



**Karen Human Rights Group**

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

---

**Photo Set**

February 24, 2014 / KHRG #13-4-PS1

---

**Hpapun Photo Set: Stone collecting impacts agriculture  
in Bu Tho Township, January 2013**

*This Photo Set shows 14 images of villagers collecting stones from the Meh Tee Loh River to be sold to a Burma government construction company. Such stones are typically used for constructing army camps and other buildings. The villagers collecting stones as their livelihood activity are not from Meh Klaw village tract, but are from a different area and include the children and wives of Tatmadaw soldiers. Meh Klaw villagers and a village head have reported to the KHRG community member that they oppose the stone mining because, without the large stones reinforcing the sides of the river, Meh Klaw villagers' flat farm fields are likely to be flooded during monsoon season.*

---

**Photo Set | Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District (January 2013)**

*The following photos were taken by a community member in Hpapun District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. They are presented below, censored where necessary for security purposes.<sup>1</sup> The 14 photos below were received along with other information from Dooplaya District, including 50 other photos and a general update on the situation in Hpapun District.<sup>2</sup>*

---

<sup>1</sup> 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 writing situation updates, villagers are encouraged to summarise recent events, raise issues that they consider to be important, and present their opinions or perspective on abuse and other local dynamics in their area.

<sup>2</sup> This Photo Set was compiled by KHRG office staff and is based on information from a community member from Hpapun District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. In order to increase the transparency of KHRG methodology and more directly communicate the experiences and perspectives of villagers in eastern Burma, KHRG aims to make all field information received available on the KHRG website once it has been processed and translated, subject only to security considerations. For additional reports categorized by Type, Issue, Location and Year, please see the Related Readings component following each report on KHRG's redesigned Website.



The above photos were taken on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2013, and they show two different angles of a Mitsubishi bulldozer beside the Meh Tee Loh River, near the Ta Kon Taing village flat field farm in Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District. According to the community member who took these photos, the bulldozer is operated by a Burma government construction company, referred to locally as “GE”, and is used for repairing the Way Hsa Way Moo vehicle road, repairing Tatmadaw army camps and for constructing additional buildings in Meh Klaw village tract. In order to do such construction, the company takes stone and sand from Meh Htee Loh River beside Peh Klaw Day villagers’ farms. They started collecting materials in October 2012. According to the community member, the local KNU authority, village head and village tract leader gave the company permission to collect stones and sand for only ten days in October 2012; however, as of January 2013, they are still collecting stones.<sup>3</sup>  
*[Photos: KHRG]*



The above photo was taken on January 6<sup>th</sup> 2013 and shows two boys, 14 and 15 years of age, beside the Meh Htee Loh River collecting stones used commonly for building and repairing army camps. According to the community member who took this photo, the boys will sell the stone to a Burma government construction company from Hpapun to earn money for their living. At the time of this photo, the two boys had already been collecting stones for three or four days, but they



The above photo was taken on January 7<sup>th</sup> 2013, and it shows three people who collect stones for their livelihood, piling stones onto an oxcart for transport. The cart belongs to a Ta Kon Taing villager, Win Nyo, who is running his business by using his two cows and a cart to transport stones from areas where large trucks cannot travel due to lack of a vehicle road, and transporting the stones to a truck (see blue ‘Cantar’ truck below) waiting on a vehicle road. He receives

---

<sup>3</sup> Information about these construction activities was also published in [“Hpapun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, November 2012 to January 2013,”](#) May 2013.



had not sold the stones yet. The construction company buys one full truck of stones (see blue ‘Cantar’ truck below) for 15,000 kyat (US \$15.24).<sup>4</sup> [Photos: KHRG]

3,000 kyat (US \$3.05) for transporting one oxcart full of stones, but he does not transport the same amount every day. The village tract leader and the security guard have not given permission for this business activity but Win Nyo’s village head has given him permission to continue this work until January 19<sup>th</sup> 2013, after which he will have to stop. [Photo: KHRG]



The above photos were taken on January 7<sup>th</sup> 2013, and show villagers collecting stones in Meh Tee Loh River beside a flat field in order to sell the stones. As they do not have jobs or any steady income, they collect stones for money. These people are not residents of Meh Klaw village tract, but they are from Ta Kon Taing, Way Muh, Way Hsa, Meh T’Roh and T’Poh Klah villages. Some of them are Tatmadaw soldiers’ family members. [Photos: KHRG]



The above photos were taken on January 7<sup>th</sup> 2013 beside Meh Tee Loh River, which is near Ta Kon Taing villagers’ flat farms in Meh Klaw village tract. The photos show villagers and the areas where stone mining occurs. This mining site is close to the flat field farms, canals and rivers which the Meh Klaw village tract residents rely upon for their living. The Ta Kon Taing village head worries that the removal of the stones will cause the river to overflow and flood villagers’ farms during monsoon season. [Photos: KHRG]

---

<sup>4</sup> As of February 21<sup>st</sup> 2014, all conversion estimates for the Kyat in this report are based on the [official market rate](#) of 984 kyat to the US \$1.





The above photos were taken on January 7<sup>th</sup> 2013. The above left photo was taken in Meh Klaw village tract on the Meh Tee Loh River, and it shows piles of stones and people, such as the man carrying stones on his shoulder in the photo on the left, who collect stones for their livelihood. The right photo shows the river where the stone has been collected from in Klaw Day village. The village head observes the process and said that this stone trading can destroy villagers' flat field farms, as the water level of Meh Tee Loh River will rise during monsoon season and nearby farms will be flooded without large stones to reinforce the sides of the river. [Photos: KHRG]



The above left photo was taken on January 8<sup>th</sup> 2013 in Ta Kon Taing village, Meh Klaw village tract, and shows a person who is blind, but collecting stones like other people for his income. The above right photo was taken on January 7<sup>th</sup> 2013, and it shows villagers who are collecting stones at Meh Tee Loh River, Meh Klaw village tract for their livelihood, which they sell to a Burma government construction company. According to the community member who took these photos, they work for the whole day but only earn 5,000 kyat (US \$5.08) per person per day. Collecting stone may destroy Klaw Day villagers' flat farms and canals, so villagers from Klaw Day are opposed to ongoing stone mining. [Photos: KHRG]



The above left photo was taken on January 6<sup>th</sup> 2013 beside Meh Tee Loh River, Klaw Day area, which is near Ta Kon Taing villagers' farms. The picture shows a dump truck carrying stone and people collecting stone and loading it onto the truck. The right photo was taken on January 7<sup>th</sup> 2013 in the Meh Tee Loh valley, beside Klaw Day flat farms. It is a photo of the dump truck returning to an area where the stones are stored. The Klaw Day village head informed the stone collectors and driver not to collect stones, as it will lead to the destruction of villagers' livelihoods. *[Photos: KHRG]*

Further background on the current situation in Hpapun District can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- "Hpapun Interview: Saw B---, February 2013," (February 2014)
- "Hpapun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, August to October 2013," (February 2014)
- "Hpapun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, March to May 2013," (December 2013)
- "Rape and sexual harassment in Hpapun District, June and August 2013," (November 2013)
- "Hpapun Incident Report: Tatmadaw soldiers threaten brickmaker in Bu Tho Township," (November 2013)

