

Where is genuine peace?

A critique of the peace process in Karenni State



Content

Page

| | |
|--|---------|
| Summary..... | 1 - 4 |
| Map of military expansion and natural resource extraction in Karenni State | 4 |
| The situation of military expansion | 5 - 7 |
| Mineral production..... | 7 - 10 |
| Worsening land confiscation after ceasefire..... | 10 - 15 |
| Evaluation of the model village project in Shadaw | 16 - 37 |

Summary

Our assessment shows that following the ceasefire agreement with the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) on March 7, 2012, the Burmese government army has not been reducing its military presence in Karenni State, but has been reinforcing its troops, expanding outposts, storing supplies and ammunition, and confiscating and staking off land for the army. Besides this, they have been repairing existing roads and building new ones for easier troop movement; they are also constructing a bridge across the Salween river.

There have been increasing demands from local people for the return of lands confiscated before and after the ceasefire. The Karenni State authorities have been unable to solve the land problems, stating that these matters have been submitted to the central government.

A clear example of unjust land confiscation is the seizing of 3,000 acres, which had been farmed for generations by local people in Pruso, in order to build the Burma Army's No. 14 military training school. Despite strong local opposition, the army has continued building the school.

Similarly, when people from HsoLyahKu tried to plough their lands, attempting to reclaim another 1,200 acres which had been confiscated in Pruso, they were prosecuted for trespassing. Such repressive measures are not compatible with the establishment of democracy.

It seems that the current peace process is simply prolonging the

administration of the previous military dictatorship, and letting the military benefit under the guise of peace.

The government is allowing business cronies, military-owned companies, and foreign companies to operate businesses, carry out mining, and set up hydroelectric power plants in Karenni State, without waiting for a nationwide ceasefire and political agreement. This is exacerbating conflict, rather than solving it. In the field of humanitarian aid, international organizations, instead of helping empower people to protect their basic human rights, are focusing on relief aid, which encourage said dependency, and does not promote self-reliance or people's right to make decisions themselves.

For example, the project to set up model villages for displaced villagers in Shadaw and give them humanitarian assistance without a political agreement is encouraging people to return home before it is safe. People still have to live in fear of the military, as well as land-mines.

“The analysis paper on the ceasefire process between the Karenni National Progress Party and the Burmese government in the last six months,” issued by KCSN on October 31, 2012, highlighted how KNPP's demands to the government during their ceasefire negotiations had not been met. Furthermore, there has continued to be fighting against the Kachin Independence Army and also other armed ethnic groups, including the Ta'ang National Liberation Army, the Shan State Army (South) and Shan State Army (North). Government troops have also instigated some clashes in the New Mon State Party and Karen National Union areas.



In order to establish genuine peace, the KCSN makes the following demands:

1. The Burma Army must immediately end its offensives in the ethnic areas, and stop sending in troop reinforcements and expanding military camps in these areas.

2. The government and ethnic armed groups must immediately hold political dialogue, with the involvement of international organisations.

3. There must be a moratorium on mega projects in Karenni State such as hydropower dams, and large-scale resource extraction projects, such as mining operations, until there is a nationwide ceasefire, political dialogue and a settlement leading to genuine peace. Local and foreign investors, as well as foreign governments, should respect this moratorium.

4. To guarantee people's rights, the 2008 constitution must be amended immediately through the cooperation of the government, democratic forces, political parties and ethnic armed groups

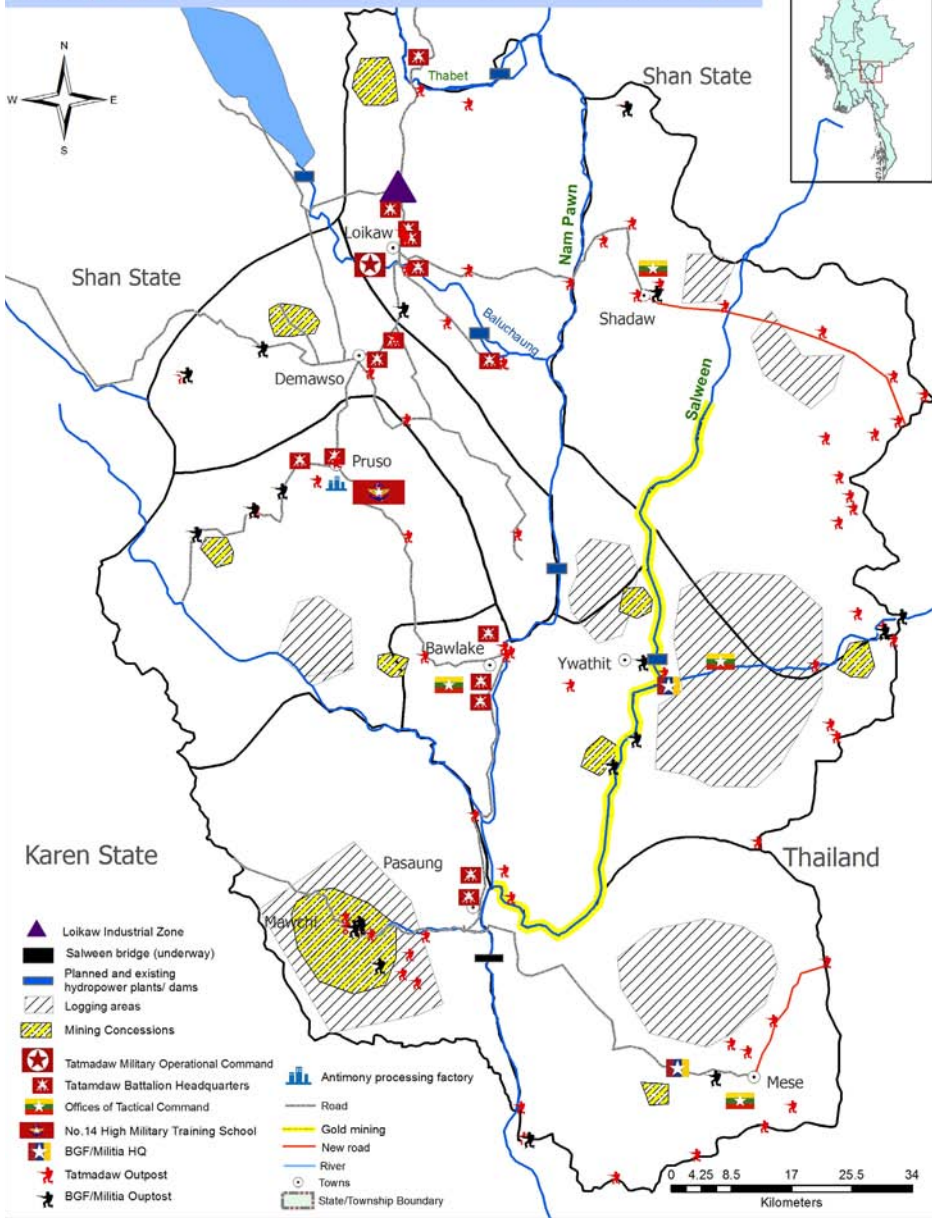
5. International organizations which operate in Karenni State must work directly with existing local community based organizations.

6. Agricultural lands which have been confiscated by the Burma Army and other armed groups must be immediately returned to the people according to their demands.



7. Resettlement of refugees should only be considered after genuine peace is established.

Military expansion and resource extraction in Karenni/ Kayah



Military expansion

In 1972, there were only two Burma Army battalions in Karenni State for the security of the Lawpita electric power plant. After crushing the 1988 uprising, the Burmese military stationed 10 battalions in Karenni State, plus an artillery battalion. These battalions are controlled by the Loikaw-based local commanding office and a strategic command based in Bawlake, from which all orders are issued. Also Burma Army Division no. 55 based in Lashio, northern Shan State, also sends troops to Karenni State on a rotation basis. They have also set up front-line headquarters at Maese (strategic force 553) and in Shadaw (strategic force 552). Also, armed groups which made peace in 2010 with the old government, have been transformed into Border Guard Forces(BGF), and have headquarters in Ywathit and Maese. They act and operate under the command of the Burma Army. The following are the government forces operating in Karenni State:

1. Under the local command headquarters: Infantry Battalion (IB)54, 72. Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) 134, 135, 428, 429, 430, 531, 337.
2. Under Operation Command HQ No 7: IB 102, 205, 261; LIB 427.
3. Under Division 55: LIB 511, 508, 18, 112; IB 7, 3.
4. Border Guard Forces: Temporary Battalion (TB) 1004, 1005.



5. Local People's Militia – Mawchi People's militia, Hoya People's Militia Artillery battalion (AB) No. 086 based in Loikaw

Altogether 24 battalions, with the support of their allied militias, operate in the whole of Karenni state, controlling it so that the natural resources can be exploited. For example, even though the Lawpita hydropower station is in Karenni State, relying on water from the Baluchaung stream stored in the Moby dam, 90% of the power is for cities in Burma. The Karenni people have to stay in candlelight.

After the ceasefire agreement between KNPP and the government in 2012, construction of the No. 14 military training school started on land cultivated by local people for their living. The local people demanded that the building be stopped, but their pleas fell on deaf ears and construction of the training school was completed. Now there have already been two trainings held at the school for commanders from the front lines, soldiers and militia.

During the ceasefire negotiations between KNPP and the government, the KNPP representatives demanded that the number of Burma Army outposts be reduced, as it was not necessary to have so many. However, up until now they have not withdrawn from a single outpost. The Burma Army has instead fortified the outposts, and resupplied them with rations and ammunition. Three years have passed since individual ethnic armed groups began making new ceasefires with the government, in the hope that the government would transform to a democratic system from a military dictatorship. However, the government



has not withdrawn its military forces from the ethnic areas; instead it has been increasing its military presence. It can be seen they are securing control over the ethnic areas and extracting the local resources. Furthermore, companies which are backed by the Burma Army have come to carry out various forms of business in Karenni State.

Transport routes, including a bridge across the Salween, have been built to support the businesses controlled by the military. People are suffering from loss of land and environmental destruction due to these military backed businesses, more so than before the ceasefire. It can be seen that local people are increasingly showing their opposition to these damaging investments.



Resource extraction

There were only three mining businesses in Karenni State before the ceasefire in 2012, but now this has increased to 16. Before, the mining was mainly carried out manually, but now large machinery is being used, which is causing more large-scale environmental destruction.

When fighting broke out between KNPP and the SPDC government in 1995–96, logs which had been felled at that time were stuck in the jungle, and there was no major logging for many years. However, since the 2012 ceasefire, the old logs have been taken and now more trees are being cut. The logging companies belong to the ethnic armed groups, which received

permission from the government to cut trees. This is causing concern among refugees in the camps, who worry about the impacts on the environment in the future. They have raised their concerns with the KNPP, which has therefore established some forest conservation areas.

The 2008 constitution does not protect the peoples' land and resources. It is being used as a weapon by the government. Under this government, military-owned businesses, military backed companies, ethnic ceasefire groups, and local businessmen are frantically doing business for their own benefit. The suffering of the people has become worse than before the ceasefire.

There is no transparency in natural resource extraction, which is having increased social impacts. Therefore representatives from 16 local civil society organizations working on the ground in Karenni State met together in 2012 and agreed to make the following demands to the government, companies and ceasefire groups:

1. Before any resource extraction takes place, there must be transparent consultation with local communities.
2. Customary laws protecting the land, resources and forest must be put in the constitution if they are suitable.
3. Civil society organizations must have the right to inspect any sites where the government, companies and other investors are implementing projects.
4. Project implementers must take responsibility for impacts



on the local area and carry out sustainable social development.

5. Project implementers must follow local traditional customs.
6. Any project must be carried out according to the principle of FPIC (Free, Prior and Informed Consent)
7. No project is allowed which will not bring development to Karenni State.
8. Every NGO or INGO which gives humanitarian aid must respect HAP (Humanitarian Accountability Partnership) standards. All projects must be based on principles of grass roots ownership, transparency, and accountability. Existing social organizations should be supported instead of being ignored and weakened.



After issuing these demands, the Karenni State Energy Minister went to Pasaung to meet with local leaders and elders to discuss about a dam being planned on the Salween River near the Karen-Karenni border at Teehtar village at the end of 2013. The minister went back to Loikaw and sent a letter to KNPP, saying the dam was approved by the local people, so only the approval of KNPP was needed. KNPP then asked its liaison officer to find out local people's wishes, and in fact the people had said "no" to the dam.

Similarly, in April 2014, Chinese and Burmese engineers, as well as government authorities, made a trip to survey the social and environmental impacts at the site of the planned Ywathit dam

on the Salween River. Two representatives from civil society organizations were allowed to take part, but their right to ask questions was limited. The civil society organizations therefore have strong doubts about the impact assessment report, which they believe will just be for show, and used to proceed with the building of the dam, like the EIA of the Myitsone dam.

Even though people are worried and oppose the dam projects, the government and companies are trying unceasingly to move ahead with them. In the report “Lessons learned from MPSI’s work supporting the peace process in Myanmar” it was thoroughly wrong to say the government had stopped building dams.

Worsening land confiscation by the Burma Army after ceasefire

After the ceasefires between the government and ethnic armed groups, land confiscation has been increasing in Karenni State, as well as in other parts of Burma. In Karenni State, the confiscation is mainly carried out by the Burma Army. The people have been demanding the return of land confiscated before and after the ceasefire, because the government has declared that it is becoming a democratic country. We would like to report how the authorities and Burma Army handled the farmers who demanded their land back in Pruso township.



1. Land confiscation for government military training school

The Burma Army's no. 14 military training school was built on an area of land in Pruso township of Karenni State, including Myoma quarter, Kaelyar quarter, and eastern Markrawshay quarter. Not only local people but also their livestock have had to face difficulties because of this. The military government confiscated 3,000 acres of land belonging to local people to build the training school in June, 2011. No prior notice was given.

The army started the building on June 10, 2012. Local people submitted petitions and letters of appeal, explaining their hardship, but there was no response.

Mass prayer ceremonies for the return of the land were held eight times. The Kholayso farmers' committee organized workshops and trainings about the land law. The Kholayso farmers' committee also applied for permission to hold a peaceful demonstration in Loikaw, but the state government did not allow this.

On April 4, 2013, the Kholayso farmers' committee held a referendum in eastern Markrawshay village about the building of the military school. In that process 99% of the 500 farmers joining the referendum cast their vote against the project. They called a press conference at the same time and demanded that the military training school be abolished.

The Karenni State Agriculture and Irrigation Minister, U Poe

Reh Yan Aung mentioned the land confiscation for the training school in August 2013, saying: “We cannot deal with requests made to us (at the state level). We can only carry out orders issued by the central (Naypyidaw) government.”

The land problems in Karenni State are directly under the control of the central government, i.e. Naypyidaw, and the Karenni State government has no decision-making power on this issue. It is therefore obvious that the old military government system is still in existence. No sign of democracy and people’s decision-making in their local administration can be seen.

KNPP also said in a press conference in August 2013 that they had told the government to give back the land confiscated for the training school in their second union level negotiation. Because of the opposition of the local people to the no.14 military training school, a small amount of confiscated land has been given back. For most of the land, people were forced to accept only 50,000 kyats (approx. US\$50) per acre as compensation. Some of the people who were able to get their land back had refused compensation. Local impacted people from other villages, Dawlawkhu, Lawjar and Lawkhuku, who received low compensation, are still demanding to get back their lands.

After the grabbing of land by the military, agricultural production has become very low. If it continues like this, it is not known how local people will survive.

On 24 September 2012, a construction worker from the training school worksite raped an 11-year-old schoolgirl, from Law-



budar quarter in Pruso. The culprit was sentenced to life imprisonment and three years' hard labour. Local people worry this kind of crime will happen often if the training school remains in the area.

2. Karenni political and community based organizations respond to the unjust handling by the authorities of the Hsolyarku farmers' struggle

In 1995 LIB 531 seized a whole hill, in total about 2,000 acres, in Hsolyarku village, Pruso township, Karenni State and set up a military camp. Again in 2012-2013 the army confiscated farmland, grazing land and forestland, altogether more than 2,000 acres, and rented the land to the farmers.

Before the ceasefire, people were allowed to cultivate the land with permission. The area was marked with wooden posts. After the ceasefire, these wooden markers were replaced with concrete posts, causing increased worried among local people. They started asking the authorities to give back their land, but the army didn't. Therefore 300 farmers ploughed the confiscated land on 27-28 May, 2014.

The commander of LIB 531 then prosecuted 190 out of the 300 farmers for trespassing. The 190 farmers who were prosecuted were informed that they had to go the police station, ten people at a time, to be investigated.

Anthony Tureh, one of those prosecuted, said: "Yesterday, the police came and called 20 of us to be investigated. But I said I couldn't go. We were told that all 300 who had gone to plough that day would be prosecuted."

On July 8, twenty political and community based organisation-sin Karenni State issued a statement criticizing the prosecution of the 190 Hsolyarku villagers for trespassing. The statement was as follows:

a) The lands around Hsolyarku village, which have been farmed for generations by the villagers, have been forcibly confiscated by Light Infantry Battalion 531 due to the failure of previous governments to issue title deeds to land owners, and also due to the failure to proceed with registration of the land according to the 2012 Land Law.

b) The villagers have the right to continue ploughing their land and plant crops each year, as their families have been doing for generations.

c) We, the local people, believe that LIB 531's plan to file legal charges against 190 villagers for trespassing when they were simply plowing their land to plant crops is not justified, and is an infringement of their rights.

d) 2014 is an important year of potential transition towards democracy and lasting peace in Burma. Given that democracy and revolution must be based on the people, we believe that the threatened lawsuit by LIB 531 and the continued confiscation of local villagers' land will stall the progress towards democracy and peace in the country.

e) Therefore, to promote the establishment of democracy



and peace, we demand that LIB 531 immediately withdraws its planned lawsuit against the 190 farmers and returns to the Hsolyarku villagers all the lands that they have confiscated.

f) We encourage all farmers, other educated people, and responsible persons in Karenni State to oppose the action threatened by LIB 531 and help cooperate in fighting for justice for land issues in Karenni State.

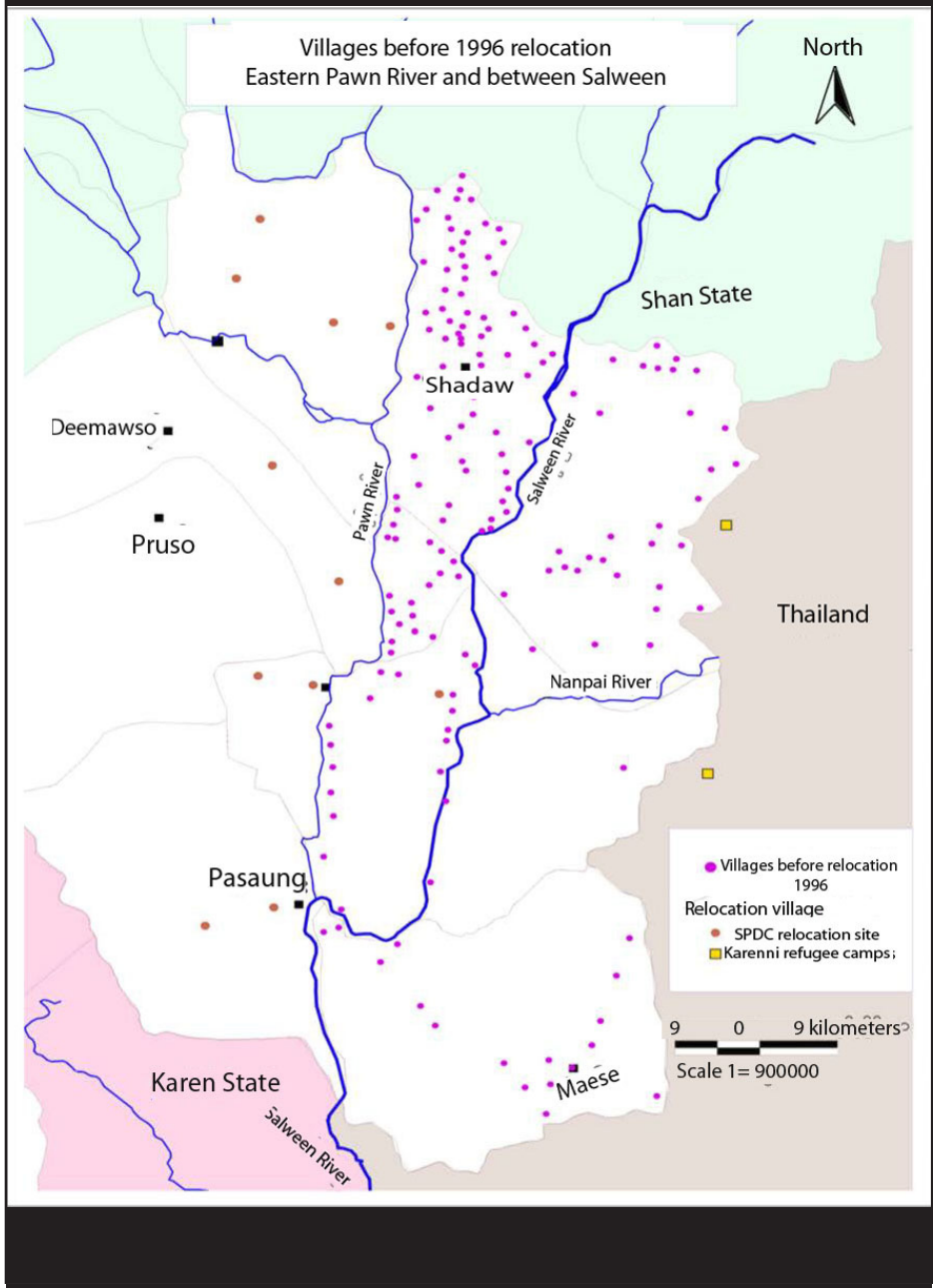
g) We urge the government and Members of Parliament to take responsibility for the land conflict around Hsolyarku village, and ensure that it is solved fairly as soon as possible.

This statement was endorsed by 20 organizations including KNPP, the Karenni Nationalities People's Liberation Front (KNPLF), Kayan New Land Party (KNLP), Karenni Youth Union, Karenni Women's Organization and Farmers' Network (Karenni State).

Even though this statement was issued, five farmers who participated in the ploughing action have been charged for violation of property under Act no. 447, and they have already gone to court in Pruso four times.



Evaluation of the model village project in Shadaw



Brief background

In Shadaw township, there used to be more than 100 villages. In 1995 the ceasefire agreement between KNPP and the SLORC government was broken after three months, and fighting resumed. In 1996, the Burma Army carried out a mass forced relocation program, ordering local people to move to relocation sites in Shadaw, Ywathit, Bawlake and Loikaw towns. Some went to hide at the Shan–Karenni border, but most took shelter at the Thai-Burma boarder in Karenni refugee camps no. 1 and 2.

Even though these people have moved away from their land, some have been going back to visit their old places and have been finding out what is going on there. They still hope they will be able to return to live there one day.

The displaced people who went to stay at the Shan-Karenni border have been given basic supplies and health care by border-based organisations, namely the Karenni Social Welfare and Development Centre (KSWDC) and Karenni Mobile Medical Team (KMMT). The IDPs sheltering in Shan State were discriminated against and had to face many difficulties for their living. KNPP military authorities therefore restricted their forces from fighting near the area where the displaced people were sheltering.

KSWDC also helped some of the displaced people to go back to their old villages. In 2001, displaced people from 15 villages started settling back in their old villages to the north

of the Shadaw-Loikaw highway. Tools like knives, hoes, axes, spades etc. which they needed for their farming were given by KSWDC, and continuous health care was provided by KMMT.

The villages displaced from the northern tract of Shadaw-township, which have moved back to their original villages, or resettled elsewhere are:

| No | Village | Year of return | Original village tract | Location of resettlement (if not to original village) |
|----|------------|----------------|------------------------|---|
| 1 | Dawmulae | 2001 | Shadaw northern tract | |
| 2 | Laedukhaw | 2001 | | Later moved again to Dawnawkalu |
| 3 | Dawtanaw | 2002 | | |
| 4 | Tanawkalu | 2001 | | |
| 5 | Dawweraw | 2002 | | |
| 6 | Laedukaesa | 2002 | | Later moved again to Namonlay |
| 7 | Namonlay | 2002 | | |
| 8 | Timloi | 2003 | | |
| 9 | Thiridar | 2004 | | |
| 10 | Dawdoedu | 2002 | | Sub-village of Dawweraw |
| 11 | Dawtanaw | 2002 | | |



| | | | | |
|----|------------|------|--|------------------------------------|
| 12 | Kalalae | 2004 | | |
| 13 | Dawlaedu | 2004 | | |
| 14 | Dawlaedu | 2004 | | |
| 15 | Dawnawpalu | 2003 | | |
| 16 | Thaelae | 2003 | | Southern Shan State |
| 17 | Suphaelaw | 2003 | | Moved back to Pawn stream |
| 18 | Dawtakhu | 2004 | | Moved to Naung-YaSaing, Shan State |



Before the ceasefire in 2012, Catholic teachers came and stayed in these villages and set up self-reliance schools. After the ceasefire, these schools were transformed into government schools and government teachers were posted there. Also, after the ceasefire the government with the help of an INGO built a 50- bed village tract hospital in Thiridar village, which is one of the villages where IDPs had returned in 2004.

After the ceasefire, KSWDC helped some members of refugee families, and some family members from Nwalapoe relocation site in Loikaw and Shadaw relocation site to resettle to the south of the Shadaw-Loikaw highway. Farming tools and health care were supported by KSWDC and KMMT.

Among the returning families, not all family members came back. For example, in some cases only the parents came back and looked after their farms and gardens, but their children

stayed in the refugee camps or the relocation villages to continue studying.

The list of the villages South of the Shadaw-Loikaw highway where some original residents have returned is as follows:

| No | Village | Original vil- lage tract | Returning year | Remark |
|----|-----------------|-----------------------------|----------------|--------|
| 1 | Salaung, Parlon | Salaung | 2004 - 2005 | |
| 2 | Phartoung | Southern tract | 2006 - 2007 | |
| 3 | Seekolae | Salaung | 2008 | |
| 4 | Dawsae | Salaung | 2008 | |
| 5 | Dawkheenae | Southern tract | 2009 - 2012 | |
| 6 | Dawkraw-aw | | 2011 | |
| 7 | Dawkletay | | 2012 | |
| 8 | Dawsawbu | | 2012 | |
| 9 | Dawaeesa | | 2012 | |
| 10 | Dawbolo | | 2013 | |
| 11 | Kholae | | 2009-2012 | |

After the ceasefire between KNPP and the government in 2012, the government allowed the Myanmar Peace Support Initiative (MPSI) to support the villagers who had resettled to the south of the Shadaw-Loikaw highway. Support was given through the Loikaw-based Kainayah Rural Social Development Organisation. Ten villages in that area were called “model villages” and given social support starting in 2013.

As part of this pilot project in support of the peace process in



Burma's ethnic areas, MPSI organized a Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) training for the Kainayah group through a social organization called Lone May, which is based in Yangon. Villagers from ten villages in Shadaw district were included in the training.

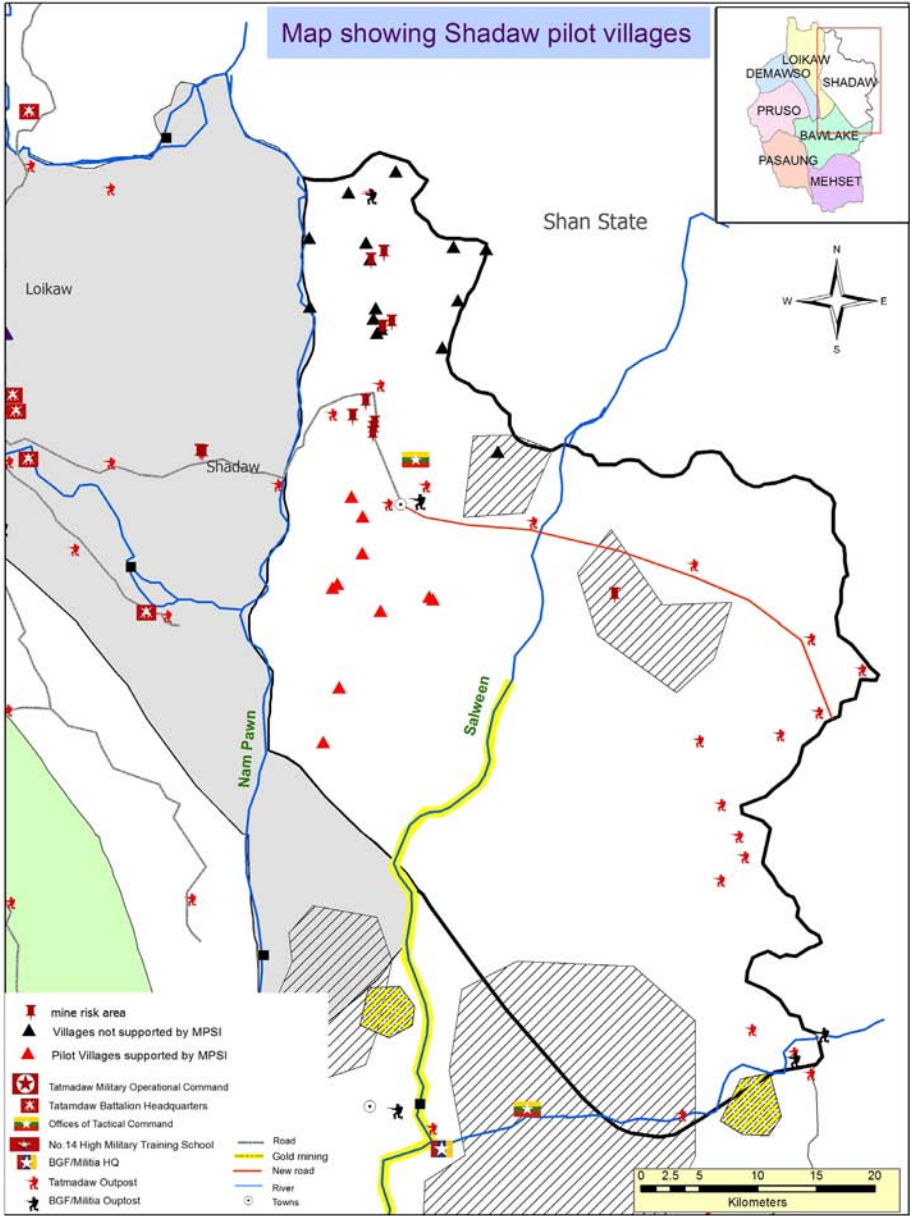
The "MPSI Lessons Learned" report March 2012–March 2014 highlights the success of the project. It said that ten villages, in total 251 families, with a population of 1,431, were given support and IDPs who had returned had been empowered and encouraged to develop their land using traditional methods and through vocational trainings. They were supported to re-introduce a traditional collective rice-bank and also were provided with seeds.

The MPSI project also included training a woman to become a community health worker for five out of the ten villages. There was also a plan for improvement and protection of local water sources with greater awareness of the danger of waterborne diseases. MPSI provided US\$79,000 for this project, the duration of which was September 2013 to June 2014.

KCSN surveyed this area, and found that the number of households which had resettled in the 10 villages was 274. However, the total population of these households, including all family members, whether they had returned to their village or not, was only 1,052, and in fact, only 487 people, i.e. 46% of the total number, had returned to live in the villages. The majority, 565 people, or 54% of the total number, still remain living in the refugee camps or relocation sites, and are mostly students and old people.



Map showing Shadaw pilot villages



The MPSI “Lessons Learned” report also mentioned that local people were worried about and had reported the impacts of grabbing land for the Ywathit dam project and cement factory project to KNPP. MPSI had supported a “KNPP Consultation Process” and claimed in its evaluation of this process that KNPP had reported the local people’s concerns about the dam and cement factory to the government, and the government had suspended these projects. However, contrary to this report, the Minister of Electricity from the state government, went to Pasaungat the beginning of 2014 and discussed with the authorities and local stakeholders about building the Ywathit dam on the Salween river.



It also seems that they are still persuading and pressuring people to accept the construction of the cement factory. If the government was really planning to stop these projects, they should declare this to the public, but they have not done so.

Also, the MPSI “Lessons Learned” report, in its “Listening Project” annex, highlighted human rights abuses of KNPP and KNPLF, but nothing was mentioned about the forced relocation of hundreds of villages, which depopulated huge areas of Karenni State, and other widespread human rights violations by the government. In other words, the report was one-sided. In response to the MPSI report, we would like to reveal the real conditions of the people who resettled in the 10 model villages in Shadaw.

1. Population of project area

The population, households and names of the 10 model villages are as follows:

| No | Village | Estimated no. households | No. of people (including all family members) according to the official village lists | Actual population in the village | Where returning villagers have come from |
|----|-----------|--------------------------|--|----------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Dawkrawaw | 50 | 30 | 45 | Refugee camp, relocation site |
| 2 | Phartoung | 21 | 114 | 22 | Relocation site |
| 3 | Dawbolo | 14 | 26 | 18 | Refugee camp, relocation site |
| 4 | Dawtama | 29 | 78 | 24 | Relocation site |
| 5 | Dawsawbu | 26 | 209 | 20 | Refugee camp, relocation site |
| 6 | Dawaesa | 31 | 140 | 27 | Relocation site |
| 7 | Seekolae | 40 | 188 | 188 | Relocation site |
| 8 | Dawkletay | 32 | 107 | 25 | Relocation site |
| 9 | Dawsae | 20 | 105 | 105 | Relocation site, IDP hiding place |



| | | | | | |
|-------|--------|-----|------|-----|-----------------|
| 10 | Kholae | 11 | 25 | 13 | Relocation site |
| Total | | 247 | 1052 | 487 | |

Note: We have based this estimate on detailed interviews, but the population of these villages is quite fluid, as people don't have confidence in the ceasefire agreement. It is mostly parents who have gone back and built temporary houses for some of their family members. Some built houses but they don't stay in them. The people are still worried the fighting will break out again.



“The people who collected the data (for the MPSI project) put the full number of family members. When they collected the data, only one person in the family came and gave the number of people in their family. But most of the members were in relocation camps or in the refugee camps. The data collector put the full numbers of family members as returnees,” a local villager said.

2. Project implementation

Within the two decades that local people have been in refugee camps, relocation sites, and hiding places, they have been facing hardship to earn a living, and other social problems. To reduce their difficulties, KNPP leaders avoided fighting in their area. The border-based KSWDC and KMMT looked after those villages by providing them with basic support and health care.

In early 2013, a group from the EU arrived in Loikaw and organized a meeting with all CBOs in Karenni state on humanitarian aid. The EU representative called for proposals only from organizations which were registered under government regulations. Loikaw- and border-based organizations responded by issuing a statement criticizing this. It was felt that the EU should not be ignoring the unregistered KSWDC and KMMT, which have been serving IDPs in Karenni state for a long time. After this, INGOS called a meeting in Loikaw about funding from EU. They held a workshop with local people by the help of the Loikaw-based Kainayah Rural Social Development Organisation and selected the 10 model villages to collect data. They didn't contact the KNPP liaison office in Loikaw and went directly to Shadaw. Only when necessary did they visit the Shadaw KNPP liaison office. Then, the MPSI project was started through Kainayah to support the needs of the 10 model villages.

“It is good to help the local people. But social development and capacity building are needed for the long run. Just giving materials will make people more dependent and less self-reliant,” said one of the KSWDC staff.

One of the leaders of KNPP said “I would like to tell INGOs that helping the villagers is good. But they should do first what is suitable and badly needed, such as ensuring protection of human rights and farmers' rights, and then give aid. Now it is back to front.”



3. Support provided

Among the civil society groups providing assistance, the Kainayah group has supported hoes, knives, sickles, water proof sheets, mosquito nets, pots, pans, plates, and blankets to the villages. The group gave funds for rearing livestock to each village, so that each village could buy 6 pigs, and each family who wanted to raise them could buy a pair of chickens. Pigs were purchased in Shadaw and from the refugee camps.

According to villagers, apart from Kainayah, several unknown INGOs, a mine-awareness group, UNHCR, and religious organizations came and supported them. The government gave 5 million kyats for building the road between Shadaw and Partoung, 5 million kyats for the road from Partoung to Dawkrawaw, 5 million kyats for the road from Shadaw to Seekolae village, 1.5 million kyats for the Shadaw–Loikaw highway to Daweesa village, and 1.5 million kyats for the road from Daweesa to Dawsawbu village. KNPP also supported supplies at the beginning. Among the ten model villages, the government built a medical dispensary clinic in Dawkletay village. Government health workers from Shadaw come to the clinic once a month, but there is no advance notice about these health workers coming, so most of the villagers are in fields when they come, and sometimes no one is there in the village.

With support from the government, villagers also built three schools themselves: a nursery school and two schools going up till the third grade.





The school in Seekolae village



Farmers clearing hillside fields at their old village



No health workers are based in this village. Only KMMT teams arrive twice a year and give medical treatment. Only four out of the ten villages have pipes to distribute water, which have been received from Kainayah and KNPP. Villagers in the other villages have to go and fetch water at the foot of the hills until now.



People in most of the ten villages still use a bamboo water-pipe system



In Dawkalaetae village there is a PVC pipe bringing water



Impacts

The villagers want to get tools for farming such as hoes, spades, and knives every year instead of receiving them once, because those items are used every day.

With this kind of support, it is not sure if the villages will be stable or not. If the ceasefire agreement between KNPP and the government is maintained, some of the village headmen worry that the villages with only a few houses will be forced to move to a single place so that they can be easily supported. If support from outside becomes their main means of income, it will foster aid dependence and spoil their spirit of self-reliance. Their customary systems of governance are also likely to disappear. The main reason why most people are not returning is that they are already settled in the relocation sites. They own houses and farms there, and it is easy to send their children to school. Those that return mostly just want to try and plant crops on their original lands, to earn money to build better houses in the relocation sites, and to spend on their family's education and health needs.

A local Karenni villager said, “Traditionally, we are only skillful at earning a living in the forest. We come back to work on our farms and gardens and rear poultry to support our children in schools. For example, the villagers in the Pasaung area have come back to grow cardamom, but their families remain in Loikaw and Deemawso.”



4. Administration

The district administrator U Khin Maung Swe manages Shadaw. He calls a meeting every Friday, always attended by responsible persons from the army. They discuss the movements of KNPP, condition of the local population, and the local people's reports. If they have something important to do, they summon the chairmen and secretaries from Salong village tract, as well as the northern and southern tracts of Shadaw, and give orders. The chairman and secretaries of the village tracts are all members of USDP, which holds power.

In Shadaw district there are three Members of Parliament, all from the USDP. They are Upper House MP Daw Nan Nu, and Lower House MPs U Poe Reh AungThein and U Htay Reh. A local person said "They automatically became MPs without a single vote."

To administer the ten villages, each village has a village chairman, and five village administration committee members. Their terms are two years. The southern village tract chairman and secretary give them orders.

5. Human rights violations

Compared with the time before the ceasefire, there are fewer check points and it is easier to move around. However, the future is still uncertain. It is no longer necessary to give 1,000 kyats to get permission to go to your own farm. It is also allowed to cut down trees and earn a living. KNPP tries to prohibit the



cutting of trees, but allows it when villagers ask permission to use wood for their own needs.

Before the ceasefire, when the area was designated as “black”, no companies were allowed to operate. However, during the current ceasefire period, local people are worrying that the companies will destroy their ancestral land and resources, if KNPP and the government allow this.

6. Burma Army control

Big signboards showing slogans of the Burma Army have been set up along the sides of the Shadaw- Loikaw road. Slogans such as “Army the father, Army the mother,” “March bravely and attack bravely,” and “Crush the enemy” can be seen clearly by the public. The freedom of movement which was given at the start of the ceasefire, has gradually decreased as time has gone by. Now the checkpoints along the roads in Karenni State have become stricter.

The army has put more checkpoints on the Loikaw–Shadaw highway, where they take lists of travellers, and army camps at the checkpoints have been fortified. Soldiers demand to ride on the same vehicles as passengers, and force drivers to carry their loads. The military intelligence keeps an eye on the activities of local people, CBOs, and armed groups. A local person said: “The gates become stricter when the relations between the government and UNFC (of which KNPP is a member) are not good on the nationwide ceasefire issue.”



A young man from Shadaw said, “Whenever I see the soldiers, I remember the story of the 1996 “Four Cuts” campaign told by my parents, and I feel worried. When I see soldiers everywhere, it reminds me our country is still under the military instead of being a democracy. Democracy means civilian administration. Now it shows civilians are not in control.”

There are two main gates to the entrance of Shadaw district, where they carry out checks. At one gate is the Burma Army Battalion 552 strategic command office, based in a temple, around which trenches have been dug and fences erected with sharp bamboo stakes. Beyond this, a furlong away, is a collective checkpoint, where the police, military intelligence, fire fighters, forest department, and Border Guard Force check passers-by. This gate has to report to the strategic gate daily.

7. *Model villages and peace*

The people who have returned to stay in the model villages are just testing out the situation, daring to take a risk because there is no fighting. They don’t believe there is peace. They think it is a kind of preparation for their children, in case the situation really improves.

A villager from Dawkraw-aw village said, “If fighting breaks out, it will be between the armed groups. Maybe we will be in the line of fire. But we will not run away this time.”

Another villager from Dawsawbu village said, “Not all my family has come back yet, because the memory of 1996 is still in

my mind. If it happens again like in '96, I don't want to face the difficulty of carrying my children and property when I flee."

It depends on the government and the armed groups whether fighting breaks out again. Doing business without political resolution could lead to renewed conflict. Therefore a political agreement is needed first.

For the refugees to return safely, they need to be sure that the ceasefire agreement between the government and KNPP will last. However, no one can predict what will happen. Another problem which makes the situation worse is the rapid selling off of the country's natural resources. A villager from Shadaw staying in Refugee Camp 1 said "I don't want to let them cut even a single new tree. They said that they would take the old logs, but in reality they also take a lot more new ones. If they've already cut new ones, then let it be, but they shouldn't cut any more, I said. If they keep cutting, nothing will be left. I won't be able to see trees anymore. We want to return home because of these forests and bamboo groves. Without them we will be in despair. We will not be able to enjoy our life."

According to another refugee, "If the situation forces us, we have to return. But we will need to struggle to get back our land, forest and bamboo."

A young man from Shadaw said, "There is no fighting in Karenni State but there has been an increase in various forms of land confiscation. In Pruso, the army seized the peoples' land and built their military training school. In our place, we need to worry our land will be confiscated for a so-called restricted



forest area.”

A member of KNPP’s Shadaw administrative committee, said “During this peace process, whether carrying out business, politics, or social affairs, there must be transparency and participation of local people, for it to be sustainable.”

A villager said “To ensure that peace lasts long, the two sides must not fight. There must be no army in our village, and no army influence in our village. The administration of our area must be in our civilian hands.”



8. The government census

Teachers from Shadaw carried out the census with their forms and ledgers in the ten model villages. A member of each family was required to answer their questions. According to the government, the aim of the census was to assess the basic needs of the population, so that the government would be able to provide support. This was their explanation. However, the villagers did not really know what was going on, and worried something would happen to them.

A villager said “I was told that my family members in a third country could also be put in the list. It made me worry for my family members.”

There was no proper explanation to the people about the aim of the census collecting. People felt confused and insecure.

Conclusion

People in Karenni State really want to return to the Shadaw area and earning their living peacefully. But the peace process so far has not been able to ensure their long term security and peace. They are afraid they will have to suffer again. Some INGOs, politicians and businessmen believe that peace can be bought and ignore ethnic people's aspirations for justice and self-determination. If they keep rashly doing business which impacts or causes suffering for the people, this will not bring peace. It will be like a spark for a wildfire.

When considering the peace process, it is necessary to look at the whole country, including all the ethnic areas. Being able to carry out social work in one ethnic area while fighting and violations of human rights take place in other areas of Burma, is not a basis of optimism for peace .

Some NGOs which have got permission to work socially (for example health support) are too optimistic about peace, and do not prioritize empowering people to protect their rights. For example, they can support health care in the Shadaw area, but still the Burma Army is controlling the whole Karenni State and not sharing power or reducing their control, which is threatening peace. In order to gain real peace, NGOs need to give pressure to the government and support the people.

In relation to the 10 model villages, we have to stick to the UN standards for refugee return, which must be voluntary, in safety and dignity. The peace process in Burma cannot ensure this. To



ensure these conditions, it is necessary to solve without delay the political problems between the government and the armed ethnic organizations. The 2008 constitution must be reformed to ensure people's rights. The military administration must be transformed into a civilian administration as soon as possible, and there must be a reduction of Burma Army forces in the ethnic areas.



kcsn2010@gmail.com