



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Situation Update

February 12th 2026/ KHRG #25-142-S1

Mergui-Tavoy District Situation Update: Education and healthcare challenges, travel restrictions, food shortages, and livelihood difficulties in Ler K'Saw Township (January to April 2025)

This Situation Update describes events occurring in Ler K'Saw Township, Mergui-Tavoy District, during the period between January and April 2025, including land disputes, healthcare and education difficulties, and livelihood challenges. In Sa Tein village tract, several schools administered by the State Administration Council (SAC) closed after teachers left the area, as they feared armed resistance groups would kill people accused of collaborating with the SAC in the area. In response, villagers reopened the schools as community self-funded schools. However, parents faced difficulties in paying teachers' salaries. Also in Sa Tein village tract, healthcare services remained inaccessible, with only one clinic available in the village tract and high treatment costs at SAC-administered hospitals in towns. Villagers facing income difficulties also experienced discrimination in SAC-administered hospitals. Nighttime travel restrictions imposed by several armed groups further limited access to urgent medical care. In April 2025, across Ler K'Saw Township, the SAC imposed strict restrictions on the transport and sale of food, causing severe food shortages in villages. Additionally, the SAC limited the amount of petrol that villagers could buy, making it harder for many to earn an income. A land dispute also took place in Rw--- village, Sa Tein village tract, as a local villager, with support from a former village authority, seized farmland from another villager. Due to militarisation and the armed conflict, local authorities have not been able to travel to the area and resolve the dispute.¹

Education challenges in Rw--- village, Sa Tein village tract:

In total, there are two schools in Rw--- village, Sa Tein village tract², Ler K'Saw Township, Mergui-Tavoy District. Both of them are primary schools. Before the 2024-2025 academic year, the schools were administered by the SAC [State Administration Council³]. But in the 2024-2025

¹ The present document is based on information received in April 2025. It was provided by a community member in Mergui-Tavoy District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions on the ground. The names of the victims, their photos and the exact locations are censored for security reasons. The parts in square brackets are explanations added by KHRG.

² A village tract is an administrative unit of between five and 20 villages in a local area, often centred on a large village.

³ The State Administration Council (SAC) is the executive governing body created in the aftermath of the February 1st 2021 military coup. It was established by Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on February 2nd 2021, and is composed of eight military officers and eight civilians. The chairperson serves as the de facto head of government of Burma/Myanmar and leads the Military Cabinet of Myanmar, the executive branch of the government. Min Aung Hlaing assumed the role of SAC chairperson following the coup. The military junta changed its name in July 31st 2025 to State Security and Peace Commission (SSPC).

academic year, the schools became self-funded schools due to security concerns from SAC-assigned teachers, as teachers assigned by the Burma government [under the SAC since the 2021 coup] dared not go to teach [in Rw--- village] anymore. Consequently, villagers [parents and the village administrator] assigned people who had graduated Grade 8 or Grade 9 from the village to teach. [Villagers assigned such students because] If villagers had assigned those who had degrees [in higher education], they [qualified teachers] would not accept it because they would not have been satisfied with the salary that they would have been paid. As a result, the quality of teaching got worse. Therefore, it caused difficulties for children [to receive quality education].

In government schools [administered by the SAC] located in Rw--- village, Sa Tein village tract, the quality of education was good from 2015 to 2023. But if we compare the quality of education with some other schools [in the village tract] during 2023 to 2025, the education system of the schools in Rw--- village is getting worse [because of the loss of well-educated teachers]. Due to several killing incidents⁴ that happened in [Rw---] village, the SAC-assigned teachers no longer went to teach. It was not because those government [teachers] [administered by the SAC] did not want to come to teach, but because they were afraid of armed resistance groups [doing something to them].

As a result, it impacts the education of the children [in Rw--- village] as there are no teachers to teach. So, after this, villagers themselves organised and reopened the schools as self-funded schools [in 2024]. There are five teachers teaching at the schools [in Rw--- village]. The villagers from Rw--- village called a Burma government headmistress who had previously taught in the village to continue teaching at the two Rw--- schools. The remaining teachers include one man and three women, who are villagers [from Rw--- village] [who had graduated from Grade 7 or 8].

However, villagers cannot afford to pay salaries for teachers [during the post-2021 coup period]. In March 2024, the school committees decided to collect as much money as the parents of students were willing to give each month in order to pay a monthly salary of 150,000 kyat [71.43 USD]⁵ to each teacher. The headmistress received a salary of 250,000 kyat [119.05 USD] per month. These teachers faced difficulties supporting their livelihood, as parents [often] cannot afford [to support] the monthly salary, and there is no support from any organisations, such as the KNU [Karen National Union⁶], non-governmental organisations, the Burma government, or other organisations that support schooling, in Rw--- village.

[In early 2025,] the teachers held a meeting with the parents to discuss their monthly salary [as the salary was not enough to support themselves]. In the meeting, the parents complained and argued among themselves, and the meeting ended pointlessly [without reaching any conclusions]. Since the situation has been like this for a long time, teachers are also frustrated. When the People's Defence Force [PDF⁷] heard this information, they said they would help [support the teacher's salaries] as much as they could, but they left [the village] after saying that [and did not

⁴ See, for instance: KHRG, "[Mergui-Tavoy District Incident Report: Kaw Thoo Lei Army \(KTLA\) soldiers arrested and killed a villager in Ler K'Saw Township, January 2024](#)", November 2024.

⁵ All conversion estimates for the kyat are based on the March 12th 2024 mid-market exchange rate of 1,000 kyat to USD 0.48 (taken from wise.com/gb/currency-converter/mmk-to-usd-rate).

⁶ The Karen National Union (KNU) is the main Karen political organisation. It was established in 1947 and has been in conflict with the government since 1949. The KNU wields power across large areas of Southeast Myanmar and has been calling for the creation of a democratic federal system since 1976. Although it signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) in 2015, following the 2021 coup staged by Burma Army leaders, the KNU officially stated that the NCA has become void.

⁷ The People's Defence Force (PDF) is an armed resistance established independently as local civilian militias operating across the country. Following the February 1st 2021 military coup and the ongoing brutal violence enacted by the junta, the majority of these groups began working with the National Unity Government (NUG), a body claiming to be the legitimate government of Burma/Myanmar, which then formalized the PDF on May 5th 2021 as a precursor to a federal army.

provide any support]. The school committee [members] worry that if the situation continues like this, they will not be able to open the schools for the coming academic year in 2026.

Healthcare in Sa Tein village tract:

There are difficulties [limited access to healthcare] in Rw--- village, Sa Tein village tract. Therefore, if something happens to the villagers, they seek treatment in Kz--- Town, Kaw Thaw (Kawthoung) District [in SAC-controlled areas in Mergui-Tavoy District]. There are two hospitals in Kz--- Town. One is an SAC military hospital, and the other is an general hospital, administered by the SAC.

There is an [SAC-administered] clinic in Yz--- village, Sa Tein village tract, but there is not enough medicine and a lack of healthcare workers in the clinic. [This is the only clinic in Sa Tein village tract.] Because of this, [villagers feel that] having this clinic [without supplies and healthcare workers] is little different from not having a clinic at all in Sa Tein village tract. Elder villagers from Wr---, Js---, and Rw--- villages, Sa Tein village tract, do not receive healthcare services [as there are no clinics in those villages and no healthcare workers in Wr--- and Js--- villages].

Most of the villagers in villages from Sa Tein village tract have no clinic or hospital in their villages or the villages nearby to take their children to for treatment if their children get sick. Therefore, if their children are severely sick, they need to transport their children to a hospital located in Kz--- Town [under SAC control], which is far away from their villages. The villagers [from Sa Tein village tract] do not like to go to Burma government hospitals [administered by the SAC] because nurses and doctors from those hospitals discriminate against poor people [by shouting, physically abusing, and swearing at them] and give less medical care to them [or even deny treatment]. In addition, medical fees there are expensive. [Additionally,] difficulties in communication [no phone service in villages], travel restrictions, and expensive medical treatment fees increase the difficulties villagers from the township face [in accessing medical care].

There are no clinics or hospitals in Rw--- village, Sa Tein village tract. However, there are a few health workers under SAC administration stationed in the village that look after villagers at their [the health workers'] houses when they [villagers] seek medical treatment. There is a doctor named Daw⁸ Y--- in Rw--- village. She only sells medicine and gives injections at her house when sick villagers seek medical treatment. It is fine if villagers call her during the daytime [for medical treatment], but not during the nighttime. The villagers cannot wake her up easily, so it is difficult for those who get sick at night. It was possible for villagers to travel at nighttime or daytime during 2015 to 2020 [to seek medical treatment]. But after the coup in 2021, villagers cannot travel at nighttime [due to conflict in the area and curfew imposed by armed groups], so most villagers face difficulties.

Livelihood of villagers in Sa Tein village tract:

On April 1st 2025, the State Administration Council [SAC] restricted the transport of any supplies, including food rations, into villages located in Sa Tein village tract, Ler K'Saw Township. Therefore, the villagers faced food shortages. Due to the restrictions, the prices at food shops in Yz--- village, and in Ler K'Saw Township, have increased. As a result, villagers faced difficulties. In some villages [in Sa Tein village tract], there are villagers who can afford food but do not have shops selling foodstuffs [in the area where they live].

Some villagers do not have enough money to afford food in their daily lives, as they are daily wage workers. Villagers who are daily wage workers work for plantation owners. They use the money they receive from their bosses to buy food. However, recently, plantation owners have not offered work to the daily wage workers [because of the SAC restrictions on petrol sales, which

⁸ 'Daw' is a Burmese female honorific title used before a person's name.

hinder their ability to use farm machinery], so these villagers have no income. As a result, they face difficulties earning their daily livelihood.

[On April 1st 2025], the SAC also put restrictions on the [quantity of] food villagers can buy. They are also not allowed to buy sacks of rice and are only allowed to buy three bowls [of rice] for each family. So, the rice is enough for those who have fewer family members, but it is not enough for those who have larger families. Since the SAC established these limits, it has caused difficulties for villagers.

The [SAC also] does not allow villagers [from Ler K'Saw Township] to buy two bottles of petrol at a time. Each bottle holds 1 litre of petrol. Therefore, the plantation owners have no petrol [for their farming machinery] to use to clear their land, consequently causing difficulties for daily wage workers. If they [plantation owners] decide to clear the land for farming with machetes, they pay labourers 15,000 kyat [7.14 USD] [per day], and if they use a machine [chainsaws or weed wackers], they pay 20,000 kyat [9.52 USD]. According to labourers, it [the daily pay rate] is not fair for them if they clear land using machetes, so they only accept work when they get to use machines. The labourers are from ZI--- village, Yangon City area. It is not convenient for them to work in the area where they were living, so they came here [to Sa Tein village tract] to work.

As of November 20th 2025, the situation in Sa Tein village tract [for daily wage workers] has not improved yet.

Land dispute in Sa Tein village tract:

During January to March 2025, most villagers from Sa Tein village tract, Ler K'Saw Township, were working on farms and plantations to secure their livelihoods. On January 1st 2025, [a villager named] Ko⁹ L--- arbitrarily disputed Ko V---'s farm. Ko V--- had started farming that land in 2013 and was growing betel nut trees.

In 2014, Ko H--- came to the farm of Ko V--- [in Rw--- village] and marked an area to clear land so he could establish his own plantation or farm there. Then, he left. Later on, Ko V--- decided to expand his farm, so he cleared more land. As the time drew near to carry out a controlled burn on the land he had cleared to prepare it for farming, Ko H--- told Ko V--- that the farm [the area that he had previously marked in Ko V---'s farm] belonged to him. Then, they argued [about the farm]. The [then] village head, U¹⁰ D---, told them to not farm the area that had been cleared and was ready to be burned. He [the village head] stopped them from working on that land.

Afterwards [the next year], Ko V--- stopped working on that farm and [instead] cleared land in another area of the forest next to the previous farm [the disputed farmland], which was separated [from the disputed farmland] by a stream. He was the only one who was working there to secure his livelihood.

[Several years later,] on January 1st 2025, a person named Ko L--- discussed with his brother-in-law, U D--- [the former village head], and gave 500,000 kyat [238.10 USD] to Ko H--- [to buy the disputed farmland] without letting Ko V--- know anything [about the sale]. On January 1st 2025, after buying the land, Ko L--- hired daily wage workers to clear the forest [the land to farm]. When they were cutting down trees [on the land], Ko V--- [tried to] stop them, but he could not stop Ko L--- and his workers. He [Ko L---] only said [to Ko V--- that] he had already bought this land [and refused to discuss with him further]. After that, Ko V--- gave up [trying to] stop them [Ko L--- and the daily wage workers] and let them continue to work on the farm.

⁹ 'Ko' is a Burmese title meaning older brother. It can be used for relatives as well as non-relatives.

¹⁰ 'U' is a Burmese title used for elder men, used before their name.

But Ko L--- could not accept Ko V--- working on the other part of the farm [on the land Ko V--- had been cultivating on the other side of the stream]. Therefore, he also started farming Ko V---'s farm [on the other side of the stream]. Then, Ko V--- reported it to the [new] village head named Ko J---. But the [new] village head, Ko J---, told him that he cannot resolve it [the dispute] for him because Ko H--- and U D--- [the former village head] are relatives, so Ko J--- did not want to argue with them, given they are all from the same village.

Ko J--- submitted a letter to the KNU head of Sa Tein village tract, P'Doh¹¹ Z---, from Js--- village, to come solve the problem for Ko V---, however, P'Doh Z--- did not come to solve the problem for him [Ko V---]. For P'Doh Z--- to go to Rw--- village, he needs to cross a checkpoint controlled by the Burma Army¹², so it is not easy for him to reach Rw--- village due to concerns for his own security. For this reason, Ko V--- does not know who to report it [the dispute] to. He [Ko V---] has been facing difficulties until now [as of April 2025].

Further background reading on the situation in Mergui-Tavoy District, in Southeast Burma/Myanmar, can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- [“Mergui-Tavoy District Incident Report: SAC air strikes injured two children in Ler K'Saw Township \(March 2025\)”](#), January 2026.
- [“Mergui-Tavoy District Incident Report: Two villagers, including a 17-year-old boy, stepped on landmines in Ler Doh Soe Township \(April 2025\)”](#), November 2025.
- [“Mergui-Tavoy District Short Update: SAC military activities causing casualties, including shelling, shootings, arbitrary arrests, use of porters, and burning of houses in K'Ser Doh, Ler Doh Soe, and Ler Muh Lah townships \(August to September 2024\)”](#), September 2025.
- [“Defying Hunger : State Administration Council \(SAC\)'s systematic destruction of civilian livelihoods and food systems in Southeast Burma \(January - December 2024\)”](#), May 2025.

About KHRG

Founded in 1992, Karen Human Rights Group is an independent local organisation committed to improving the human rights situation in Southeast Burma. KHRG trains local people to document and gather evidence of human rights abuses, and publishes this information to project the voices, experiences and perspectives of local communities. More examples of our work can be seen online at www.khrg.org.

¹¹ ‘P’doh’ is a title meaning ‘governor’ or ‘minister,’ within the government in S'gaw Karen.

¹² The terms Burma military, Burma Army, SAC, Tatmadaw, and junta are used interchangeably throughout this report to describe Burma's armed forces. Villagers themselves commonly use Burma Army, Burmese soldiers, or alternatively the name adopted by the Burma military regime at the time -since the 2021 coup, the State Administration Council (SAC).

