



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Interview

October 30, 2014/ KHRG #13-138-A1-I1

Hpa-an Interview: Saw U---, December 2013

This Interview with Saw U--- was conducted in Nabu Township, Hpa-an District in December 2013. It includes information regarding the recent history of the armed conflict in southeast Burma/Myanmar and the activity of armed actors during the current ceasefire, the provision of education and healthcare, and villagers' concerns regarding a proposed dam on the Pa Ta River.

- *Since the signing of the preliminary ceasefire agreement between the Karen National Union (KNU) and the Burma/Myanmar government, the government has assigned a greater number of teachers to schools in southeast Burma/Myanmar that had previously been primarily supported by the Karen Education Department (KED). However, the KNU was critical of the move after stating that the government had failed to coordinate this activity with their headquarters. Similarly, the provision of healthcare was reported to be poorly coordinated between government and KNU authorities.*
 - *According to the interviewee, the activity of the Burma/Myanmar army had not changed during the ceasefire, as troops continued regular rotations and re-supply activities, and had also strengthened military camps in some areas.*
 - *On the 4th of October 2013, representatives of the Mitsui Company and U Than Shwe, the chairman of Kawkareik Township, held a meeting with villagers in Waw Lay village tract regarding proposals to construct a dam on the Pa Ta River. However, villagers rejected the plans citing the need to seek the approval of armed actors in the area before proceeding with the construction.*
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Interview | Saw U---, (male, 48), A--- village, Nabu Township, Hpa-an District (December 2013)

The following Interview was conducted by a community member trained by KHRG to monitor local human rights conditions. It was conducted in Hpa-an District on December 15th 2013 and is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.¹ This interview was received along with other information from Hpa-an District, including 38 photographs.²

Ethnicity: Karen

¹ KHRG trains community members in eastern Burma/Myanmar 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, community members 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.

² In order to increase the transparency of KHRG methodology and more directly communicate the experiences and perspectives of villagers in eastern Burma/Myanmar, 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 Website.

Religion: Buddhist
Marital Status: Married
Occupation:
Position: [KNU] official

What is your name?

Saw U---

How old are you?

48

What is your village name?

A--- village, Waw Lay village tract, T'Nay Hsah [Nabu] Township, Hpa-an District.

Are you married?

I got married in 2004.

How many children do you have?

I have two children.

How old is your eldest?

The eldest is eight years old.

How old is the youngest?

The youngest is six years old.

Could you please tell us about your experience and the difficulties that you face as a [KNU official]?

Because of the emergence of the DKBA [Democratic Karen Buddhist Army] in 1994,³ we could not live in our area anymore and we had to leave T'Nay Hsah [Nabu] Township, and [when we] arrived at the [Thai] border we had to live under the control of the district [level KNU authorities] because the DKBA had come into our area. But we re-entered our area again slowly. We had to suffer a lot because of the fighting against each other [between the DKBA and KNLA] and our civilians were affected as well, but later, we were able to re-enter the whole township. However, another incident happened to us again in November 2007, [when] we had to leave our township again because *Hpuh*⁴ Htain Maung went back and joined with the Burmese government.⁵ This is when we left our township for the second time. So we [the KNU] lost

³ The Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA), formerly the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, was formed in December 1994 and was originally a breakaway group from the KNU/KNLA that signed a ceasefire agreement with the Burma/Myanmar government and directly cooperated at times with Tatmadaw forces. The formation of the DKBA was led by monk U Thuzana with the help and support of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), the name of the military government in Burma/Myanmar at that time. For more information on the formation of the DKBA, see "[Inside the DKBA](#)," KHRG, 1996. The DKBA now refers to a splinter group from those DKBA forces reformed as Tatmadaw Border Guard Forces, also remaining independent of the KNLA. As of April 2012, the DKBA changed its name from "Buddhist" to "Benevolent" to reflect its secularity.

⁴ *Hpuh* is a Karen term of respect for an elderly man that translates to "grandfather," but it does not necessarily signify any actual familial relationship.

⁵ On 30th January 2007 Maj-Gen Htain Maung (formerly a Brigadier-General and the Commander of Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)'s 7th Brigade) was dismissed from the Karen National Union (KNU) for entering into negotiations with the SPDC without the approval of the KNU Central Executive Committee. One day later, he and his supporters (including his son-in-law, Ler Moo, Colonel Saw Htawt Lay and Pastor Timothy Laklem) formed a breakaway faction with Maj-Gen Htain Maung as Chairman, which they named the KNU-KNLA

the connection with our civilians. According to the order of our superiors we entered into our area again in September 2011. At that time the BGF [Border Guard Force]⁶ who split from the DKBA attacked us and they got injured and our soldiers were injured as well. No soldiers of Burman [ethnicity] were injured. Furthermore, it affected the livelihood of our civilians. For example, some of the civilians were hit by landmines and some were hit by bullets because of the fighting.

Before the ceasefire,⁷ we realized that the civilians really wanted peace. They [the civilians] have seen, known and feel that our armed groups [that split from the KNU] cannot understand each other and dare not see each other, so on behalf of us [the armed groups], our civilians, monks and leaders from [among] Christian [communities] from C---, Noh Kay village tract, Yown Ku village tract and Htee Po Kyaw village tract made a plan because they knew that it was not good for our Karen people to attack each other. They had a very specific plan and they organized a meeting in the grounds of P--- monastery and invited the leaders of the BGF, who had attacked us [in the past], the KNU, the leaders of the DKBA and the KNU/KNLA Peace Council [KNU/KNLA PC]⁸ to attend the ceremony. Commander Bo Du, the deputy commander of our [KNLA] Battalion #101 discussed this case with me and decided that we should attend this meeting because our civilians invited us and also we needed to know the result, so we went. Then we understood that our civilians wanted to find a solution. A senior monk opened the ceremony, and after that the leaders from the DKBA, BGF, KNU/KNLA PC and KNU stood and gave speeches. In their speeches, everyone mentioned that they were working for their people. Then it came to the turn [of the civilians] to speak, and the civilians said that they were very happy to hear that all of our leaders were working for their people in their speeches, but as you [the leaders] said, the civilians are the [source of the] strength of the armed groups and the parents of the armed groups. You said that you are the representatives of the civilians and you are working for the civilians; the civilians do not want to see the armed groups splitting and fighting one another, but we dare not complain to you. Even though you call us [civilians] parents, we dare not call you our children.

The speeches of the civilians were important [and made] us think. After that our armed groups did demining together. We also have photos. Not very long after that the ceasefire emerged in 2012 and [since then] we have had a better relationship. Then we met with the people who we had shot at with guns and it became humorous. I cannot express what the people who died in battle would say if there were alive. It is our responsibility not to fight each other again and we have to find the answer as to how to avoid it. I have no doubt that our civilians have an expectation that our armed groups will become one group. The only thing is they cannot tell us as they dare not tell us.

Could you please tell me about the situation in T’Nay Hsah [Nabu] Township since the ceasefire?

Since the ceasefire, we have been able to meet with the armed groups who split from us, we can travel and meet together and discuss things together. Our leaders also have a plan to reunite the armed groups and they founded a committee. Another thing is that since the ceasefire our leaders have met with the government many times and we have got permission for [managing] education [affairs]; we have the

Peace Council (KNU-KNLA PC). On February 11th 2007, the KNU-KNLA PC signed a peace deal in an elaborate ceremony with the SPDC which was attended by foreign guests, filmed and shown on Burmese television. For further background reading, see “Child soldiers recruited to support expansion of the KNU-KNLA Peace Council,” KHRG, May 2007.

⁶ Border Guard Force (BGF) battalions of the Tatmadaw were established in 2010, and they are composed mostly of soldiers from former non-state armed groups, such as older constellations of the DKBA, which have formalised ceasefire agreements with the Burmese government and agreed to transform into battalions within the Tatmadaw. BGF battalions are assigned four digit battalion numbers, whereas regular Tatmadaw infantry battalions are assigned two digit battalion numbers and light infantry battalions are identified by two or three-digit battalion numbers. For more information, see “[DKBA officially becomes Border Guard Force](#)” *Democratic Voice of Burma*, August 2010, and, “[Exploitation and recruitment under the DKBA in Pa’an District](#),” KHRG, June 2009.

⁷ On January 12th 2012, a preliminary ceasefire agreement was signed between the KNU and Burma/Myanmar government in Hpa-an. Negotiations for a longer-term peace plan are still under way. For updates on the peace process, see the KNU Stakeholder webpage on the Myanmar Peace Monitor website. For KHRG’s analysis of changes in human rights conditions since the ceasefire, see *Truce or Transition? Trends in human rights abuse and local response since the 2012 ceasefire*, KHRG, May 2014.

⁸ The KNU/KNLA Peace Council (also called the Karen Peace Council or KPC), is an armed group based in Htoh Gkaw Ko, Hpa-an District, which split from the Karen National Union (KNU) in 2007 and subsequently refused to comply with orders from the then-SPDC government to transform its forces into the Tatmadaw Border Guard. See: “[KPC to be outlawed if it rejects BGE](#),” *Burma News International*, August 30th 2010.

chance to study our language at school and the civilians are very happy. The reason why they are happy is because if we look back to the past, during the era of the Burma Socialist Program Party,⁹ some of the schools in our area became government schools because our civilians had to rely on themselves to open schools because our KNU could not support them. But some parents tried their best and found ways to send their children to school. At that time the KNU could not [support] the schools because of the offensive attacks of the Burmese soldiers.

The villagers did not dare to live in the villages and fled from their villages. They had to work as porters for the Burmese soldiers if they were arrested, so some parents sent their children to the city to study, but the government did not accept the [validity of] education provided by the KNU. However, the parents tried to find ways and bribed the teachers to get [official government school] transcripts. It was very difficult for us to contact civilians because the government practiced the four cuts¹⁰ policy. The villagers requested the government to recognize their schools and to give them teachers, but the government gave only one teacher for each school and they did not even give any teachers to some schools; they just recognized them. The villagers had to take care of the security, food and accommodation for the teachers. It was the era of the Burma Socialist Program Party and all of these problems got worse during the era of the dictatorship government. Then the DKBA split from the KNU and it was a big problem for us to do our jobs because they knew how we operated. Some of them understood us [politically] but some of them did not understand us. Therefore, the KNU told villagers to study the Karen language because it was not connected with the armed conflict, and if we did not study our language our new generation would not understand their language. Later the DKBA started to study literature. There are two [Karen] languages [that were adopted by the DKBA]; one is *Le Ta La Nyah* and the other one is *Le Kweh Kaw* and it is compulsory to learn them [in all areas of Kayin state that are now controlled by the BGF, which formed out of the DKBA in 2010]. People in those areas have to go to language training in the summer holiday. Some people even had to attend training to become teachers of the language. The villagers had to support the people who attended the training. Sometimes the training took place in Myaing Gyi Ngu and sometime the training took place in La Nit. After the training they came to the village and organized training for the villagers in the summer holidays because the government did not give them permission to study their language during school time. Sometimes they combined two villages and sometime they combined [several villages] from the village tract and gave training and the villagers had to spend their own money.

Are they still doing it?

As far as I know they are still doing it in Wa Kyah and also in Myaing Gyi Ngu. One thing is the villagers are wondering where will they use these languages after they have learned them. Some people do not want to study them anymore. They said that other people are not interested in it and they weren't interested in it either. Some people learned a lot about those languages but they forgot all about them after they had not studied it for one or two years.

Could you please tell me about the current education situation in T'Nay Hsah [Nabu] Township?

Now there are 43 schools supported by the KNU in T'Nay Hsah [Nabu] Township. We have seen that the government sent teachers to the 43 schools. They sent two teachers to each school. It is compulsory for the civilians to accept it, so the civilians have to accept it, but some villages strongly rejected it and some villages are afraid to reject it. Some villages cannot reject it because the teachers are already there. They are thinking about what consequences there will be if they reject it, what backing they have and what guarantees they have. Some villagers knew that it would be a big burden for them to take care of the

⁹ The Burma Socialist Program Party was formed in 1962 under the Union Revolutionary Council led by General Ne Win, which had taken power in a coup in Burma/Myanmar earlier that year. The BSPP was the only political party allowed to exist in Burma/Myanmar until its dissolution in 1988, after a mass uprising culminated in another coup by General Saw Maung and the establishment of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). The SLORC was officially dissolved in 1997 by Senior General Than Shwe and was replaced by the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). Than Shwe officially dissolved the SPDC in 2011 following the election of a quasi-civilian government in Burma/Myanmar in November 2010.

¹⁰ In Burma/Myanmar, the scorched earth policy of '*pya ley pya*', literally 'cut the four cuts', was a counter-insurgency strategy employed by the Tatmadaw as early as the 1950's, and officially adopted in the mid-1960's, aiming to destroy links between insurgents and sources of funding, supplies, intelligence, and recruits from local villages. See Martin Smith. *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999 pp. 258-262.

teachers, but some of the villagers did not think about it. They were happy that the government sent teachers for them because they had to rely on themselves for a long time, but they did not think about the consequences; when the teachers arrived, they came with their [Burmese] curriculum, and their signboards and their flags, and they were only teaching their own curriculum, so they [the villagers] felt guilty when they saw it. They want the right to study their own language at school, and they want our mother organization, the KNU, to arrange something for them and to speak on their behalf. The schools that became government schools do not have the chance to teach their language and they [the students] do not even have the chance to speak their own language at school. The reason why they do not have the chance to speak their own language is because the teachers are worried that the students will not be able to speak their language [Burmese] fluently. They fine the students if they do not speak in Burmese. We can say that they are threatening the students and on the other hand they want the students' [education] to be improved. The parents had the chance to study their own language but their children do not have the chance to study their own language, so they realized that it is a big problem for the new generation that they do not have the chance to study their own language.

Did they [villagers in Nabu Township] have the chance to study their own language before that?

Yes. They had the chance to study their own language. Like I said before, there are 43 schools and these schools used the curriculum of the KED [Karen Education Department]¹¹ [before the ceasefire], and the KNU could support them before the ceasefire. From August 2013, the Burmese government sent teachers and we can say that in the middle of the year, we knew that they had not contacted the KNU headquarters [to tell them] that they had sent new teachers, so we informed the district education department [KED] that the Burmese government had sent the teachers, and we were able to stop it in some places but there were problems; the civilians could not stop [the government from entering into] some places. The KNU made a statement during the ceasefire that all activities of NGOs or the Burmese government in KNU controlled areas must have permission from KNU headquarters, and then the township level [authorities] could accept it. It gave us courage and strength and the villagers as well.

Did the Burmese government inform you that they would send teachers?

No. They did not inform us.

Who supports the teachers?

They called the teachers *Sweh Khant*.

What is the meaning of *Sweh Khant*?

Sweh Khant means they [appoint] people [to jobs in various locations] around Burma. Before this activity is implemented the government requests a list of people who have graduated but do not have jobs, then they will give them jobs. There are many people who have already graduated but have no job and they are happy to hear it, so they submit their names, and people who are willing to be teachers are assigned to be teachers and those who are willing to be nurses are assigned to be nurses.

So they are not forced to be teachers?

No, they are not. The government already has enough teachers in their schools, so they send them to other places. For example in our KNU schools we assign one teacher to teach 25 students. We are okay with the number of students and the number of teachers, but the government sent more teachers. In my opinion I think that the government should not have done that because the government already gave permission to our leaders [to manage education affairs] when our leaders met with them. Therefore, I think the Burmese government should meet with our leaders and negotiate with them and implement this

¹¹ The Karen National Union's Education Department. The main goals of the KED are to provide education, as well as to preserve Karen language and culture. During the civil war in Burma/Myanmar the KED became the main organisation providing educational services in the KNU controlled areas in Southeast Burma/Myanmar. The KED also previously oversaw the educational system in the seven refugee camps along the Thai-Burma/Myanmar border, however in 2009 these activities were restructured under the Karen Refugee Committee – Education Entity (KRCEE). See "[Conflict Erupts over Govt teachers deployed to KNU areas](#)," Karen News, August 20th 2013 and the KRCEE website: "[Who Are We](#)," accessed February 6th 2014.

activity jointly. It makes us think like civilians during the ceasefire process when the government is doing this.

Why didn't the government send teachers before the ceasefire? And why did they send teachers after the ceasefire?

Personally I think that it would be difficult for the government to enter into our area. Also it would be difficult for them to manage the villagers and tension would rise [between them and the KNU]. I think they have been testing their influence in our areas since the ceasefire. We do not know whether their activities will be successful or not. The government relies on NGOs in order to implement its activities. The NGOs come and explain to the civilians. Most of the people from NGOs are our Karen people, so it will be easy for them to build trust and even if there is conflict it will be conflict between Karen people and it will not be connected with the Burmese government. This is one of their plots. The civilians believe that NGOs are not affiliated with the government so they can accept them, and they like it because the NGOs help them and they deserve it. The civilians might have another perspective if the activities came through the Burmese government. The people who came were Karen and they said that they were going to develop their people, so the villagers accepted it, but they found out that it was connected with the government after they had accepted it.

What about the students? Do they receive enough books?

Everything is going well with the schools supported by the KED. We can say that our school is better than the government school. We heard that the students have to buy books in government schools. For example, the school committees of R--- village mentioned that they have books at the school but the villagers do not know whether those books are free or not. The students have to buy books from the teachers if they do not have enough books.

It means there is no transparency between the parents of the students and the teachers?

Yes. There is no transparency among the teachers, students and parents. They have books in their office. But you have to give money if you want books.

Do the students need to pay school fees?

The students do not need to give school fees. But the villagers have to arrange everything for the new teachers.

What do you mean by everything?

It means rice, cooking oil, chilli, monosodium glutamate, firewood and everything. The school committee has to send the teacher to attend meetings or to attend refresher training by motorbike and then they collect the cost of the fuel from the villagers.

Who gives the salary for the teachers?

The government gives it. They get 2,700 kyat (US \$2.72)¹² per day. They are not paid for the days they are sick, for the days they do not teach or for the important days [official holidays].

Do the students like the teachers?

As you know, our Karen people are not good at speaking Burmese and the children do not want to go to school where there are Burmese teachers. They do not go to school, but not because we discourage them. They say that they do not want to go to school because the teachers are Burmese.

Did the students enjoy going to school in the past?

Yes. They enjoyed going to school in the past with their old teachers. It is a little bit better if the teacher can speak Karen. The Burmese [government] teachers underestimated the Karen teachers at S--- School. One of them is from Thin Gan Nyi Naung and the other is from Whay Shan. They said that the

¹² All conversion estimates for the kyat in this report are based on the 30 September 2014 official market rate of 993 kyat to the US \$1.

Karen teachers were not legal teachers but that they were the legal teachers because the government had assigned them, so the Karen teachers should not teach. The children do not understand Burmese, so they do not understand what their teachers explain to them, and the teachers stick pens in the children's ears. Now the school committee and teachers of S--- School mentioned that they do not want to be concerned with that school anymore and they want us to find a resolution for them. They want to build a new school. They will leave the old school and people can go to that school if they want. Let the teachers teach if they have students. They asked if we could arrange it for them. They do not like the teacher.

Did the students get injured seriously?

Not that much. They scold the children [saying] that they are not clean and they are rude. In the past, the teachers taught the children about hygiene but they were afraid that the children would not come to school if they scolded them, so they just let the children come to school like that. The Burmese teachers are not like that. They want the children to come to school with clean clothes, but some parent cannot afford it.

Where do the teachers stay?

Actually they have to find their [own] houses, but it is the rainy season so they are staying in the villager's houses. Some people do not want to accept them but they accept them according to an arrangement made by the chiefs of the village [the village head and others]. They said that they would not accept them in the coming year. They want the village chiefs to build a house for the teachers if they come next year.

What about the activity of the Burmese army since the ceasefire in your area?

There is no change in the activity of the Burmese army; they send food when it is time to send food and they rotate the soldiers when it is time to rotate the soldiers and they strengthen their camps. They made fences with barbed wire and covered the roofs with zinc in some places. They made the fences with bamboo in the past. For example, Light Infantry Battalions¹³ #547 and #549 did not have cement walls [in their camps] before the ceasefire. But they built cement walls and also built strong foxholes after the ceasefire. The foxholes are very strong and have stairs going under the ground and above the ground [to the top of the fox hole wall].

Have you seen the Burmese army withdraw their soldiers?

No, we have not seen it. If we look at our township, we did not see army camps in the past up until 2012, [when the Tatmadaw established a camp] at a junction on the road between Thin Gan Nyi Naung and Koe Ko. In April 2013 they based the Light Infantry Division¹⁴ #22 there.

What were the names of the Light Infantry Battalions you mentioned before?

They are #547, #548 and #549.

Are they [under the command of a] Light Infantry Division?

No, they are [under the command of] Military Operations Command¹⁵ #12. They confiscated a lot of villager's land to live there. The villagers hope that they will get the chance to work on their fields. The villagers got the chance to work on their fields last year. In the past they leased the fields to the villagers and the villagers had to pay them to work on their own fields because they said that the fields belonged to the camp. The land is not the villagers' land if we look at their laws because the law says that the air, land

¹³ Light Infantry Battalion (Tatmadaw) comprised of 500 soldiers. However, most Light Infantry Battalions in the Tatmadaw are under-strength with less than 200 soldiers. Primarily for offensive operations but sometimes used for garrison duties.

¹⁴ Light Infantry Division (Tatmadaw); commanded by a brigadier general, each with ten light infantry battalions specially trained in counter-insurgency, jungle warfare, "search and destroy" operations against ethnic insurgents and narcotics-based armies. LIDs are organised under three Tactical Operations Commands, commanded by a colonel, (three battalions each and one reserve), one field artillery battalion, one armoured squadron and other support units.

¹⁵ Comprised of ten battalions for offensive operations. Most have three Tactical Operations Commands, made up of three battalions each.

and water belongs to the government. In the past the highest ranking commander of these three battalions told the villagers that the land did not belong to the villagers because the land was located within range of submachine guns belonging to the camp. Notably, one of the villages there called Y--- village had to relocate to a monastery because the Burmese army confiscated their land. They hope that the Burmese army will withdraw from their village and they will get the chance to go back and live in their village.

What about the health situation in your Township?

In September, the Burmese government sent medicines for elephantiasis disease and asked the doctor to give it to the villagers, but the villagers were not given an explanation about the medicine. The villagers asked us about the medicine; they had to take the medicine before they went to bed and sick people or people with diabetes, heart disease, pregnant women and people suffering from hypertension were not supposed to take it. They also said they had never seen people who suffered from elephantiasis disease in their whole life, and it made them think. They asked us whether they should take the medicine or not, and who would take care of them if something happened to them after they took the medicine, so we asked the headquarters about it and the headquarters told us to stop the villagers from taking the medicine for a while. Then we wrote a letter and informed the villagers. We also held a meeting with villagers and the Burmese doctors. We agreed with the government that civilians [ought] to take the medicine, but they should test the civilians and explain to the civilians about the medicine before letting them take the medicine. We asked the Burmese doctors why didn't they test the civilians before letting them take the medicine? Then some of the doctors replied that it was very difficult to get this medicine and it had taken many years to organise, and it would take time and cost more money to test the civilians. I asked them didn't the government have money to spend to test the villagers? Or did they not want to spend it? And why couldn't the government spend [more] time? They are our civilians even if they are not Burmese civilians, so are the villagers animals for testing or doing research on? This was our opinion. Then our leaders from headquarters informed us that the doctors from the Burmese government met with them and apologized to them for not informing them about doing this.¹⁶

What about development projects in your Township?

We have not seen any real development projects in T'Nay Hsah [Nabu] Township. In 2007 we heard that the government would build an industrial zone in Myawaddy Township. They also finished [surveying for potential] oil [extraction] in Htee Chah Rah near Kok Ko. The other thing is that there is a river called the Pa Ta River, which is located between Ta Kreh [Paingkyon] Township and T'Nay Hsah [Nabu] Township. They planned to build a dam on that river but people did not allow them.¹⁷

Who did not give them permission?

The KNU/KNLA PC and the KNU did not allow them. They came to meet with the KNU/KNLA PC, the monks and civilians to do research. The company that came to do the research is called the Mitsui Company. They went there many times. They went there on the 26th and 29th of September and on the 4th of October to do research but the civilians did not give them permission. And the civilians said that you should not do research yet because there are still many armed actors, [so you should] make sure with them first and you can come and do research later. On the 4th of October 2013, they came with U Than Shwe, the chairman of Kawkaik Township and met with the villagers at the W--- monastery in Waw Lay village tract and explained to the villagers about the construction of the dam. They had already received the grant to construct the dam. They told the villagers that they [would] get electricity, the area would be developed and the villagers would get the chance to grow rice in the summer. He also said that he wanted to build the dam as the fruit and flowers of the ceasefire and as a memorial for the ceasefire. And the other thing was that he wanted to build the dam to benefit civilians while he was in his position as the township chairman. He introduced himself and said that his mother was Karen from the delta side and his father was Burmese from Pakkoku. So he said that he wanted to make something of benefit to the people on his mother's side, but the villagers answered that there were still many armed actors such as the KNU,

¹⁶ KHRG has received several other reports of villagers experiencing negative side effects after taking medicine for elephantiasis provided by the Burma/Myanmar government. See for example, "[Dooplaya Situation Update: Kyonedoe Township, September to December 2013](#)," KHRG, September 2014.

¹⁷ For further information on the proposed Pa Ta Dam, see the previous News Bulletin: "[Negative impacts of dam building and drug use in Paingkyon and Nabu townships, Hpa-an District, May 2014](#)," KHRG, July 2014.

DKBA, BGF, KNU/KNLA PC and the Burmese army. The villagers said that he should try to negotiate with the armed actors first and then they could give him permission. It would be a problem for the villagers if one of the armed actors didn't like the project. Then they said that they would not do it if the civilians did not like it, but we do not know what they will do.

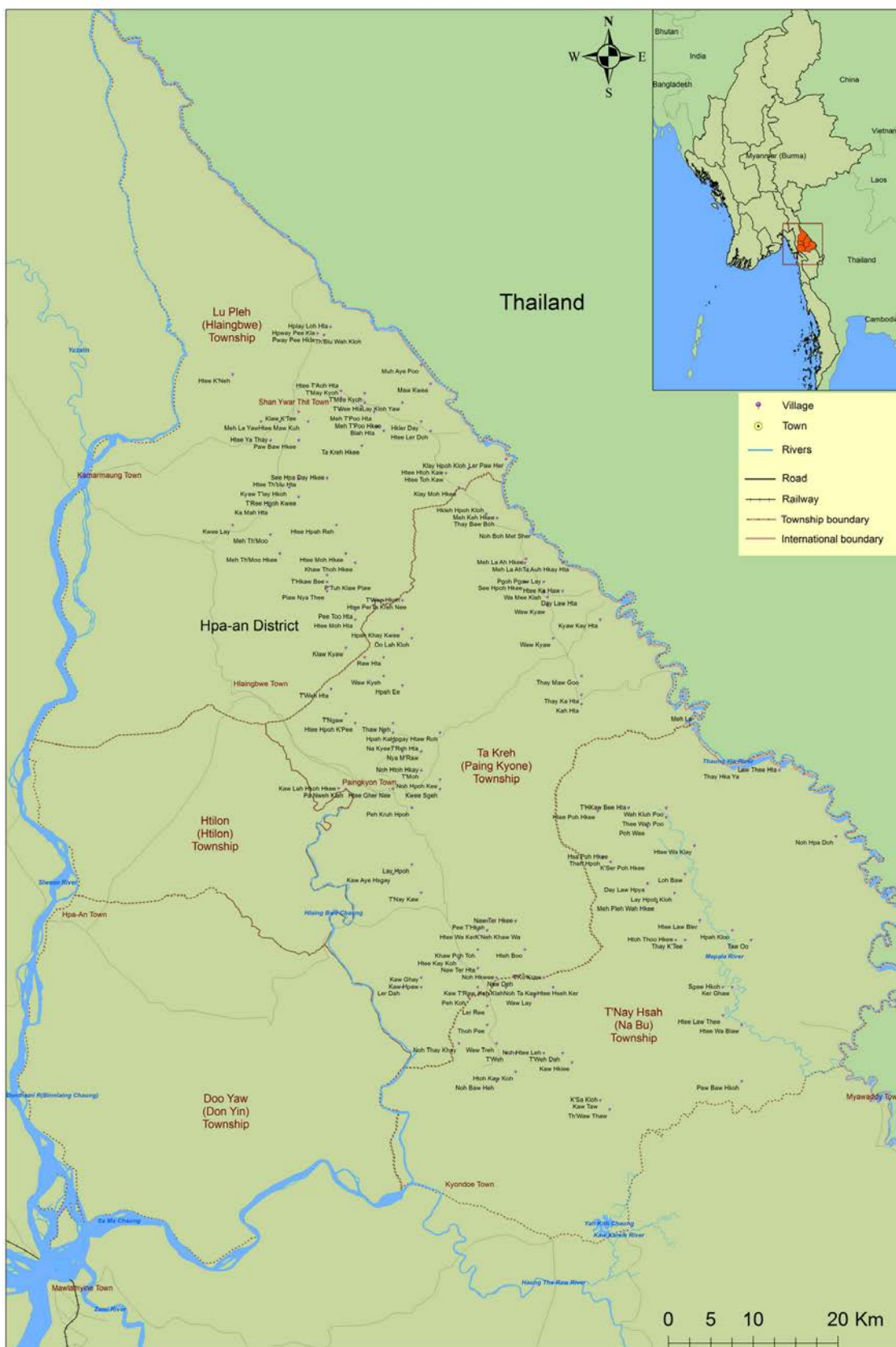
What is your opinion on the ceasefire between the KNU and the Burmese government?

I think that the ceasefire between the KNU and the Burmese government is a good one and they should do it. Our leaders and our people have a simple attitude on the ceasefire; we really want peace and our civilians want peace too and they want the KNU to implement it for them. The only thing is the Burmese government side. We do not know if they are honestly [engaging with] the ceasefire process or not. We have to wait and see the result when our leaders have been and met with them. We cannot give our opinion now, but for our side like I said before we had been fighting each other for a long time and our civilians want peace and I also want peace personally, but we do not know the plan of the Burmese government. It would not be the fault of our Karen leaders if they broke their promise, and it would show that they do not want peace. If we look back, the Burmese civilians also want peace and the other ethnicities want peace too. We must stop fighting each other first to build an everlasting peace. It should not be a nationwide ceasefire signed only by the ethnic groups. I believe that there will be no more sounds of gunfire if the government proclaims a nationwide ceasefire. The second thing is the constitution. I think there will be no problem if the government asks the ethnic groups to participate in the drafting of the constitution so that both sides benefit. We must have the same rights and there should be no discrimination. It will be difficult for this country to build an everlasting peace if the Burmese government just wants to play with the ceasefire.

Further background reading on the situation in Hpa-an District can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- "Hpa-an Situation Update: Paingkyon Township, July 2014," (October 2014)
- "Hpa-an Situation Update: Hti Lon Township, March 2014," (September 2014)
- "Human rights violations by BGF Cantonment Area Commander Kya Aye in Paingkyon Township, Hpa-an District, February 2013 to July 2014," (September 2014)
- "Hpa-an Incident Report: Stone mining damages villagers' fields in Paingkyon Township, March 2013," (August 2014)
- "Hpa-an Short Update: Hti Lon Township, March 2014," (August 2014)

Hpa-an District



Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)