.*"

Do you have a clinic in your village?

The villagers have many different kinds of diseases, but there's no clinic within easy reach. If we look at the situation, [Than Daung] Town is very far from here.¹¹² We have many health problems.

Where do the villagers go when they get very sick?

Even if a sickness is serious, what can we do? If we look in one direction, the clinic is far, and the other way, the clinic is also far. So we just keep the patients in their houses. If they have a long life, they can still live, but if they have a short life, it finishes there. The second thing is that we also need a lot of money to go to the clinic.

What are the common diseases in this area?

In this area, the common disease is malaria. If the weather's changing [when the seasons change], there's dengue fever, runny noses and a lot of flu.

Have the villagers had the chance to work smoothly within recent months?

When the SPDC is active in the village, we can't work smoothly, but when they leave, we can work well. Each year, there's never enough food for the villagers because the rats destroy the rice.

How much does one big tin (16 kg. / 35.2 lb.) of rice cost?

We have to go [outside W--- village to buy rice] and come back the same day. One big tin is 8,000 kyat or 10,000 kyat (US \$10.39 or 12.99). There are many different kinds of rice and different prices of rice.

¹¹² According to one of the villagers trained by KHRG who documented the attack on W---, the village is 24 km as the crow flies from Than Daung Gyi Town. Saw F--- did not elaborate on why this distance is "very far", however in Toungoo District the mountainous terrain and frequent travel restrictions, particularly along vehicle roads, may present particular challenges to travel for local villagers.

How much does one viss (1.6 kg. / 3.52 lb.) of meat cost?

All different meats are 1,000 kyat (US \$1.30) for one viss.

Where do you buy food?

I go to buy food in He---.

On the way between your village and He---, are there any SPDC checkpoints?

I have to pass the Htee Tha Saw army camp.

Do you have to get a travel permission document?

Sometimes we have to get one if the [security] situation isn't good, but if the situation is good, we can go and don't need to get the document.

How much is one travel permission document?

For one travel permission document, we have to pay 500 kyat (US \$0.65).

Does the SPDC come and develop anything in your village?

From my perspective, I've absolutely never seen them come and develop anything in the village.

How badly does the SPDC treat the villagers?

They came and destroyed our things. And they killed the Tha Ba Rah village chairperson. They cut down the bamboo that shielded the village and took the muskets and they destroyed things, the same as they've done before. The SPDC soldiers rampage in many villages.

What was the name [of the Tha Bah Rah village chairperson]?

His name was Saw C---.

Which year was that [when he was killed]?

He was killed in 2008.

What do you think of the KNU [Karen National Union]?

We cooperate with them and, as we do, we see nothing bad thing in them.

Do you have anything to mention about anything we haven't asked you?

Based on your questions, I want to request some things of you, but I'm so *ah na* [shy] about the problems and the things I need. The Tatmadaw came and destroyed things in my village and, moreover, they took our money from the last cardamom seed harvest. They also took our livestock and killed the chickens and destroyed the houses. If we look back, when we worked in

our hill farms, there were many rats that destroyed the paddy. Therefore, the pigs, buffalos and the paddy plants were all not growing well. Now the villagers face malnutrition because they don't have enough food. They face health problems if they need to go to the public hospital because it's far away and also the *Kaw Thoo Lei* [KNU] clinic is far away. We can't go to either of these two places. If I report a list of problems like the alphabet, it goes from *Ka Gyi* [the first letter of the Burmese alphabet] to the end of the alphabet. There are a lot of problems we see. We need education, health care and food. If I have to say it to you straight, we need many things.