



Damming at Gunpoint

**BURMA ARMY ATROCITIES
PAVE THE WAY FOR SALWEEN
DAMS IN KAREN STATE**

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IN KAREN STATE

KAREN RIVERS WATCH
NOVEMBER 2004
KAWTHOOLEI

Karen Rivers Watch is a coalition of Karen organisations – the Karen Office of Relief and Development (KORD), Karen Youth Organisation (KYO), Karen Student Network Group (KSNG), Karen Environmental and Social Action Network (KESAN), Karen Women’s Organisation (KWO) and Federal Trade Union of Kawthoolei (FTUK) - which work on environmental, women’s, youth, human rights and development issues within the Karen community in Karen State. It was formed to monitor development processes affecting the environment, especially rivers, in Karen State in particular and Burma in general, and to mobilize grassroots communities, as well advocate, with other Burma compatriots, for democratic and sustainable development in Burma.

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*Rich men dam the water
Flooding the hill rice field, causing problems for Mother
Rich men dam the river
Flooding over the roof and making Mother homeless.*

Traditional Karen saying

Acronyms and terms in the book

Terms and acronyms related to SPDC

SPDC	State Peace and Development Council (Military Junta)
IB	Infantry Battalion
LIB	Light Infantry Battalion
South Eastern Regional Command	- The military command in Karen State and Mon State

Terms and acronyms related to KNU

KNU	Karen National Union
KNLA	Karen National Liberation Army (KNU's army)
KNDO	Karen National Defense Organisation (KNU's militia)

KNU administration zones in Karen State and Tenasserim Division (Civil administration and corresponding military command)

1. Thaton District - Brigade 1
2. Taungoo District - Brigade 2
3. Nyaunglebin District - Brigade 3
4. Mergui/Tavoy District - Brigade 4 (in Tenasserim Division)
5. Papun District - Brigade 5
6. Duplaya District - Brigade 6
7. Paan District - Brigade 7

District Administration

- Township
- Village Tract
- Village

Other acronyms

EGAT	Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand
EPDC	Electric Power Development Company (Japanese company)
NMSP	New Mon State Party (in Mon State and Tenasserim Division)
KNPLF	Karenni National People's Liberation Front (in Karenni State)

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All maps are drawn by KRW team

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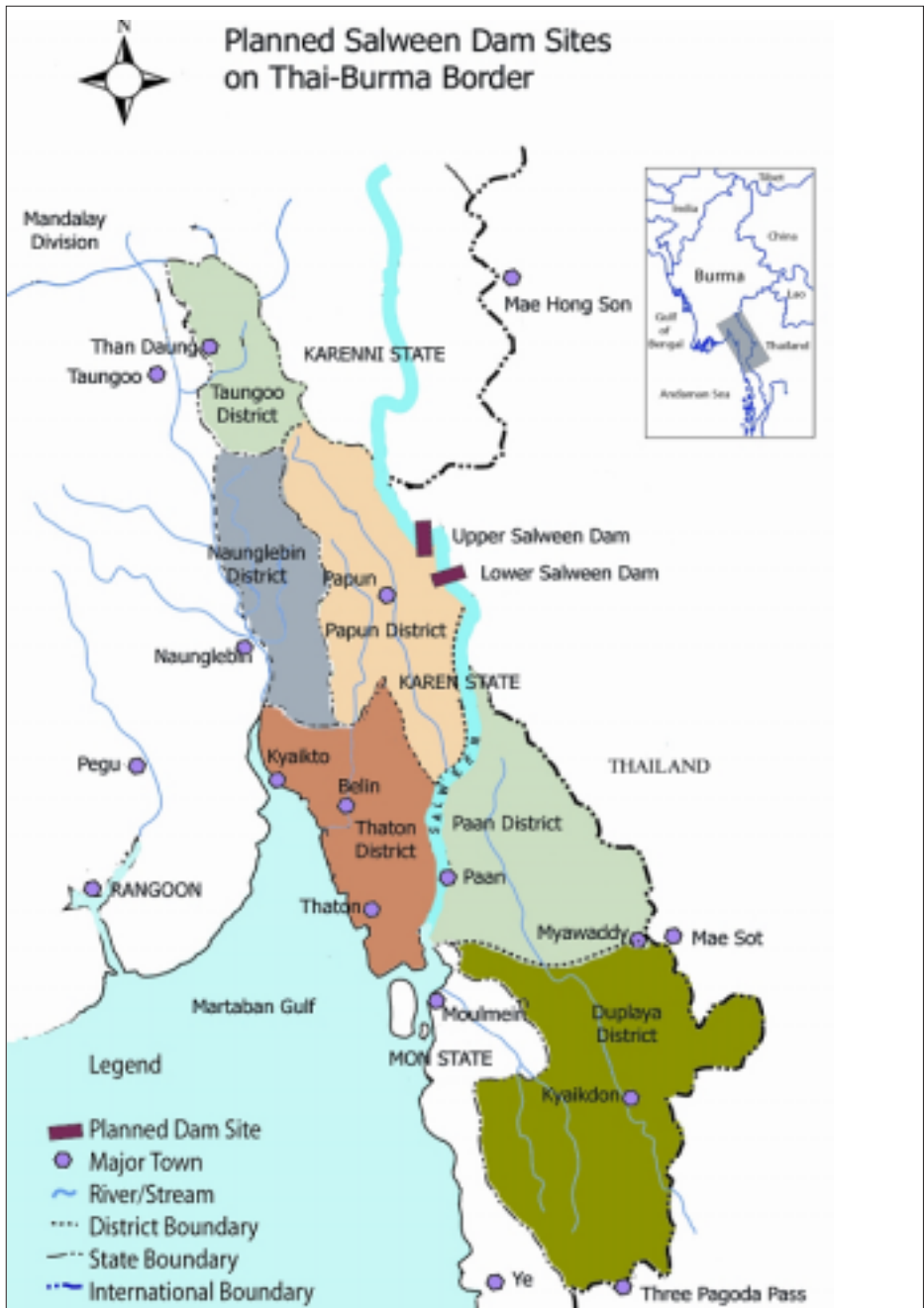
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Karen Rivers Watch Coalition
Kawthoolei

Burma facts

- The Burmese regime has more than doubled the size of its army to over 400,000 since 1988.
- Burma (approx. total population 52 million) has the highest per capita ratio of soldiers to civilians in the world.
- The regime spends over 40% of its national budget on arms, and only 0.4% and 0.5% of its GDP on health and education.
- The regime has refused to honour the national elections of 1990, won in a landslide victory by the National League for Democracy
- Continuing civil war in the ethnic states has caused over 600,000 internally displaced people in Eastern Burma, over 140,000 refugees in camps on the Thai-Burma border including about 120,000 Karen people, and about 2 million refugees/migrants in Burma's neighbouring countries.
- The regime earns over US\$400 million a year from selling off Burma's natural gas to foreign investors. Now it wants to sell off the country's hydro-power to further strengthen its military forces.



Map 2: Planned Salween Dam Sites on Thai-Burma Border

Summary

As Thailand proceeds with plans to join Burma's military regime in building a series of dams on the Salween River to gain "cheap" electricity, this report reveals the atrocities being inflicted on the people of Northern Karen State to pave the way for two of the planned dams.

The Upper Salween (Wei Gyi) Dam and Lower Salween (Dar Gwin) Dam are planned to be built on the river where it forms the border between Thailand's Mae Hong Son province and Burma's Karen State. Together they will produce about 5,300 MW of electricity. It is estimated that the reservoir for the Upper Dam will stretch for 380 kilometers inside Karen and Karenni States of Burma.

Both dams are located at the eastern edge of Papun district in Karen State. Once a Karen liberated area, during the last decade Papun has been the site of repeated military offensives and anti-insurgency campaigns by the regime's troops to crush the Karen resistance. Before 1992, there were only ten Burma Army garrisons in Papun district. Today there are fifty-four garrisons, including twelve along the Salween river bank, fortified with heavy artillery.

The military campaigns have decimated the local population. 210 villages have been destroyed, and villagers forcibly relocated to 31 relocation sites, where movement has been strictly controlled, and villagers are subject to forced labour and other human rights abuses. Tens of thousands of villagers have fled to Thailand as refugees; others live in hiding in the jungle, where they live in constant fear of being found and tortured or killed. In 1992, there were estimated to be about 107,000 people in Papun district. Now this has been halved to about 54,000, of whom about 35,000, or 60%, are internally displaced in the jungles. The rest have fled to Thailand or other parts of Burma.

Out of 85 original villages in the mountainous area of Eastern Papun directly adjoining the planned dam sites, only a quarter remain. Most of the communities who had farmed and traded along the Salween River have fled to Thailand, and many farms in the fertile tributary valleys have been lying

fallow for over a decade. Over 5,000 villagers remain hiding in the jungle, facing severe food shortages and health problems. Roads to the planned dam sites have been built using forced labour, and landmines have been planted alongside the roads.

There has been no consultation with local communities about the dam plans. If the dams are built, the floodwaters will permanently displace many of the communities currently in hiding or living as refugees in Thailand. The increased military security for the dam sites will also inevitably mean further abuses against local populations.

The Salween dams fit into the ongoing strategy of the Burmese military regime to use “development” projects to gain funding and collusion from neighbouring countries to subjugate ethnic resistance movements, and exploit the natural resources in the ethnic areas.

Karen Rivers Watch makes the following recommendations:

To the SPDC

- To immediately stop its atrocities against the people in Karen State and withdraw its troops from the entire area.
- To abandon all plans to build dams on the Salween River, which forms such a vital part of the Asian eco-system. Alternative sources of energy must be found, but this should be in the hands of a democratically elected leadership.

To the Thai Government

- To stop plans to dam the Salween, as there will be no benefit for the local population. On the contrary, the dams will cause even further forced relocation, forced labour, poverty, and other forms of human rights abuses against local people, which will lead to further displacement.
- To stop all forms of investment in Burma until genuine democracy is restored, as this investment is strengthening the military dictatorship and supporting their military strategy to subjugate the ethnic peoples
- To stop any development aid to Burma until democracy is restored, as any benefits will only go to high-ranking persons and not be shared by the local population.

Introduction

Rationale

This report examines the tactics used by the Burmese military to take control of the northern Karen State border, and the sites where the Thai government and the Burmese military regime are planning to build dams on the Salween River, and aims to highlight the atrocities committed by the regime's troops in this area.

It also aims to show how the regime is using the pretext of “development” to justify its subjugation and militarization of the ethnic-controlled areas, in order to delude the public both at home and abroad, and mask the root causes of the civil war in Burma.

Ever since it took power, the regime has been using various strategies to gain control of the ethnic areas, and neutralize the ethnic armed groups operating there. This has included not only the use of direct military force, but also the strategy of making ceasefire agreements with some ethnic armies. Under these agreements, the regime allows the armies limited opportunities to conduct business, thereby distracting them from their political struggle.

At the same time, the regime utilizes ceasefire agreements to proceed with mega development projects from which it can reap direct benefits. For example, the regime reached a ceasefire agreement with the New Mon State Party (NMSP) and at the same time managed to demobilise some of the KNU units in the area to pave the way for the Yadana Gas Pipeline Project in 1995.

This report aims to expose the strategies used by the regime and their links to development in the Papun District area.

Methodology

The research incorporated a study of relevant literature and fieldwork. Literature reviewed included “*The Tragedy of Two Lands*”¹ on the Salween

¹ Southeast Asia Rivers Network (SEARIN), 2003, *Tragedy of Two Lands*

Dam and the Karen Human Right Group (KHRG) reports in Papun District. Other sources included analyses of the SPDC development and its Border Area Development Program, and the Thai and Chinese plans on Salween dams. The articles and literature were in English, Thai, Burmese and Karen languages.

The methodology was informed by recommendations of the World Commission on Dams, human rights perspectives and the UN Draft Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples.

The field survey was conducted during a period of 8 months between September 2003 and April 2004, in two townships in Papun District, Karen State. All of the interviewees were internally displaced persons (IDPs). The field research covered 18 villages in four village tracts in Luthaw Township and Butho Township of Papun District. The townships are situated along the Thai-Burma border where the Salween flows.

Butho and Luthaw townships of Papun District were chosen, as they adjoin the area where the Upper and Lower Salween Dam will be built. Most of the area has come under SPDC control and thousands of people have fled to refugee camps in Thailand since January 1995. Approximately 35,000 are remaining (out of the current total population of 54,000 in the whole district) as internally displaced persons and the survey was conducted among some of them.

Eight members of the associated organisations of Karen Rivers Watch (KRW) (6 men and 2 women) conducted the interviews. Permission to conduct the survey was gained from relevant KNU administration departments.

The research team conducted interviews with four district officers responsible in the fields of administration, forestry and health.

Constraints and clarification

Detailed information about the dam plans, particularly information related to flood areas, has not been made publicly available by the agencies or authorities involved, either in Burma or Thailand.

Most of the villagers along the river bank have been forced out by Burmese military operations in the areas since 1995, and community knowledge

regarding environmental resources such as plants and animals are not well documented due to the unstable living conditions of the communities.

The maps of the area used by the SPDC were mostly drawn up during the time of British rule and are therefore 80 years out of date. Thus, many villages referred to in this report are not in the regime's maps. Also, some village names ending in "Der," were written in the Burmese military maps as "Doe".

Most villages in the Papun area which end in "Hta" or "Khee" are new villages, extended from nearby villages, and are often villages formed by internally displaced persons (IDPs) who had relocated due to war. This indicates how long-standing the problem of internal displacement has been in the area.

Names of villages visited by survey team

Table 1: List of villages visited (see map)

No.	Village Name (IDPs Hideout)	Population	Family Number
1	La Bor*	NA	NA
2	Dabunoe*	NA	NA
3	Laytherkho	432	28
4	Mae Nu Hta	NA	26
5	Htoe Wee Der	506	75
6	Tae Mu Der	403	56
7	Hee Poe Der	87	13
8	Pa Tay Der	NA	NA
9	Pa Dae Der	NA	NA
10	Ta Oo Der	200	42
11	Mee Maw Der	51	8
12	Way Naw Der	478	57
13	Tha Twee Der	379	43
14	Klor Kee Der	170	38
15	Perler Der	114	19
16	Ko Kay	146	26
17	Lor Pla Thay	101	18
18	Htee Der Kwee	156	28
	Total	3,223	477

* Villages are on the Yunzalin River, which is a tributary of the Salween River

PHOTO:KRW (2003)



KRW research team talking with villagers.



Wei Gyi area in dry season

Dams and the Burmese military regime's border development programs

“Construction of infrastructure throughout the country has boosted the Union spirit and patriotism.”

SPDC Gen. Maung Aye, 22 Aug 1999 (broadcast on the BBC)

The issue of “development” has been key to the propaganda strategy of the Burmese military regime. By continually stressing in the state-controlled media that it is committed to the “development” of the nation, and by citing the completion of infrastructure projects as proof of this, it seeks to distract people from the urgency of the need for political reform and their right to participate in decision-making during the development process.

Since 1989, the regime has also used the promise of “development” to help convince various ethnic armies to sign ceasefire agreements. The strategy of persuading the ethnic groups to sign ceasefires was led by the Directorate of Defense Services Intelligence (DDSI). Under the agreements, the ethnic armies have been granted no political concessions, but have merely been allowed limited control of certain areas and various economic concessions. The aim has been to lure the groups into becoming business-oriented, thereby eroding their commitment to their original political goals, and neutralizing their resistance movements.

As part of this strategy, in May 1989, the Burmese military regime formed the Development of Border Areas and National Races Committee (DBANR), and it began carrying out its Border Area Development (BAD) program. The program has consisted largely of infrastructure projects, which has conveniently facilitated strategic access by the Burmese army into the ethnic areas. 65% of the regime's ‘Border Area Development’ budget is for roads and bridges, with little directed towards health and education. (Global Witness, October 2003, *“A Conflict of Interest: The uncertain future of Burma's forests”*)

The ceasefire agreements and infrastructure development have facilitated the rapid exploitation of natural resources, such as timber and minerals, in the ethnic areas by the regime, and their sale to neighbouring countries. The regime has been able to earn huge revenues from the sale of natural gas to Thailand, following the construction of the Yadana gas pipeline to Thailand. The pipeline construction was made possible by the ceasefire agreement between the Mon resistance army and the regime.

The sale of resources to its neighbours has enabled the regime to continue building up its military infrastructure and intensify military offensives against the remaining active resistance armies. During 1989–1992, precisely while the regime was implementing its ceasefire strategy with armed groups in Shan State, it was launching full-scale attacks against resistance bases of the Karen National Union (KNU) and managed to capture most of the KNU-controlled areas.

It can be seen that the regime's plans to exploit the water resources in the Salween River, by building dams and selling hydropower to Thailand, fit into its ongoing strategy of subjugating the ethnic areas and exploiting the natural resources there. Since 1992, the regime has been seeking to establish control over Karen State, by repeated military offensives against the Karen resistance, and by targeting civilian populations under anti-insurgency campaigns. However the KNU have not yet been pacified. By pushing joint plans with the Thai government to build the dams on the Salween River, the regime is clearly hoping to further cement its official economic links with Thailand and garner Thai support to either crush the Karen resistance or force the KNU to reach a ceasefire agreement.

The Salween dam plans

The Salween River, 2,800 km (1,350 miles) in length, is the longest river in Southeast Asia that has not yet been dammed. Its source is in western China, eastern Tibet; it flows for half its length through southwestern China, then through Burma's eastern ethnic states, except for a very short course along the Thai-Burmese border. It empties into the Andaman Sea in Burmese territorial waters. The average annual river flow of the Salween is said to be 124,000,000,000 cubic metres per year.

Since the late 1970s, Japanese and Australian consulting companies and Burmese and Thai state agencies have produced a number of major studies examining the possibility of constructing large dams on the Salween.²

The Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT) in 1981 began planning to build two dams — the Upper and Lower Salween dams — on sites adjacent to Karen State and to Thailand's Maesariang District in Mae Hong Son Province, where the river forms the Thai-Burmese border for about 120 kms.

In July 1996, the Thai Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Burmese military regime to purchase 1,500 MW of electricity from Burma by 2010 and announced the possibility of future MoUs to build dams with the regime.

EGAT has plans to invest \$5.5 billion in building the two dams, and to start supplying electricity to Thailand by 2012.

The Salween dams tie into Thailand's ambitious plans to establish a South-east Asian regional energy grid. EGAT opted for these two dams on the Thai-

² Japan has been involved in dam building in Burma since after World War II when the Japanese provided war reparation to Burma. In 1967, Japan funded the building of the Baluchaung Dam and hydroelectric power plant in Karenni State on the Balu River, a tributary of the Pawn River, which flows into the Salween.

Burma border, rather than dams deeper inside Burma, because it would be easier for EGAT to seek international financial loans to construct them³. This reflects concerns by international funders about lack of transparency, further sanctions and lack of security inside Burma.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is planning to secure financing for the dam's transmission lines in Thailand as part of its Greater Mekong Sub-region Regional Power Interconnection Initiative. The Burmese military regime is also encouraging other ASEAN countries to invest in the Salween dam projects⁴.

EGAT has allocated nearly \$950 million for investment in the project and the agency is ready to put up the money first through its own capital or by issuing bonds.

³ *Bangkok Post*, 3 December, 2002, "Burma Agrees to Join Thailand in Dam Project".

⁴ At the ASEAN Ministerial meeting in Cambodia Than Shwe encouraged the ASEAN countries to invest in building the Salween dam. SEARIN, 2003, see above, p 21

The Wei Gyi and Dar Gwin dams in Karen State

The planned site of the Upper Salween (Wei Gyi) Dam is on the northeastern border of Papun District, at the southern end of the 5-km long Kyaut Nyat (“Cliff”) Gorge, where the Salween river forms a whirlpool at Wei Gyi (meaning Great Whirlpool). This part of the river is well known by boat users as it so difficult to navigate throughout the year: in the dry season, the Mae Hro Rapids make passage through the Cliff Gorge dangerous, while in the rainy season, the Wei Gyi whirlpool increases in size and becomes more hazardous.



Map 4: Detailed Map of Wei Gyi site



Map 5: Detailed Map of Dar Gwin site

The planned site of the Lower Salween Dam is at Dar Gwin, which lies directly east of the town of Papun. Dar Gwin means literally “Knife Curve” and the river at this point makes a sharp-pointed turn around a narrow section of Thai territory about 5 kms long and 2 kms wide. During colonial times, the British had a border post at this site, as did the Thais, and traders would regularly cross the river at this point.

According to Japan’s EPDC⁵ (Electric Power Development Company) study the lower dam would complement the Wei Gyi dam (Upper Dam) as a pumped storage facility. The Reservoir for the Lower Dam will reach the base of the Upper Dam. The distance between the two dams will be 35 km. The reservoir for Upper Dam will be as long as 380 km: 56 km along the Karen-Thai Burma border and the remaining 324 km in Karenni State, inside Burma.

The area of land to be flooded by the Upper Salween Dam (Wei Gyi) is estimated to be about 960 sq.km (237,220 acres)⁶: 30 sq. km in Thai territory and the rest will be in Papun District and Karenni State. The reservoir of the Lower Dam will be about 35 km in length, reaching the foot of the Upper Dam. The total flood area will be about 5 sq. km.

⁵ EPDC was approved to carry out initial dam studies in 1991 by the Joint Working Group for the Development of Hydroelectric Projects on Border River which was appointed by the Thai government and the Burmese regime.

⁶ On May 21, 2003, the EGAT Governor reported to the Thai Senate Commission on People’s Participation that the total reservoir would be 600,000 rai (960 sq kms).

Table 2. Project Details⁷

	Upper Salween Dam	Lower Salween Dam
<i>Location</i>	Latitude 18° 19' N Longitude 97° 33' E Above O Loh Checkpoint of Salween Sanctuary and 14 km upstream away from Sob Ngae (Mae Ye Hta), Mae Sariang District of Mae Hong Son Province	Latitude 18° 04' N Longitude 97° 42' E At Ban Tha Ta Fang, 15 km upstream away from Ban Mae Sam Laep (Thaw Le Hta), Mae Sariang District of Mae Hong Son Province
<i>Catchment Area (sq.km)</i>	293,200	294,500
<i>Annual inflow (million cubic metres)</i>	118,600	119,200
<i>High water level (m.MSL)</i>	220	86
<i>Gross storage capacity</i>	21,000	245
<i>Reservoir area (rai) [625 rai = 1 sq km.]</i>	19,101 rai (30.7 sq km) in Thailand alone	1,340 rai (2 sq km) in Thailand alone
<i>Type of dam</i>	Storage dam	Regulating dam
<i>Height (m)</i>	168	49
<i>Length (m)</i>	570	379.5
<i>Net water height (m)</i>	116.8	20.9
<i>Installed capacity (MW)</i>	4,540.00	792.00
<i>Firm power (MW)</i>	2,139.75	476.61
<i>Annual energy production (GWh)</i>	29,271.04	54,422.49
<i>Firm energy (GWh)</i>	18,744.15	4,175.12
<i>Investment Cost (both)</i>	277,000 million Baht (US\$ 6,150 million)	
<i>First year of power</i>	2012	

⁷ EGAT 2003, as quoted by the Foundation for Ecological Recovery (FER) June 2003, *Salween Hydropower Project (Thai-Burma border)*

PHOTO: KORD (2003)



Karens villagers in Papun District, Karen State

Political context of the dams in Karen State

The Karen are an ethnic nationality of Burma, with an estimated population of seven million, comprising 13 percent of Burma's total population of about 52 million.

The majority of Karens live in Karen State, Pegu Division, Tenasserim Division, and in the delta region.

The Karen traditionally have an agrarian lifestyle. During the British colonial period, many Karen converted to Christianity and many were educated in the British education system.

The Karen movement for autonomy started after World War I. After World War II, the movement gained momentum, and in 1949, just after Burma gained independence in 1948, the Karen entered into civil war for greater autonomy under the leadership of the Karen National Union.

After it was outlawed by the Rangoon government at the beginning of 1949, the KNU retreated from the Rangoon outskirts and was able to set up its administration in most of Eastern Karen State, along the Thai-Burma border.

This circumstance was also exploited by the Thai military for its counter-insurgency policies during the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, where the KNU were used by Thailand as a "buffer" against its ideological adversary, the Burmese socialist-oriented regime under General Newin.

The KNU was able to support itself economically by operating custom points along the Thai-Burma border, through which flowed Thai goods for Burma's unofficial market⁸.

⁸ Between the 60s and 80s unofficial border trade boomed as goods from neighboring countries (especially Thailand) flowed through custom points under the control of ethnic resistance groups, headed for the huge black market that operated in the shadows of Burma's socialist economy.

The Thai “buffer policy” came to an end after 1988. A group of influential Thai military personnel led by Thailand’s Army Chief, Gen. Chavalit Yongchaiyud, visited Burma at the end of 1988. The regime started to sell logging and fisheries concessions to Thai companies. The visit also boosted the regime with confidence to further welcome more multinational corporations such as the US oil company Unocal and the French oil company Total to invest in exporting its natural resources and to cooperate in bringing down the insurgent armed groups such as the Mons and Karens in the area.

“In May 1989 Lieutenant-General Than Shwe, the commander of the Burmese Army, visited Thailand and told Deputy Prime Minister Prapath Limphapandu that Burma wanted to clear the border area as soon as possible for ‘security reasons and for the mutual benefit of bilateral trade.’”

Global Witness, *A Conflict of Interest*, October 2003

Since the areas of logging concessions that had been granted to Thai companies during 1989-1992 lay in the territories of the KNU and New Mon State Party (NMSP), the Burmese army carried out major offensives against the strongholds of KNU and NMSP in order to take control of the area. In the case of the NMSP, it reached a ceasefire agreement in 1995.

The offensives led to a flood of refugees from Karen State to Thailand. Currently there are about 120,000 thousand refugees in Thai camps who have fled from Karen State.

Papun pre-1992: The Salween under Karen control

Until the beginning of 1992, the entire area of Papun District adjacent to the Thai-Burma border was controlled by the KNU.

The area of Papun District is 6,722.540 sq km (2,595.573 sq miles). Papun District shares a border with Thailand's Mae Hong Son Province, and is adjacent to Thailand's Salween National Park and Salween Wildlife Sanctuary. To the north, it shares a border with Karenni State.

The KNU administration⁹ divides the district into three townships: Luthaw, Dwelo and Butho, in accordance with the three main mountain ranges running through Papun District from North to South. The Butho range forms the major part of the western bank of the Salween River on the Karen State border side.

The majority of the population are ethnic Karens, with some Shans and other ethnic peoples. The population in 1985 was about 107,000.

Natural resources

Papun District, including the areas forming the watershed of the Salween River, has vast swathes of teak forest and was known as a 'Golden Teak' forest zone. In the British colonial time, it was the main resource for export from Burma, followed by gold and lead. Logging and transport of logs depended mainly on the Salween River. Logs were floated downstream along the Salween.

A 90-year-old Karen woman recalled, "*In the korla time (British era), there was logging in our area. Logs were floated along the Salween river. Thais also carried out logging on the Thai side*".

Interview with villager in Pa Hai Village Tract, September 2003

⁹ The KNU has Departments of Education, Health, Agriculture, Defense, Justice, Forestry, Customs and Taxation, and Mining. Most of the Papun area was under the KNU administration system prior to 1992.

Some other forest products were also available such as cane and cardamom. Most of the mountain range along the Salween River is covered with monsoon deciduous forest.

During the first three decades of the Karen resistance, beginning in 1949, the area was free from commercial logging. However, logging resumed in 1983 on the Salween River bank when the KNU began selling logging concessions to Thai companies.

The KNU Forestry Department had the role of making laws related to maintenance of the environment, in accordance with the aspirations of Papun villagers. Regulations covering rotational slash and burn farming, forest fire control, reforestation or replanting of teak forests, and the forbidding of hunting of rare wildlife were drawn up.

The KNU Forestry Department arranged for the setting up of a small number of teak plantations as a reforestation program in some areas.

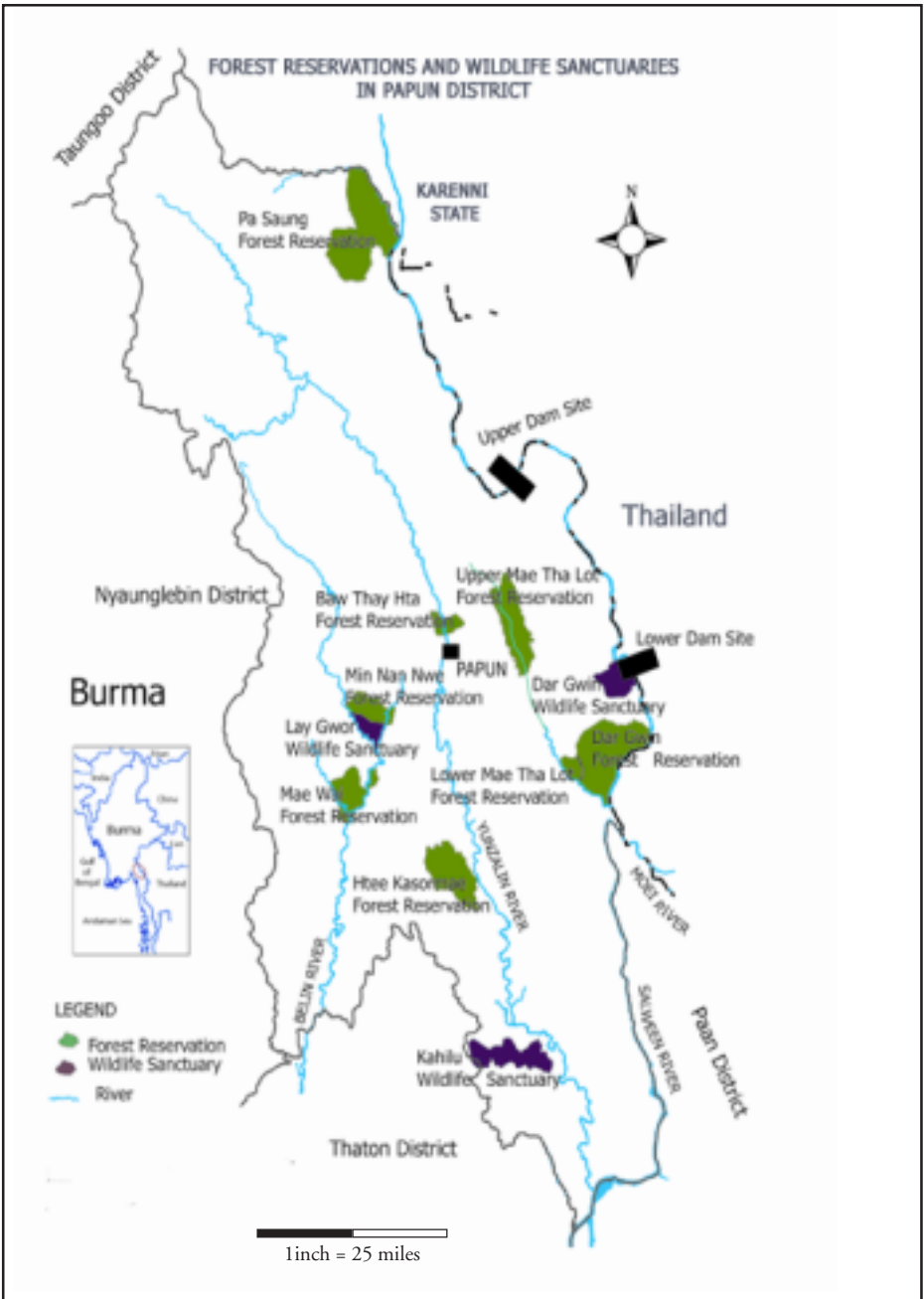
The KNU also maintained teak forest reservations in Papun District¹⁰. These included: the Mae Wai Forest Reservation, Min Nan Nwe Forest Reservation, Htee Kasormae Forest Reservation, Upper Mae Tha Lot Forest Reservation, Lower Mae Tha Lot Forest Reservation, Pa Saung Forest Reservation, Baw Thay Hta Forest Reservation and Dar Gwin Forest Reservation. (See map on page 21)

There are three wildlife sanctuaries in the district. Two are designated by the KNU: the Dar Gwin Wildlife Sanctuary adjacent to the Thai Salween National Park, and the Lay Gwor Sanctuary in the western part of the district in Dwelo Township. The remaining one, Kahilu Wildlife Sanctuary, was designated by British in Dwelo Township.

Traditionally, each villager in Papun would own a certain area of land allotted to them by the village patron known as the “*teepo kawkasa*,”¹¹ who wielded power and influence over the community. These traditional land allocations are still recognized by local villagers. The villagers managed to use

¹⁰ The KNU reintroduced the system of designating certain areas as forest reservations which had been practiced during British colonial rule.

¹¹ Literally means “Master of land and people”. After the British introduced the “headman” system in the area in the colonial time, the role of these leaders was retained in spiritual and customary affairs only.



Map 6: Forest Reservations and Wildlife Sanctuaries in Papun District

the resources according to their needs. Some tracts of the forest were set aside as “community forests”.

The *teepo kawkasas* would take care of affairs related to the livelihoods of villagers and their animist rituals. Yearly worship of nature was carried out by the *teepo kawkasa* who would be in charge of the ceremony.

Although the traditional system of land demarcation and ownership was not enforced along the Salween River bank, where logging was carried out between 1983 to 1995, it was strictly enforced in the northern part of Papun.

Infrastructure

Although the British had built roads during the colonial times, mainly to facilitate the export of logs, these had mostly fallen into disrepair during the civil war. Only the roads leading from towns further inside Burma to Papun and Pwagor were maintained (by the regime) prior to 1992, and were used to transport supplies to Burma Army troops during the rainy season.

In the 1980s, after the KNU sold logging concessions to Thai companies, those companies dug some roads along creeks flowing into the Salween River in order to transport logs, mostly in Butho Township.

Papun town has an airport, with aircraft flying from Rangoon via Pa-an. Telegrams were used to communicate between bigger towns. Particularly during the rainy season, rivers such as the Belin and Yunzalin were commonly used for transportation between Papun and bigger towns or villages. Along the border, the Salween River served as the major transportation and trading route.

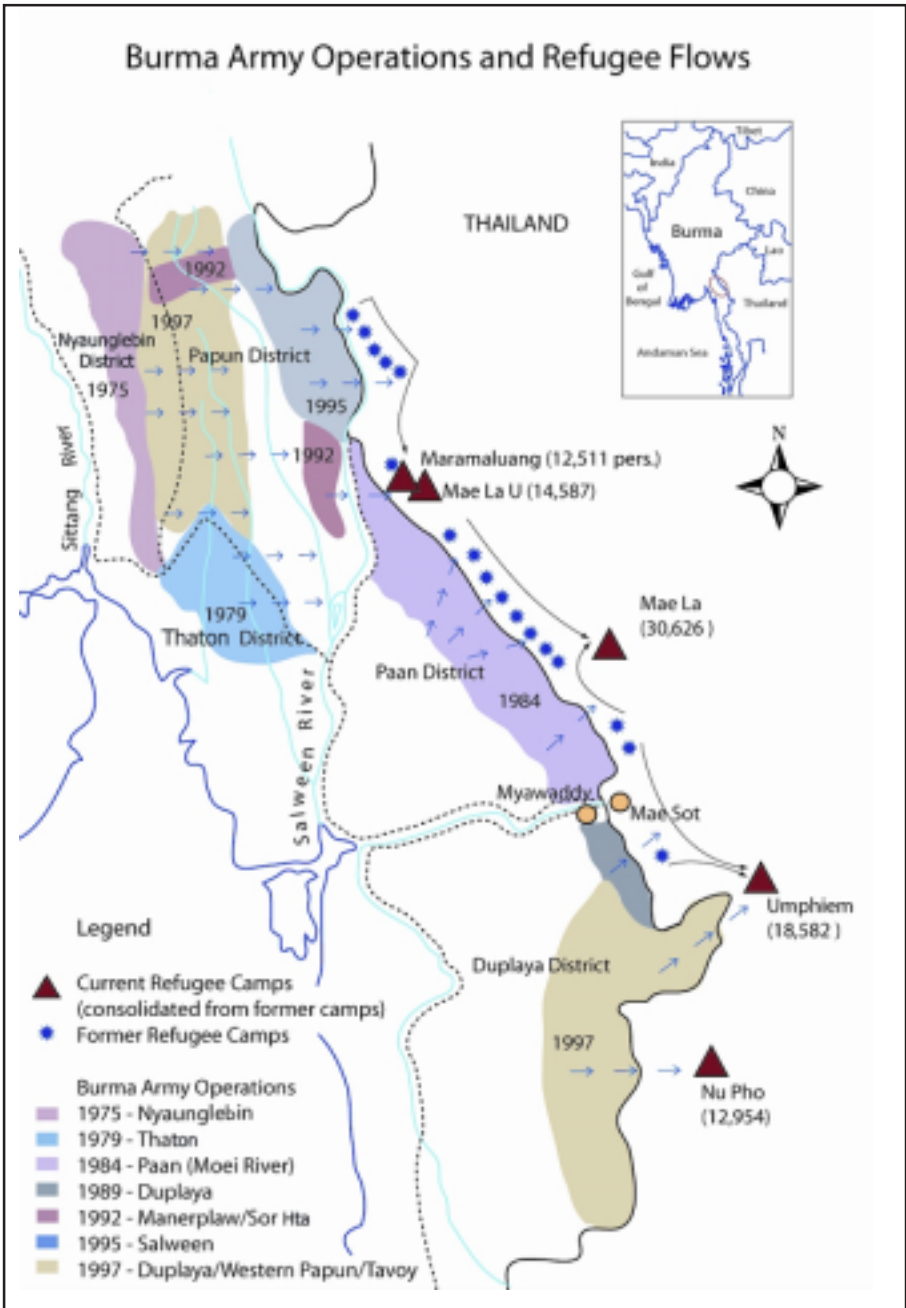
Major Burmese military offensives in the Papun area pre-1992

- 1955 The first Burmese troops arrived and set up their administration in Papun (where the General Headquarters of the KNU was located at that time.)
- 1963 Following the failure of talks between KNU and General Ne Win's Revolutionary Council, the Burmese regime began a military operation known as "*Operation Min Yan Aung*," in the northern part of the Papun hills. Burmese troops permanently set up bases in the area.
- 1975 Burmese troops implemented their "Four Cuts" policy (aimed at cutting off civilian support for insurgents, depriving them of food supplies, funding, intelligence and recruits) east of the Sittang River to bring down the KNU. They took control of the upper part of the Belin River at Mae Wai-Mae Thu, and set up more military garrisons in the area. These operations led to increased numbers of IDPs and the setting up of the first refugee village in Thailand (Pu Mya Loo, adjacent to the junction of the Moei and Salween rivers).
- 1983-91 The Burmese army carried out military operations in the Luthaw, Pawday and Htee Moo Khee area at the upper part of the Yunzalin River, which was captured by Burmese troops in its yearly dry-season operation between 1983–92.

PHOTO: KSNB(2000)



On the run: This boy and his family are fleeing the Burmese troops in December 2000, heading towards Thailand. They had no chance to celebrate the Karen New Year which fell on December 26 that year.



Map 8: Burma Army Operations and Refugee Flows

Burma Army tactics to seize control of Papun District and the Salween (1992-present)

From 1992 onwards the Burma Army began a step-by-step campaign to seize control of the entire Papun District including the Salween river bank.

Successive military offensives

Operation Dragon King 1991-92

From the end of 1991 to the end of 1992, Burmese military troops carried out an offensive to take control of the KNU headquarters of Manerplaw, which hosted most of the anti-Rangoon opposition alliances after the 1988 uprising. According to the KNU, (as quoted by Burma Issues, Operation Dragon King 1993) the regime spent millions of US dollars and mobilized 25,000 troops in the operation. The offensive caused the displacement of around 6,000 villagers living in the frontline areas in Papun District¹². Forced relocation was carried out in the eastern Papun area prior to the offensive by Burmese troops in 1991. A road for supplying military supplies during the operation was constructed between Papun and Kor Pu. Most of the villages in the areas did not go to the relocation sites and tried to survive as internally displaced people in the area.

Interestingly, even at that time Burmese military officers were making reference to the plans to dam the Salween.

“At that time (1992), the LIB 48 commander Kaing Aung summoned the villagers and said, ‘come and cooperate with us because we will build a dam at Kyaut Nyat [upper Salween Dam site]. We will give you free electricity.’” Interview with villager from Hsor Bwe Der Village, Butho Township September 2003

¹² KHRG, November 13, 1992, “*The Current Situation in MuTraw District*”

On April 28, 1992 the Burmese army overran “Sleeping Dog Hill,” the buffer outpost in Papun District protecting Manerplaw. This was followed by the fall of Sor Hta, a KNU post in the northern part of Papun District in September later that year. Burmese troops were then able to build a road leading to Sor Hta to transport their military supplies directly from the Sittang River to the Salween riverbank opposite Thailand. In October 1992, possibly in response to international criticism, the Burmese regime announced a unilateral cease-fire and called off the offensive against the KNU.

However, despite the suspension of its full-scale military offensive in the area between late 1992 and 1994, the Burmese army continued “low intensity” operations against the KNU in the Papun hills during the dry seasons.

The Fall of Manerplaw

In January 1995, the Burmese military launched another offensive that overran Manerplaw, with the help of mutinied KNLA combatants who had joined the Democratic Karen Buddhist Organisation/Army (DKBO/A) led by a Buddhist monk U Thuzana. During 1995, another new forced relocation was carried out by the DKBA. Some villagers in the lower part of Dwelo township and many villages in Butho township were relocated to the DKBA headquarters at Myaing Kyi Ngu (near Kamamaung) and fifteen thousand new refugees arrived in Thailand. The Thai-Burma border along the Salween River had come totally under the control of the Burmese troops.

1997: Failed ceasefire talks and intensified scorched earth tactics

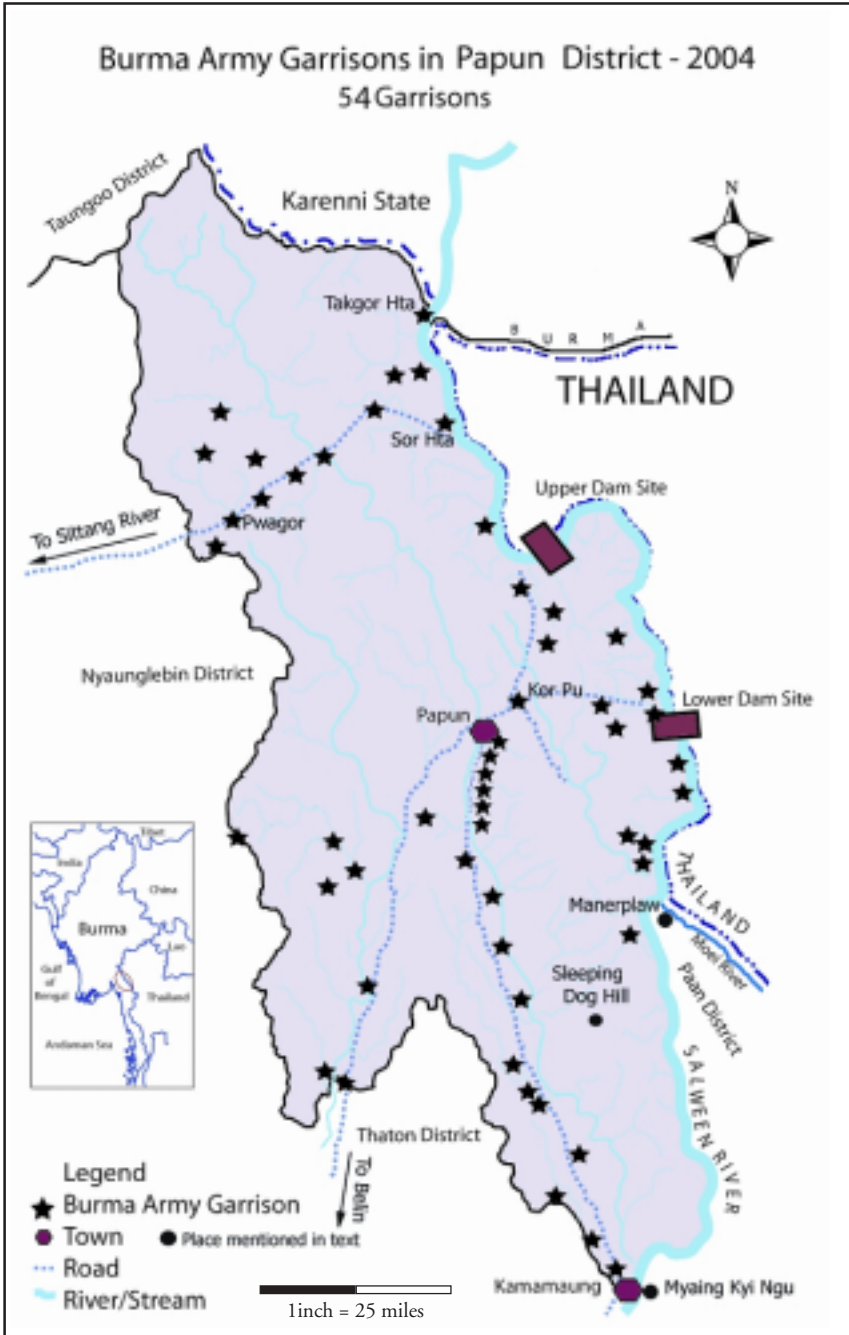
At the beginning of 1997, Burmese troops conducted a widespread operation against the KNU following the failure of talks between the regime and the KNU at the end of 1996. In the northern districts (Papun, Nyaunglebin, Taungoo and Thaton), SPDC waged an intensive campaign to consolidate control over the area. The campaign mainly targeted the civilian population rather than the armed resistance group, carrying out forced relocation, destruction of villages and torture and killing of those suspected of supporting the resistance. The Burmese military increased the number of its garrisons in the Papun District area, and this led to an increased flow of refugees into the northern Karen refugee camps in Thailand.



Some Karen villagers along the Salween River fleeing Burmese Army offensive in January 1995, which led to the fall of Manerplaw, receiving food assistance. These villagers later fled to Mae Khong Kha Refugee Camp.



Map 9: Burma Army Garrisons in Papun District - 1992



Map 10: Burma Army Garrisons in Papun District - 2004

Increased Burma Army presence

Before 1992, there were ten Burmese military garrisons in the whole of Papun District. Each year troops were sent into the area to conduct dry-season operations. The garrisons were stationed along the roads (Belin-Papun, and Kamamaung-Papun roads) accessing Papun Town and the surrounding area. In the northern part, the garrison was Pwagor, where its troops received supplies from Kyaut Kyi Town, in the Sittang valley.

After the Burmese troops captured Sor Hta in October 1992, it installed more garrisons along the route from Kyaut Kyi (via Pwagor) to the Salween bank (Sor Hta). The route was known as the “Sor Hta Road” which made it increasingly difficult for the KNU and villagers to travel from the southern part of Papun District to the northern part of Papun and Toungoo District. Patrols were carried out by the Burmese troops and landmines were laid along the sides of roads.

The Papun area falls under the Burma Army’s Southeastern Regional Command. After the military regime reached further ceasefire agreements with armed groups in other ethnic areas, troops from the other areas were sent into the area, including from the Sagaing Division ¹³.

Since 1992 until the present, the total number of garrisons and camps has now increased from ten to fifty-four in the whole of Papun District (See details in Appendix 2)

Anti-insurgency measures

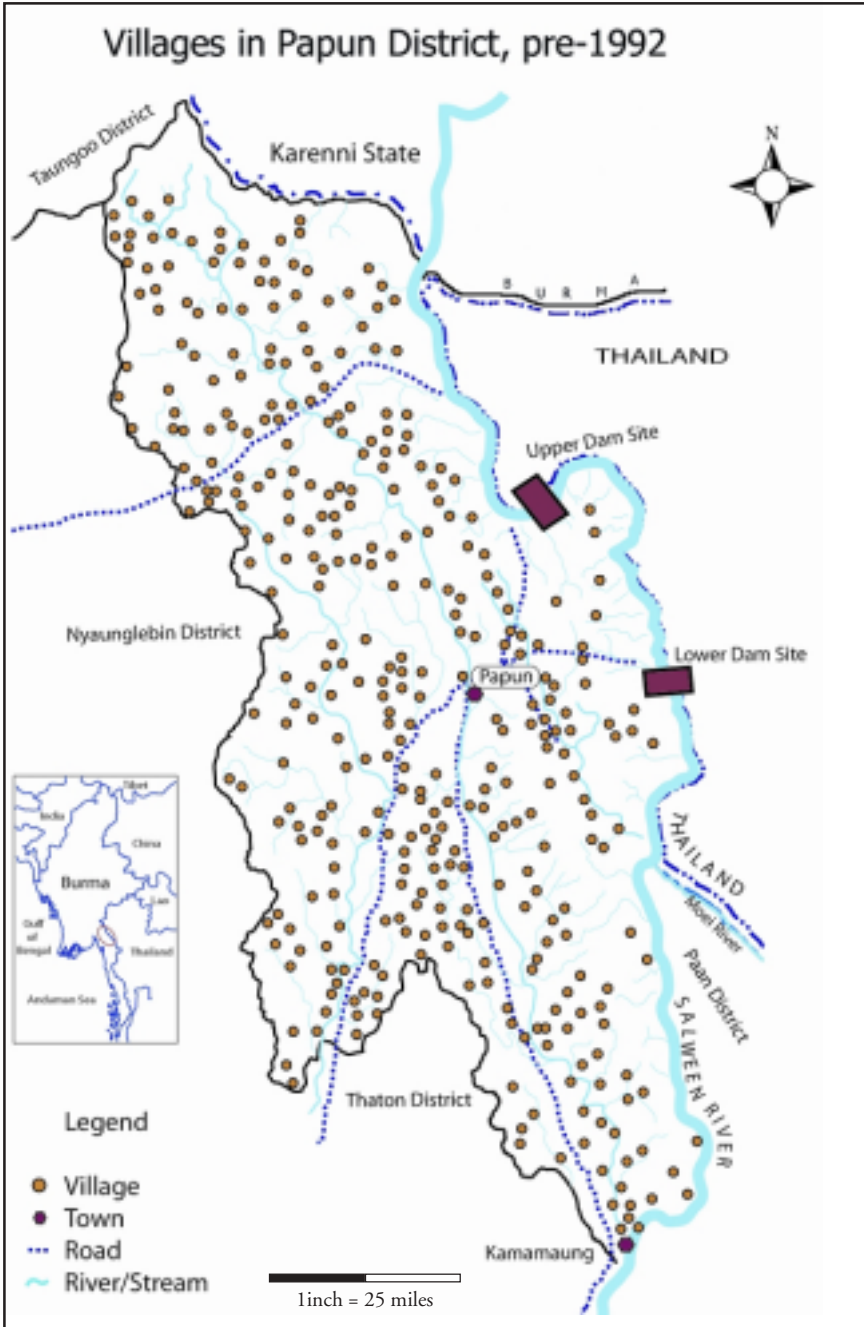
In 1997, the Burmese military set up more military camps, mainly in Dwelo Township, west of Papun, in the areas they had cleared by offensives. This area was of strategic importance because after 1995 it had been used as a headquarter area by the KNU’s 1st and 3rd Brigades. Therefore in early 1997, the regime launched a military operation called “Operation Water Wave.” The aim of the operation was firstly to clear the area and secondly to set up garrisons to protect the food supply routes and to bring the population under military control using scorched earth tactics.

¹³ Karen Human Right Group, May 2001, *SPDC & DKBA Orders to Villages: Set 2001-A* includes an order of SPDC troops operating in Papun District to a village using its formal seal with the address of their former garrison, Kalay Town of Sagaing Division.

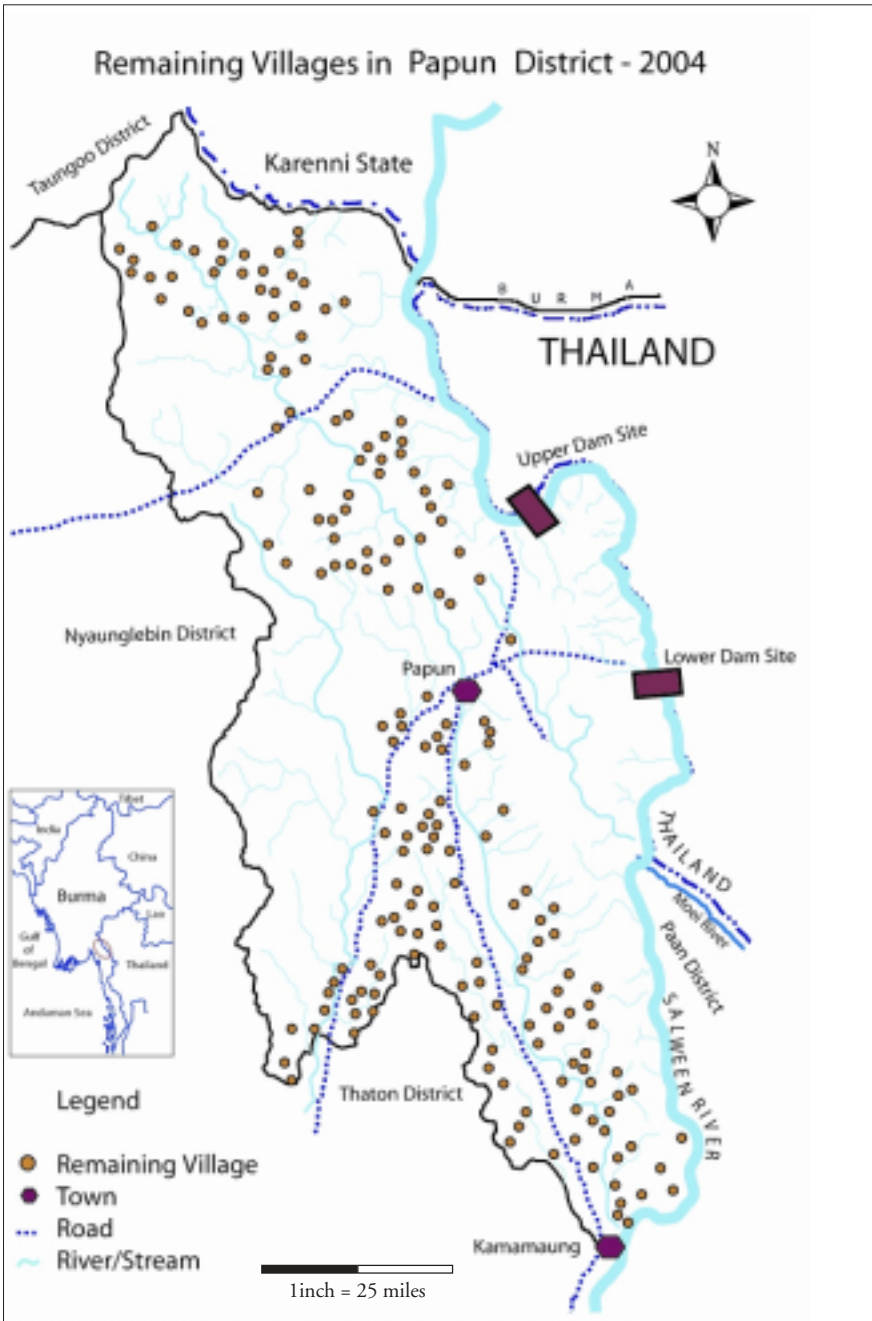


PHOTO: KORD (2004)

Deadly Road: *A group of Karen IDPs who have come and bought food on Thai-Burma border on the way back to their homes in Northern Papun Distict crossing the “Sor Hta Road”. KNLA patrols are providing security for them.*



Map 11: Villages in Papun District, pre-1992



Map 12: Remaining Villages in Papun District 2004

These anti-insurgency tactics have continued to be used by the regime's troops during subsequent years in the Karen area.

"The SPDC's present policy is to bring all rural villages under direct military control. This policy has meant establishing more Army camps throughout most of the Karen areas, and forcible relocation of villages too remote to be controlled by an Army camp to Army controlled villages. The soldiers then destroy the relocated villages."

KHRG, *Flight, Hunger and Survival*, October 2001

After villagers have been forcibly relocated, the Burmese military regularly patrol the areas around the former villages to flush out IDPs in hiding, often firing on sight at anyone found, and destroying any plantations.

In 1999, 8 new battalions were sent into areas in Papun, to destroy villages that were suspected of having connections with and supporting the KNU's Brigade 5. As reported by the Democratic Voice of Burma, on October 23, 1999: *"The objective of the operation, according to the Southeastern Division Command, is to destroy villages in Brigade 5 [KNLA military command in Papun District] and other nearby areas they claimed had connections with and supported KNU."*

Forced Relocation

At present, there are 31 relocation sites in Papun District, which have been designated by the Burmese military since 1991.¹⁴ The relocation sites are usually existing villages, where the original villagers have been forced to give up their land for housing and resettlement of the new arrivals. The Burmese Army does not provide the relocated villagers with any food or other assistance.

In the case of Dwelo Township of Papun District, in 1997, as part of an operation that took place simultaneously in the southern area of KNU (Brigades 4 and 6), the Burmese military forcibly relocated 24 villages into the existing villages of Mae Wai, Mae Nyu Ta, Wor Mu and Ku Thu Hta. Some villagers did not go to the relocation sites and chose to live as IDPs in the jungle; some came to refugee camps in Thailand.

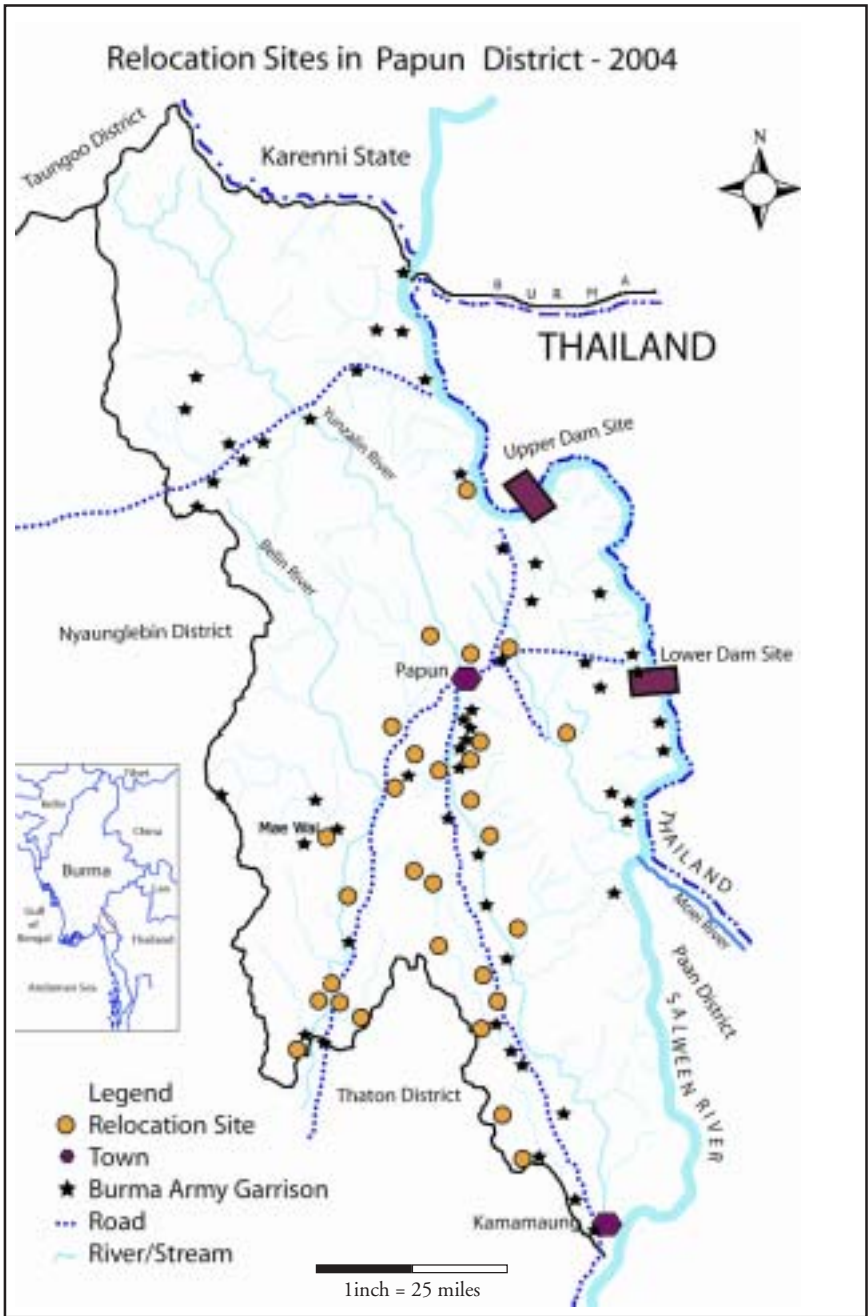
The increased concentration of SPDC troops in proximity to the sites has meant that human rights abuses have been rampant. The troops impose curfews and restrictions on movement. The villagers have to obtain a pass for traveling outside their village for work. Especially since 1998, when the SPDC introduced a new self-reliance strategy for its frontline army units, troops have been forced to grow their own food supplies. Due to this, villagers have been subjected to increased forced labour, land confiscation and extortion of money, food and materials.

Table 3: Current Relocation Sites in Papun District

No.	<i>Relocation Sites (Villages)</i>	<i>Village Tract</i>	<i>Township</i>
(a) Relocation Sites around Papun Town			
1	Ta Doe Hta	Baw Thay Hta	Luthaw
2	Klaw Hta	K'law Hta	Luthaw
3	Toe Thay Pu	K'law Hta	Luthaw
4	T'po Pu	Mae Klong	Butho
5	Wein Mon	Mae Klong	Butho
6	Wein San	Mae Klong	Butho

¹⁴KORD's Papun District representative information, 2004

No.	<i>Relocation Sites (Villages)</i>	<i>Village Tract</i>	<i>Township</i>
7	Htee Tha Blu Hta	Htee Thablu Hta	Dwelo
8	Baw Tho Hta	Htee Thablu Hta	Dwelo
9	Ma Htor	Ma Htor	Dwelo
10	Mae Nyu Hta	Mae Nyu	Butho
11	Mae Ku Hta	Mae Ku	Butho
(b) In Yunzalin River Basin (Along Kamamaung-Papun Road)			
12	Mae Moei Hta	Mae Moei	Butho
13	Pway Htor Roh	Ka Ter Ti	Dwelo
14	Baw Kyo Lae	Ka Ter Ti	Dwelo
15	Lay Po Hta	Lay Poe Tha	Dwelo
16	Pa Lone	Ka Ter Ti	Dwelo
17	Noe Paw Htee	Ka Ter Ti	Dwelo
18	Tha Gor Play	Lae Poe Hta	Dwelo
19	Waw Ta Moe	Lay Poe Hta	Dwelo
(c) On Belin River basin			
20	Lay Kor Hti	Lay Kor Hti	Dwelo
21	Pwa Wae Hta	Lay Kor Hti	Dwelo
22	Mae Wai	Mae Wai	Dwelo
23	Ku Thu Hta	Ku Thu Hta	Dwelo
24	Mae Cho	Mae Cho	Dwelo
25	Ma Lay Ler	Ma Lay Ler	Dwelo
26	Kwee Ta Ma	Mae Cho	Dwelo
27	Wor Mu	Wor Mu	Dewlo
(d) In Salween River Basin			
28	Takgor Hta	Kaw Lu Der	Luthaw
29	Thi Mu Hta	Pa Hai	Butho
30	Kor Pu	Kor Pu	Butho
31	Paw Hta	Kor Pu	Butho
	Total	31 sites	



Map 13: Relocation Sites in Papun District-2004

Forced Labour

The SPDC relies on forced labour as a means to maintain their troops and military infrastructure in general. In Papun District, villagers in the areas near roads have been forced to mend the roads. All of the roads in Papun District are dirt roads, and after every rainy season the SPDC mends the roads to transport supplies by ordering villagers in the area to carry out the work. Even though the SPDC officially announced that it had ended the use of forced labour in 2000, local troops have still continued to force villagers to work for them.

A defector from the SPDC army in 2001 quoted an SPDC operation commander in Karen State as saying “I will still use forced labour in my area.” (Tin Lwin, Lance Corporal, who deserted to KNU- KHRG, *Flight Hunger and Survival*, October 2001,)

The increased number of SPDC troops has inevitably meant increased use of villagers for forced labour, especially on construction and maintenance of military barracks, to the extent that villagers have had no time to work their own fields.

“There was no help. After they drove the people out, we had to build houses for the soldiers, we had to make fences for them, and we had to go for “loh ah pay” [general forced labour] and “set that” [messenger forced labour]. People couldn’t work their hill fields anymore. This year no one got any paddy.” “Saw Thi Oo” (M 60), village head from xxx village, Dweloh Township, KHRG *Flight, Hunger and Survival*, October 2001,.

The use of villagers for forced labour has continued into 2004, despite the ongoing ceasefire talks between the KNU and the SPDC. The KNU information department reported that on 15/1/04 the SPDC IB 36 Battalion Commander Zaw Zaw Naing forced villagers from several villages in Dwelo township to make bamboo spikes for them. They asked for 300 spikes from Htee Law Thi Hta village, 50 spikes from No Gaw village, 50 from Wa Tho Klah village and 50 from Baw Tho Hta village. (Bamboo spikes are used to fortify military camps.)

Sexual violence

In areas where the military troops have garrisons and conduct patrols, rape cases are often reported. The Karen Women's Organisation (KWO), in its recent report *Shattering Silences*,¹⁵ which documents 125 cases of sexual violence by the regime's troops against women in Karen State, exposed how women and girls in relocation sites are vulnerable to rape.

In the Papun area, two cases occurred in 1999 near the Mae Wai relocation site. On March 2, LIB 434 battalion commander Aung Win and his rank and file column commander Kyaw Khin raped a 16-year-old girl by the side of the road at Toe Mae Khe (15 minutes from Mae Wai relocation site). On April 4, the two officers raped another woman (aged 21) in the same location. It was reported that no action was taken against the rapists.

In 2002, a 50-year-old woman was raped by an SPDC officer in a village under SPDC control in the west of Papun District.

¹⁵ Karen Women's Organisation (KWO), April 2004 "*Shattering Silences*"

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Most villagers do not want to go to relocation sites and do not want to escape to Thailand to face an uncertain future as refugees. They live in IDP hide-outs, sometimes not very far from their villages so that they are able to sneak back to their villages if the security situation permits. These people are subsistence farmers who earn their livelihood by cultivating rice whenever it is safe for them. They must live in perpetual fear of violent death if the SPDC discovers them. They cannot stay in big groups due to lack of food supplies and also for security reasons.

“When we escaped, we killed all the cocks and dogs since we were afraid that they would make a noise.”

Interview with an IDP in Pa Hai Village Tract, September 2003

According to the figures of the local KNU District Administration, there are currently about 35,000¹⁶ IDPs in Papun District, out of the total estimated population of around 54,000, who live in 392 villages or settlements.¹⁷

Summary executions

When troops come across IDPs, they shoot at them on sight and destroy the villagers’ dwellings, property, and food supplies. As described by an IDP villager in Luthaw Township of Papun District said:

“One or two years ago the enemy¹⁸ (Burmese army) came into our village. While they were in our village, they ate our fowl, killed livestock and destroyed rice, and more than that, they injured two people (who they found there).”

Villager from Hee Poe Der Village, Luthaw Township, September 2003

In Luthaw Township of Papun District, where almost all of the villagers are in hiding from Burmese troops, many villagers have been killed and wounded by the SPDC troops. Between 1997 and 2003, local records show

¹⁶ Committee for Internally Displaced Karen People (CIDKP) figure presented at “Symposium on the Salween Dams” June 27, 2003.

¹⁷ Estimated figure for 2003 provided by KNU’s Papun District Administration.

¹⁸ In the northern KNU area, villagers refer to Burmese troops as their enemy and KNU authorities as their leaders; KNU soldiers are called “Karen soldiers”.

that 98 villagers (83 males and 15 females) were killed by SPDC troops and 37 (26 males and 11 females) were wounded by the SPDC troops¹⁹.

The villagers, who have spent their whole lives in their villages simply surviving on a daily basis, find it hard to understand why they are being targeted by the Burmese troops. An IDP woman, one of whose children was wounded by gunfire of Burmese troops in Luthaw Township complained:

“... We have no guns. We have nothing. We don't work against them. We just work in our hill fields. We don't understand the SPDC. We are just farming our hill fields and living among the hills. If we think about it, it is not fair that they come and shoot our babies.” A villager in Luthaw Township, KHRG, *Flight, Hunger and Survival*, October 2001

Destruction of Food

The Burmese troops have also sought to destroy the food supplies of the IDPs, in order to starve them out. The KHRG (2001) reported that the key element of the regime's troops' strategy since 1999 has been their efforts to deprive villagers of their food supplies. “This has been a much more effective tactic than the shooting or capturing of the villagers.” KHRG, October 2001 *Flight, Hunger and Survival*.

Most of the IDPs hide their supplies of food in hills where they think it will be safe from SPDC troops. Nevertheless, these supplies have been targeted by Burmese troops, during deliberate “hill searches,” which lead to severe food shortages in the whole area.

“The hill searching campaigns take place between November and May. For dry-rice farmers this is also the cultivating period. Harvesting takes place in November-December, and preparation for land clearing and planting for the next year's crop in February to May. If you can't grow this year's crop, there is nothing to eat for the next year.”

A relief coordinator of KORD, June 2004

Food shortages have been common occurrences in the Papun area since the olden days, usually caused by natural disasters such as plagues of crop-eating insects or wild animals destroying crops. In former times, when com-

¹⁹ Luthaw Township Record 2003, obtained in field research of KRW.

munities were stable and had freedom of movement, they would try to solve the problem by searching for other means of survival, such as earning wages as porters for traders, working in exchange for food, or harvesting and selling forest products. However, under the current circumstances when the villagers are constantly having to avoid SPDC troops, it is far more difficult to cope with food shortages.

“In old days, when food (rice) shortages occurred in the area, people tried to lessen the impact in various ways, such as helping each other. They would borrow and lend food, consume less rice by mixing cooked rice with other food. Affected families would find ways to earn other sources of income such as by selling forest products, etc. But as IDPs they have to be alert about their security and leaving the family to travel a day or so away is impossible. So it makes the situation [food scarcity] worsen and get out of control.”

A relief coordinator of KORD, June 2004

“With the regime now systematically wiping out the crops and food supplies of both the internally displaced and those still in their villages, the situation is becoming increasingly desperate. Destroying all access to food and medicines is fast becoming the junta’s most feared weapon.”

KHRG, *Flight, Hunger and Survival*, October 2001

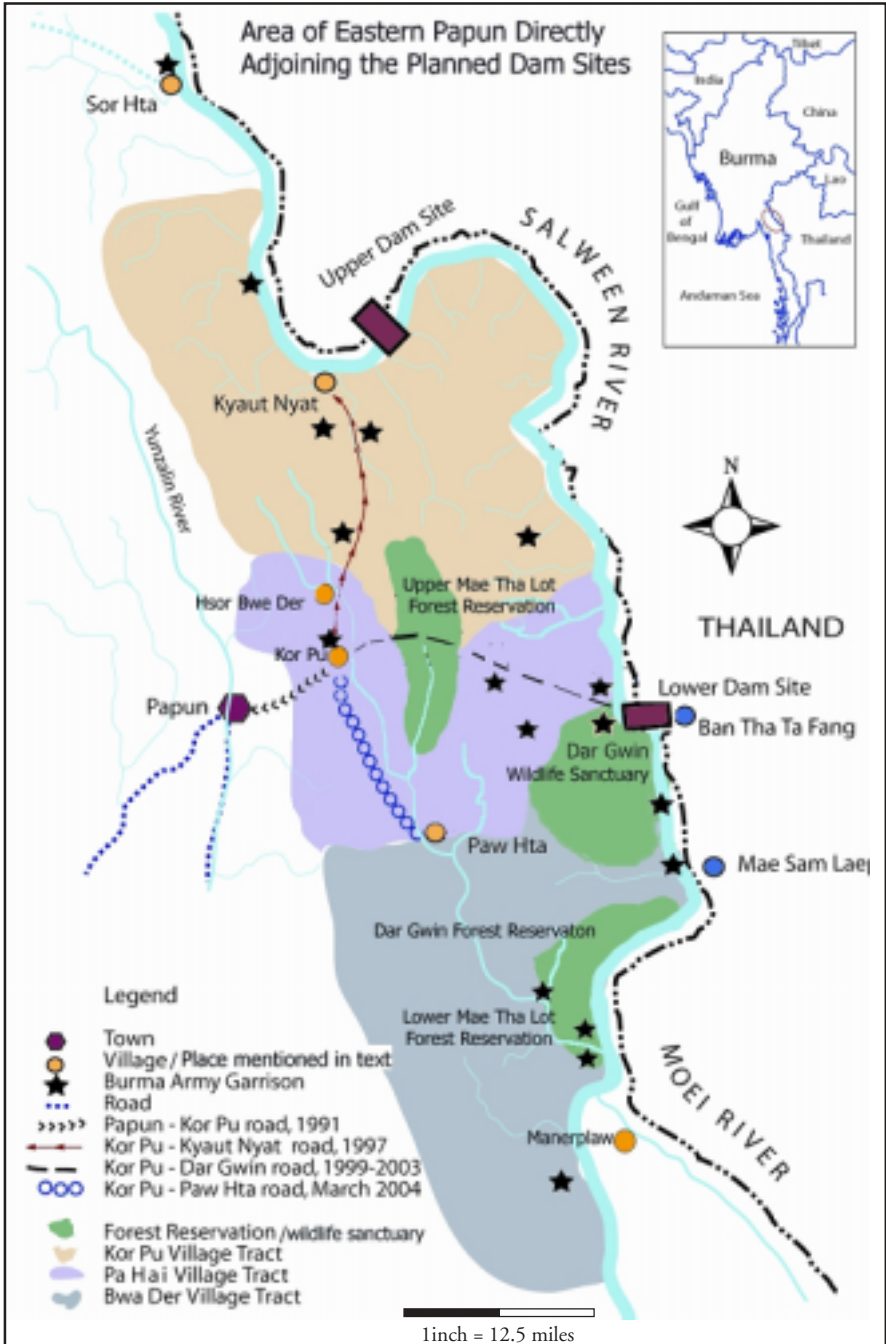
Going to Thailand and entering refugee camps is the villagers’ last choice.

“New refugees arriving in Thailand often tell of moving around and surviving like this for anything up to three years, before eventually giving up the struggle.”
Jack Dunford, Director of the Burmese Border Consortium (paper presented at Regional conference of IDPs, 2000)

PHOTO: KRW (2004)



Villager in Kawlu Der Village Tract, Luthaw Township near the Karenni State border, ploughing his farm. He fears that his land will be under water if the dam is built.



Map 14: Area of Eastern Papun Directly Adjoining the Planned Dam Sites

Conditions around the planned dam sites

Terrain and traditional livelihoods

The land between the Yunzalin River, which flows through the middle of Papun District, and the Salween River bordering Thailand is mountainous. Butho Mountain Range (at an elevation of 2,000-3,000 ft above sea level) is the major mountain terrain in the area. There are only a few stream valleys which form flat land that can be used for wet rice farming. The hillsides were thickly forested, with a type of forest called “*kaw bway*” or “monsoon deciduous forest” by the Karen inhabitants. Teak and other hardwoods are found in the area, and the Dar Gwin Forest Reservation, the Dar Gwin Wildlife Sanctuary, and Upper and Lower Mae Tha Lot Forest Reservations are located here. Valleys of creeks and streams that are tributaries of the Salween River are inhabited by the local population, even though the waterways are not navigable. When the KNU sold logging concessions to Thailand from 1983 onwards, the logging companies cut down about 90% of the teak and ironwood trees in the forest along the Salween bank (comprising about 70% of the total forest cover) bordering Thailand. Some endangered wildlife species, such as tigers, are still found there.

A numbers of waterfalls, both big and small, such as the Lay Doh Waterfall and Maw Law Kwee Waterfall are found in the area. Oral histories related by the villagers in the area and the existence of spirit caves (such as the Pa Por Lay spirit cave) indicate that habitation of the area dates back far into the past. Villagers in the area used to conduct “hill veneration” ceremonies annually.

A road from Papun to the Salween River bank was built during British colonial times. Later, when logging took place during the 1980s and the 1990s, Thai companies dug some roads for transport of logs. Apart from this, the Salween River has served as the main route for transportation and travel.

The population in the area are Karen, settling in villages averaging 10–50 houses (numbering about 50–300 people) per village. The population are mainly Buddhist-animists²⁰ and Christians. The population living right on the Salween River bank increased during the 1970s as civilians fled from the “four cuts” campaigns of the Burmese troops in Nyaunglebin District, Taungoo District, Thaton District and the Southern Part of Papun District.

Economically, most of the local population are subsistence farmers. They practice “slash and burn farming,” permanent farming (wet-rice farming), and some cash-crop gardening such as betel nuts, mangos, coconuts and cardamoms. Some also do other work such as trading, or fishing and gathering forest products and selling them to markets in Burma as well as Thailand. Prior to 1995, people living along the Salween bank between Sor Hta in the north and the Moei River junction in the south earned their living by fishing, logging, trading and farming.²¹

Politically, before 1995, the entire eastern Papun area formed one of the liberated zones of the Karen resistance, under the administration of Butho Township of Papun District. The area was divided into three village tracts: Bwa Der, Pa Hai and Kor Pu village tracts. The KNU was responsible for the administration of justice, education, welfare and health, taxation, agriculture and forestry. Local administration structures existed from the village level up to the district level.

The Burmese army carried out its first forced relocation in the area in 1991 under its *Operation Dragon King* against the KNU’s headquarters, which took place in 1992. The relocation site was Hsor Bwe Der Village. Very few villagers went to the relocation site. Most chose to live as IDPs in the area while the operation was being carried out. At the same time, Burmese troops started to rebuild the road from Papun to Kor Pu (see map on page 23) for the operation. After the end of the operation, from 1992-1994, the situation became less tense. However, after the fall of KNU headquarters at Manerplaw in 1995, as the Burmese army consolidated control over the district of Papun, villagers in the area were forced into the relocation sites of Kor Pu, Paw Hta and Thee Mu Hta. Again, many villagers chose to hide in the jungles instead of going to the relocation sites.

²⁰ The Karen animists that convert to Buddhism and retain major practices of animism.

²¹ Saw Baw Na Lay, 2000: *Thaw –thee-bwor-gor Ya Say Baw* p. 5

The military operations of the Burmese military regime have made it difficult for the KNU to enforce their laws to regulate the environment. However, in 2002, some local communities in eastern Papun wishing to control their lands revived the traditional system of land demarcation, and a system of “community forest” has been assigned in some areas. For example, in Maw Lay Kho and La Bor villages of Luthaw Township, lower Papun District, villagers have developed their own by-laws to protect their land and manage their forests. Under these by-laws, developed by a process of village meetings, villagers are forbidden from cutting down and exporting cane for trading purposes, which had been happening on a wide scale in the area.

Current population and living conditions

The total area has been drastically depopulated by Burmese military offensives since 1995. Most of the population who had formerly lived on the bank of the Salween River are now living in two refugee camps in Thailand: Mae Rama Luang and Mae La U (formerly sited at Mae Kong Kha). Some chose to hide in the deep forest in hilly areas, joining other communities in hiding, to avoid Burmese troops and strive to survive as IDPs. Some villagers, mostly living close to the town of Papun and close to roads, who were not able to avoid the Burmese troops, have had to remain in their existing locations under close guard by SPDC troops.

Out of an original total of 85 villages in the eastern Papun area before 1995, there now remain only 60 communities, of which 40 communities, comprising 973 households, or 5,574 people, are living as IDPs. The remaining 20 communities are villages under the control of Burmese troops, including 3 relocation sites: Kor Pu (close to Papun town), Thee Mu Hta (on the Salween riverbank) and Paw Hta (southeast of Papun town). The population of these 20 villages is 523 households or 2,822 people. Thus, about two thirds of the population of eastern Papun are living as IDPs.

Even though there has only been limited KNU troop movement in the area since 1995, Burmese troops regularly conduct patrols to sweep out IDPs.

Table 4: Village and Population in the Pa Hai, Bwa Der and Kor Pu village tracts²²

No.	Village (community)	No. Household	Population	Status
<i>(a) Pa Hai Village Tract</i>				
1	Pa Hai	NA	NA	IDP
2	Hter Nya Der	77	506	IDP
3	Htoe Wi Der	75	506	Some/face Burmese troops
4	To Thay Der	65	415	IDP
5	Klaw Khee Der	35	189	Face Burmese troops
6	Way Nor Der	54	363	IDP
7	Hper Ler Der	19	113	IDP
8	Yu Wah Der	19	95	IDP
9	Lay Ther Kho	43	309	IDP
10	Tha Thwee Der	48	276	IDP
11	Ka Na Der	9	42	IDP
12	Baw Khaw Der	42	206	IDP
13	Htee Hkler Hta	8	45	IDP
14	E' Tu Khee	17	79	IDP
15	Hko Kay	26	146	IDP
16	Paw Ka Der	8	NA	IDP
17	Mae Nu Hta	26	NA	IDP*
18	Thi Mu Hta	7	NA	(R)
<i>(b) Bwa Der Village Tracts</i>				
19	Kyi Thoo Pu	25	141	IDP
20	Bwa Der	28	156	IDP
21	To Nyo	33	163	Face Burmese troops
22	Hpaw Di Der	37	201	IDP
23	Bla Lay Hkor	16	74	Face Burmese troops
24	Lay Khor Htit	18	99	Face Burmese troops
25	Kaw Kho	14	101	IDP
26	Thay Gay Mu Der	20	119	IDP
27	Law Plat Thay	18	101	IDP
28	Hpa That Day	10	62	IDP
29	Htwee Mi Kwee	10	59	IDP

²² 2003 figure of KNU's Butho Township Administration of Papun District

No.	Village (community)	No. Household	Population	Status
30	Htee Bot Khee	17	89	IDP
31	Hsor Lae Der	31	195	IDP
32	Mae Laet Khee	19	109	IDP
33	K'ner Kho	22	102	IDP
34	Hi Hpo Tha Khee	14	70	IDP
35	Bae Bo (pi Wah)	17	79	IDP
36	Ma Mu Der	17	104	IDP
37	HPa Tha	10	56	IDP
<i>(c) Kor Pu Village Tract</i>				
38	Kor Pu	NA	NA	(R)
39	Per Hta	36	246	IDP
40	Paw Hta	25	125	(R)
41	Pray Day	15	72	Face Burmese troops
42	Maw Tha	16	95	IDP*
43	Kyaw Kya Khee	15	95	IDP*
44	Haw Lat Khee	21	143	IDP*
45	Hpaw Khee	29	166	IDP*
46	Kaw Mae Law Khee	30	172	IDP
47	Kae Ka Khee	18	98	IDP*
48	Ko Law Khee	25	147	IDP
49	O Kaw	17	86	Face Burmese troops*
50	Du K'mae Khee	14	73	IDP*
51	Hsor Bwe Der	35	186	Face Burmese troops
52	Hi Poe Der	23	140	Face Burmese troops
53	Kyo Kho Der	20	131	Face Burmese troops
54	Mae Thot Khee	18	83	Face Burmese troops
55	Ta Khu Der	44	244	Face Burmese troops
56	Lay Kweh Loh	27	158	Face Burmese troops
57	Thet Poe Khee	22	129	Face Burmese troops
58	K'but Per Kho	14	96	Face Burmese troops
59	Htoe Poe Pa Der	59	341	Face Burmese troops
60	Hpaw Muh Der	22	NA	Face Burmese troops
	Total	1,496	8,396	

Note:

*IDP communities formed after the 1995 offensive

(R) current assigned relocation sites

Generally, the living situations of the villagers in the area can be divided into two categories: there are villages near SPDC garrisons, and then all the rest of the area, comprising a free-fire zone, where villagers hide out from the Burmese army.

Villages under the control of the Burmese Army (“Peace” Villages²³)

These villages are those situated near garrisons of SPDC troops, usually situated along roads. Even though villagers in these sites are technically “under the protection” of the SPDC troops, the men in the sites are constantly in fear that they will be accused of links with the resistance, and of being forced to serve as porters, or even human mine-sweepers. Therefore, men try not to be present when Burmese troops enter the village, which leaves women and children vulnerable to conscription for forced labour of all kinds, rape and other abuses.

In addition, whenever the Burmese troops arrive in the villages, they loot villagers’ foods supplies. This includes basic food such as rice and poultry, and other miscellaneous food items.

“From 10/1/04 to 17/1/04 the SPDC troop LIB 1 of LID 66 who entered and conducted operations in the area of Tae Tor Khee and Hsor Bwe Der villages (along the Papun-Kyaut Nyat road) looted the villager’s rice – 1 tin [16 litres] per household, 6 chickens, 1 cat, 4 viss of slab-sugar, 4 tins of sticky rice, 3 basket of paddy, 2 viss of fish paste, 2 bamboo trays and 2 bamboo baskets.”

KNU Information Department, January 2004

“When they were going to come up [with a supply convoy], they demanded that we go to sweep and guard the road. Both men and women had to go for that. ... We have to go and sleep there for 3 days, and after that other people replaced us. They ordered us to sweep the road before the trucks came.”

A refugee from Kor Pu Village,

KHRG, *Flight, Hunger and Survival*, October 2001

The villagers in these sites also cannot practice farming or other forms of

²³ According to the local villagers, these term of “peace villages” mean “cease-fire villages” or “surrendered villages”. Villagers consider that such villages deserted the struggle and comply to Burmese army.

livelihood freely, due to the designation of most of the surrounding areas as “free-fire” zones. Thus, like IDPs, they seek to avoid Burmese troops when leaving their villages and working in their fields, in case they are shot on sight.

IDP Communities

These groups of villagers are those who have abandoned their original settlements and are living in hiding. Their fields and settlements are therefore “illegal,” and subject to destruction if found by Burmese troops. The villagers will use their original village names for their new settlements, even though they have moved to a new location

As mentioned earlier, the SPDC regularly conduct patrols to search for IDP hideouts and destroy their food to make it more difficult for the IDPs to survive. For example, in April 2003, SPDC troops entered an IDP hideout in the Wei Gyi area (near the Upper Dam site) and burned down the shelters, food supplies, and destroyed the plantations of the IDPs.

Extrajudicial killing of IDPs is also common. In May 2003, Burmese troops entered an IDP hideout in Mae Nu Hta right on the bank of the Salween, and shot and killed a 16-year-old girl and a 33-year-old man.²⁴

Security - Roads and Landmines

There are some roads that were constructed by the British during the colonial period, such as the Papun–Dar Gwin and Papun–Kyaut Nyat roads. Since 1995, the Burmese troops have been reutilising these roads to transport military supplies, and landmines have been extensively laid to protect the roads. The Papun–Kor Pu–Kyaut Nyat road was used by the regime’s troops in 1995 to transport supplies while they were taking control of the whole Salween bank. This road is just above the planned site of the Upper Salween Dam. The Papun–Kor Pu–Dar Gwin road which leads to the Lower Salween Dam site, was rebuilt in 1999 by the SPDC using forced labour. This enabled SPDC troops to transport their supplies to their Dar Gwin

²⁴ Backpack Health Worker Team - Karen 2003 report

garrison. Between March and April 2004, SPDC troops constructed a new road from Kor Pu to Paw Hta.

The landmines which have been laid beside the roads have frequently proven deadly for villagers in the area. Villagers have often been injured by landmines while serving as porters or clearing the roads as human mine sweepers for the SPDC troops.

According to information provided by local KNU sources:

“On 17/3/03 the SPDC battalion active in the Butho Township area ordered Htee Baw Khee villagers to send military food rations up to Pa Hai. On the way back at Kor Pu, one of the women porters, Naw Kweh Htoo was injured by a land mine laid by the Burmese troops and she lost her leg.”²⁵

Landmines are also laid by SPDC troops around villages:

“We are afraid to work or cultivate our farms far from our village. But close to our village we can’t farm either since there are landmines.” Interview with Pae Dae Der villager, Luthaw Township, Papun District.

Unfortunately, lessening of hostilities does not necessarily mean a decrease in the number of land-mine injuries. When the Burmese military are not conducting operations in an area, villagers start to move about more widely in an attempt to earn a living, and then are more vulnerable to stepping on mines. The records of the Karen Backpack Health Worker Team in Papun District show a caseload of 12 landmine injuries in 2003, compared to 3 in 2002, despite the fact that there was more military activity in the area in 2002.

Food Security

Food production used to be sufficient for the three village tracts in the Eastern Papun area, before the presence of Burmese troops in the area. When food shortages occurred in the area, villagers managed to overcome this as they were free to move around to barter or sell other economic produce at market places within nearby communities (including some in Thailand). This included forest products (fruits, honey etc) and home livestock (pigs and chickens). Some villagers also travelled outside their villages to work for

²⁵ According to a relative, the SPDC troops sent the woman to Papun Hospital, but the family had to pay for the cost of treatment.



Map 15: Wet-Rice Farms in Eastern Papun District

wages elsewhere.

Today, however, increased militarization, forced displacement, road building, restriction on movement and other abuses by the Burmese Army are threatening food security for local populations.

Since the Burmese Army offensive in 1995, a total of 50 plots of paddy fields (487 acres in total = 0.76 sq.miles) in Pa Hai Village Tract have been abandoned until today. This has meant that rice production in the village tract has been effectively reduced by 19,400 baskets (a value of about 2.3 million bath annually, at a rate of 120 baht per basket). This does not include the decrease in dry hill rice production, which the local population largely depended on, owing to the fact that the hill areas have become “free-fire” zones.

In Kor Pu Village Tract, between March and April 2004, during construction of a new road from Kor Pu to Paw Hta led by SPDC troops (LIB 379), 25 plots of land (51 acres) along Thee Ro stream and Mae Ye stream valleys were permanently destroyed by the road project.

It is now extremely difficult for food supplies from Thailand to be transported into the area, since SPDC established a permanent presence there. Other income for cash is very limited due to the fact all villagers have to live as IDPs. Some villagers risk their lives by buying supplies such as medicines and other basic goods (mostly from Thailand) and peddling them among the IDP communities.

Lack of food is one of the decisive factors in influencing IDPs to become refugees in Thailand. IDPs prefer to face extreme difficulties and dangers in order to stay near their home area, rather than in villages under the control of SPDC troops or in refugee camps in Thailand. Even when fleeing to avoid SPDC troops, they tend simply to move around their home area. Moving to another place such as a refugee camp in Thailand is only their very last resort, when they have no choice, usually meaning they have no food.

An IDP woman in Bwa Der Village of Bwa Der Village Tract described life in former, more peaceful times:

“Nowadays, earning a living is not as enjoyable as in previous times. We are always worrying when we plant our crops. Before [before Burmese troop operations in the area], ah, what a wonderful time it was! We helped each other plant-

ing rice and enjoyed working. Now, we cannot clear large areas of land as we are so afraid.”

KRW Interview, September 2003

In the rainy season this year, villages in the area had faced a plague of rats²⁶, which had eaten up their paddy plantations. This means there will definitely be food scarcity this year. The villagers know well that the effects of the current food scarcity will also stretch on into future years. There is a saying passed on from our Karen ancestors: *“Famine take place in one year, but the consequences will drag on for three years.”* Since the local population are already facing severe problems of food security because of the Burmese military situation, it is certain that the occurrence of the rat plague will bring dire consequences.

Health

The mountain terrain in the area is harsh, and the rainy season there is long. Due to these conditions, malaria is endemic. The IDPs in the area also have to face other diseases such as diarrhea and acute respiratory infections.

According to a survey conducted by the Karen Backpack Health Worker Team (BPHWT-Karen) in the period of 2000–2003 in the Papun area, the malnutrition rate among children under age 5 was 12 percent²⁷. The death rate of children under age 5 was 250 per 1,000 children.

A health worker in the area explained:

“The death of new born babies is due to the fact that pregnant mothers do not get sufficient health care. Moreover, the pregnant mothers have to carry heavy loads, walk along difficult paths, have insufficient rest, and lack nutritious food while they are avoiding and running from the SPDC.”

KRW interview, September 2003

²⁶ According to information given by local villagers, a rat plague occurred this year due to the periodic flowering of bamboo in the area (between January-March), which attracted rats, who like to eat the bamboo fruit. After the rainy season started, there was no more fruit available. The rats then spread out and began eating all the surrounding plants, including paddy fields.

²⁷ Relief organisations generally agree that a nutritional emergency exists if more than 8% of the children are found to be malnourished.

One of the main factors causing the critical health problems in the area is the lack of availability of medicine due to the restriction on travel and transport by SPDC troops in the area. Villagers found with modern medicines have been accused of supporting resistance groups and punished. As explained by KHRG:

“The transportation of medicine is forbidden, and villagers caught carrying it for whatever reason are arrested and can be executed- even if the amount being carried is so little that it is clearly for personal use.”

KHRG, *Flight, Hunger and Survival*, October 2001

A Karen mobile IDP clinic operating in eastern Papun has reported a high incidence of malaria and acute respiratory infections (ARI) in the area. The villagers in the area know that the severe health problems they are suffering are a direct result of the fact they have been forced to live in the jungles, with little access to health care.

“We had to face several diseases and death when we fled. We did not have any medicine, and we did not dare to go anywhere to get such medicine.”

A villager in Klaw Khee Der, KRW interview September 2003

Most villagers usually resort to traditional herbal medicine to try and cure their ailments.

“In our village, we face too much illness. Most of the children suffer from fevers, headaches and malaria. But all we can treat them with is herbal medicine.” KRW interview with Way Nor Der villager, Butho Township, Papun District.

The health crisis in this small area is only the tip of the iceberg of the country's overall health problems, that have been worsened by the ineffective management of the military regime. Not surprisingly, the regime will not allow any health service to serve the communities it is trying to destroy.

Education

Villagers in the area value education, and those living as IDPs try to organise schools for their children despite all the obstacles. These schools are constantly being relocated and classes suspended when the SPDC conduct operations

in the area. Maintaining full-time teachers is another challenge for the villagers. Teachers therefore have to earn their living like the rest of the villagers, farming their own land.

According to a local community development worker, most of the communities in the area have set up village projects to support education programs, for example, setting up revolving funds (such as to run a small retail shop) to provide a salary for teachers.

The highest class of schools in the area is fourth standard (primary) where children will read and write Karen and study basic arithmetic. It is hard for school children to continue their studies after finishing the highest classes in their villages since they have to go outside their villages if they do so. According to a field report of KRW, only 40 percent of the children who finish schools locally will travel to other places for higher classes.

A child among IDPs hiding around the planned dam sites.



PHOTO: KRW(2003)

PHOTO: KRW (2004)



Villagers around the Wei Gyi area conducting an animist ceremony calling on the local spirit to protect their lands and water. The ceremony was held opposite the EGAT feasibility study site.

Recent developments along the Salween

“Joint development will make border areas more open and help eliminate bad people, minority people and bad things hidden along the border and ensure greater security.”

Thai Deputy Prime Minister General Chavalit Yongchaiyud (Bangkok Post, 27 November 2002)

Until the beginning of 2002, Thai and Burmese troops stationed along the Salween did not have close relations. Thai boats traveling along the Salween River were often shot at by Burmese troops. However, since 2003, the Thai and Burmese army units stationed along the border seem to be enjoying a closer relationship. This may be linked to the plans to build the dam. In particular, the Burmese Army's Southeastern Regional Command (in control of Papun) has developed closer relations with Thai Army Task Force 36 based along the Salween River.

Local sources say that in mid-2003 (prior to the ceasefire talks between KNU and the regime that began later that year) KNU leaders were told by Thai authorities not to launch any military attacks against the Burmese troops along the Salween border. On the Burma side, since 2002, many SPDC garrisons along the Salween river bank, usually on strategic mountain peaks, have been fortified and fenced with barbed wire, and surrounded by landmines. Heavy artillery has also been installed there. According to KNU military sources, there are 120 mm mortars at the bases at the bases at Maw Rit Kyo (close to Wei Gyi), Ler Toe (close to Dar Gwin) and Maw Mo Kyo (close to the Salween-Moei river junction) Roads have also been improved for transportation of troops' supplies.

In March 9, 2004, the Thai Army facilitated a trip for their Burmese army counterparts to the Thai town of Maesariang, in southern Mae Hong Son province. In this border area, hitherto there had been no formal border committee between the two countries, as at other border trade points.

The last feasibility study of the sites was conducted in November 2003 by EGAT. Local KNU authorities tried to prevent the team from conducting the survey. A local woman activist described their efforts to stop the survey:

“We put up a signboard “No Dam” as a protest on our raft hut. One Thai commander came and asked us to take it down. He said, ‘This is not good. If the Burmese come, I will not allow you people to escape to the Thai side’”.

Interview with a member of Salween Eyes, March 2004

Such threats place the local KNU administration in a difficult position in relation to the dam issue.

“It [the dam] is really a headache. In previous years, the IDPs in our areas used to cross the border [into Thailand] when the enemies came. Now, if we do not cooperate with them [Thai soldiers], maybe the consequences will be like what they (the Thai soldiers) said.”

Interview KNDO commander in the area, March 2004

The latest KNU-SPDC ceasefire talks started in November 2003. The KNU proposed the withdrawal of Burmese troops and garrisons in the Papun District area to allow the resettlement of IDPs to their home village sites, but the Burmese army has not accepted the proposal, and justified their presence in terms of ‘national security.’ In fact, their motive in controlling the area is clearly to facilitate and profit from border trade and the building of the Salween dam.

A villager staying in a village on the Salween River informed the KRW:

“A Burmese commander came a few months ago and the commander asked us to pray for the construction of the dam to be materialised as soon as possible.”

Interview with Klaw Hta Villager, September 2003

However, far from heeding this advice, on March 16, 2004, over 100 Karen villagers from nearby communities travelled to the Wei Gyi dam site and conducted an animist ceremony to call on the local spirits to protect the river.

On September 16, 2003, an SPDC strategic commander visited Dar Gwin and observed the situation in the area. According to a local source, the Burmese army is planning to set up another official border trade point on the Salween River at Dar Gwin (opposite Ban Tha Ta Fang) to facilitate trade of goods from Mae Sariang to the Papun District area. This will enable troops under the SPDC's Southeastern Command Division to control and profit directly from border trade in the area.

Currently, there are two official border trade points in this area: Ta Kaw Hta (at the junction between Karen State, Karenni State and Thailand) and Mae Set (on the border between Southern Karenni State and Thailand). Trade passes between Mae Sariang District of Thailand to the Sittang valley (Taungoo town) and Loi Kaw, Karenni State, in Burma. Mae Set, which is on the border of Karenni State, is under the Karenni National People's Liberation Front (a ceasefire group in Karenni State) and the Burmese Army's Eastern Command Division. Goods are transported via Mae Sam Laep on the Thai side using the Salween River as the transportation route up to Takgror Hta and Mae Set.

This year, there have been indications that Burmese troops in Papun District are beginning efforts to gain support of villagers by means of "development" projects. For example, when building the road from Kor Pu to Paw Hta Village in March 2004 (see map on page 23), between late March and early April 2004, the SPDC troops did not use forced labour but used a bulldozer instead. Villagers in hiding were also invited via local headmen to come out and see the road building. The SPDC troops took video recordings and also photos of the road building and of the villagers "welcoming" the road building. However, during the road building, 25 plots of paddy fields (51 acres) were bulldozed and destroyed. The villagers noticed that the troops did not video the bulldozing of the farmlands.

"They used a bulldozer in road building. They recorded video and photos. When they crossed the farms [formerly used for growing paddy by villagers], they stopped shooting cameras. When they reached villages, they invited villagers to form groups and take photos."

Interview with villager in Paw Hta Village, April 2004

Impacts of the dam

It is certain that construction of the dams will affect the ecosystem of the Salween watershed, one of the most fertile and ecologically unique areas of the world. This area is regarded as an ecological transition zone between the Indo-Chinese Sub-region and the Sino-Himalayan or Indian Sub-region. According to the Foundation for Ecological Recovery, the flooding will threaten the habitats of at least 235 wild animal species. This will include highly endangered species such as tigers, leopards, Asian Golden Cats, bulls and White-eyebrow gibbon that are found only in Burma²⁸. Construction of the dam will also affect the numerous fish species found in the Salween River; and among these at least 35 species are of economic importance.

Effects on livelihoods

The project will affect the livelihoods of communities along the banks of the river and in the watershed area on both sides of the border.

None of the Karen villagers living along the Burma side of the Salween have been officially informed or consulted about the construction of the dams. When Karen Rivers Watch interviewed them about the proposed dams, they all expressed concerns and fears about the potential impacts.

Villagers are aware that the building of the dams will cause land along the river and its tributaries to be flooded, and that their farmland and natural resources will be submerged.

“If the dam is constructed the villagers will face huge problems. The reason is that our land, farms, gardens, trees and bamboo will all be flooded. We the mountain people clear the forest and plant rice for our lives, so this dam will bring huge problems to us.”

Interview with Ta Oo Der villager, Tay Mu Der Tract, Luthaw Township, September 2003

²⁸ FER, June 2003, see above

There is little flat land for farming in Eastern Papun (see map of wet-rice farms on page 55), and the areas along the Salween tributaries in the north-east of the district, which were traditionally cultivated by local villagers, will all be submerged (see map of projected flood area on page 64). This will mean that about half of the available flat agricultural land in the district will be lost.

Villagers living along the Salween also plant various cash crops on the banks during the dry season, when the water level falls. The dam will deprive villagers of this vital source of income.

“Those who live on the banks of this river earn their living by selling and buying vegetables. When the river goes down, they grow peanuts, watermelons, tobacco and different kinds of beans. So, if this dam is built, these people will have trouble earning a living.”

Interview with Perler Der village, Pa Hai Village Tract, Butho Township, September 2003

Villagers are also concerned about the submerging of the forest resources along the Salween, which they rely on for numerous purposes.

“If there was a flood, ...trees and bamboo, which are very useful for us for building our houses, would be destroyed also.” Interview with Ta Oo Der villager, Luthaw Township, September 2003

“The precious trees such as teak, iron trees, Thay Ter Ler and La Thee Law Ba will no longer be alive if this dam is built. Furthermore our herbal medicines will disappear.” Interview with Tha Thwee Der villager, Pa Hai Village Tract, September 2003

Effects on security

Apart from concerns about their livelihood, villagers expressed fear at the inevitable increase in the number of Burmese troops that would occur if the dams were to go ahead, and the threat to their security as a result.

“We believe that we will have to flee to the jungles again because the enemy troops will arrive as guards following the dam project.”

Interview with Pa Dae Der villager, Luthaw Township, September 2003.

Villagers believe that the troops will be deliberately seeking to annihilate them from the area.

“The enemies will bring large numbers of their soldiers to our area so that they can destroy us more easily.” Interview with Way Nor Der villager, Butho Township, September 2003

Living in the jungles will cause further deterioration in health conditions of the villagers, and further deprive their children of education.

“Children’s education would be lost if the dam was built because we will be fleeing from the SPDC and living in the jungle. It would cause problems for health as well because fleeing into the jungle and living without real homes would cause more diseases.”

Interview with Ta Oo Der villager, Luthaw Township, September 2003

Villagers in the area continue to be reluctant to become refugees in Thailand.

“If we cannot live here and if we have to move to the refugee camp... we will not be allowed to live our lives, and we will be under strict control. So we can’t stay here and we can’t go to Thailand.” Interview with Htee Kay Der villager, Luthaw Township, September 2003

During 2004, momentum has been gaining for repatriation of Karen refugees from Thailand. Yet, if the dam plans go ahead, many of the Karen refugees will have no home to go back to.

No benefits for local people

Despite the fact that Burmese military officers have mentioned to villagers in the area that they would receive “free electricity” if the dam was built (see earlier section), villagers’ bitter experience has taught them that they will not receive any benefits from the dam.

“If we look at our history, we have been oppressed by the Burmese for a long time. So we think that if this dam is built, there will be no benefit for us. It will only benefit the Burmese government.”

Interview with villager at Kho Kay, Salween river bank, September 2003

The experience of the Baluchaung Dam in Karenni State suggests that their fears are well-founded. Thousands of Karenni and Shan villagers have been displaced because of the dam, and the Burmese military units stationed at the site have inflicted numerous abuses on the local population in their attempts to secure the area. Forced labour was used on construction and maintenance of the power plants, and till today villagers are being made to work without payment for the Burmese military. Countless landmines have been laid around the dam. While the Baluchaung power plants produce 12-17% of Burma's power (mainly going to Rangoon), most of the local people continue to have no electricity.²⁹

The villagers are appealing to the United Nations, and to the international community to try and stop the dam.

"We do not have any money or power to prevent this dam from being built. We can only use our voices to stop it..."

Interview with Klaw Khee Der villager, Butho Township, September 2003

An elderly Karen villager from Luthaw Township had this message to the international community:

"I would like to encourage foreign countries to think about how much suffering and destruction the building of the dam would cause for us. Without the dam we already face many problems and struggle to survive. If the dam were to be built, I don't think we will be able to survive anymore." Interview with Tay Mu Der villager, Luthaw Township, September 2003

²⁹ SEARIN, 2003, see above

PHOTO:KRW(2004)



Rice Pot: *The Salween serves as a rice pot for villagers in the area. Fishing is one of their sources of income. This fisherman earned 240 baht for selling this fish. The amount is enough to buy 2 tins (32 kg) of rice that enough for two adults for one month.*

Conclusion and recommendations

This report has shown that villagers in Karen State have already been paying the cost of the “cheap electricity” EGAT has been planning for Thailand. They have had to suffer the Burmese regime’s atrocities in its offensives to take control of the area. The population along the Salween river bordering Thailand and Burma has been forced out by the regime’s offensives and thousands of them have had to flee to Thailand while thousands are striving to survive as IDPs.

It is clear the regime has no intention of consulting and heeding the voices of the local population in the decision-making process regarding the project, as prescribed by the World Commission on Dams. On the contrary, they are in the process of annihilating them, using forced relocation, torture and killing.

Thus, under the convenient guise of “development” the regime is proceeding with its brutal policies against the Karen people. What is more, it is managing to do so with the complicity and financial support of the dam construction industry and neighbouring governments.

It is therefore urgently needed for the international community to re-evaluate their support for development programs currently being implemented by the regime in Burma³⁰. Without political reform and restoration of the basic rights of citizens throughout the country, such programs will inevitably be exploited by the military rulers and will inflict further suffering on the peoples of Burma.

Therefore, Karen Rivers Watch make the following recommendations:

To the SPDC

- To immediately stop its atrocities against the people in Karen State and withdraw its troops from the entire area.

³⁰ “... [C]onditionally, I don’t think the international aid and international investment to the country has to be changed before the condition of political participation of other forces in this endeavor.” UNCHR Special Rapporteur for Burma, Mr Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, Interview with Democratic Voice of Burma radio, November 5, 2002)

- To abandon all plans to build dams on the Salween River, which forms such a vital part of the Asian eco-system. Alternative sources of energy must be found, but this should be in the hands of a democratically elected leadership.

To the Thai Government

- To stop plans to dam the Salween, as there will be no benefit for the local population. On the contrary, the dams will cause even further forced relocation, forced labour, poverty, and other forms of human rights abuses against local people, which will lead to further displacement.
- To stop all forms of investment in Burma until genuine democracy is restored, as this investment is strengthening the military dictatorship and supporting their military strategy to subjugate the ethnic peoples
- To stop any development aid to Burma until democracy is restored, as any benefits will only go to high-ranking persons and not be shared by the local population.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Excerpts from interviews with villagers living around the planned dam sites. Reproduced from a video documentary by KRW released in June 2004 prior to this written report.

What problems will the villagers face when the dam is built?

-It could cause many problems for villagers, especially in relation to planting and growing of crops. If there will be flooding because of the dam, all of our farmlands will be destroyed as well. The other problem we will face is that there will be more activity of SPDC troops in our village. We will probably not be able to stay in our village, so we will have to escape to the jungle.

Can you tell us about the background history of your local school?

- This school was built many years ago. However, the SPDC destroyed it in 1994. We built it again in 1995; at the time, that DKBA (the Karen Buddhist Army) started cooperation with the SPDC. Because local leaders in this area and also the parents noticed that the children really wanted to go to school, they sent their children to the refugee camps in Thailand, so that they could go to school there. That was because there was no school here. So we decided that we should rebuild a school again for the children. They started to build this school seven years ago.

- We cannot say we are living in a stable situation now. In 2001, in the first year that I came here to work as a teacher, the SPDC came to this area, so we had to close the school, because the SPDC used big weapons such as rockets and grenades. They did not use these weapons directly against the villagers, but it was very close to our village. We are dependent on the situation. We are always aware of possible threats. Education for the children will be very difficult when the dam is built, because we will have to flee from the SPDC and live in the jungle. The dam will also cause problems for our health situation, because living in the jungle, without a real home will cause many diseases. The health condition of the villagers here is very poor.

- It is very difficult to find medicine. Sometimes we receive some medicine from visitors. And there is a clinic not far from here, but also they do not

have so much medicine. When villagers become ill, we go there. But for serious illnesses, there is nowhere to go.

What kind of safety problems will you face with when this dam is build?

- There is so much we will face. There will be twice as many SPDC troops in this area. Where can we flee? How will we survive? Where can we go?

- If the dam is built, the SPDC will take strict control of this area for security, so that people cannot destroy the dam. The villagers who live close to the dam will face forced relocation. And also, if the SPDC soldiers see any of the villagers in the area of the dam, they will threaten them. Now, if they see villagers in the jungle and places far from their village, the SPDC usually threaten them. So, when the dam is built, the SPDC will make it more difficult for the villagers.

- If there is flooding and if we can't find a place to go, we might die.

What do you want to happen?

- I want to tell the people who are working on this issue, to tell the United Nations and other governments about our situation. Hopefully they can help us to prevent this dam from being built.

- The villagers who live along the bank are unable to do anything. But there are some organizations working on environmental issues. If they could come here, we will tell them that we do not want this dam to be built. Alone, we are unable to do anything, we can just raise our voice, and we hope the United Nations and other organizations will become aware of our problems.

- I have no idea; I can't do anything to prevent this dam. We are hoping for other developed countries to help us. We can't prevent this by ourselves, because the ones who decide on this project are all governments, on the Burmese and on the Thai side. We ourselves are too small, and it is impossible for us to prevent this.

- If the dam is built, there will be problems for the villagers. But we do not have any money or power to prevent this dam from being built. We can only use our voices to try to stop it.

- I would like to encourage people from environmental organizations to become actively involved in this issue and to help us to raise our voices. I believe that we can cooperate and prevent this dam from being built.

- I want to prevent this dam. We Karen have a traditional saying:

“Rich men dam the water

Flooding the hill rice field, causing problems for Mother

Rich men dam the river

Flooding the roof and making Mother homeless.”

This means that if the dam is built, where we will go and earn our livelihood? I will not be able to stay and our plantation will be lost. So, I do not want this dam to be built.

- I think we are not strong enough to prevent this project. Even if we raise our voice it will have no effect. Because we are a small group. So, we are looking for other countries and the United Nations to help us to prevent this. I do believe it might be possible. Alone we cannot prevent this.

- I cannot do anything to prevent this dam from being built. But one thing we can do is to tell our leader to tell the companies who are planning to build the dam about our problems. Maybe they will not build it if they have pity on us. If they have no pity and don't mind if we are oppressed, we have to suffer.

- In my opinion, we cannot do anything by ourselves to prevent it. We are hoping that our leaders and organizations that are working on this issue, will support and consult us and we will do what we can to help them. There is not much we can do; we can mostly help them by encouraging them to do what is right.

Appendix 2: SPDC garrisons in Papun District

1. IB = Infantry Battalion
2. LIB = Light Infantry Battalion

Permanent Battalion in Papun District

IB 19*	LIB 340**	LIB 341**	LIB 434**
<i>Luthaw Township</i>			
1. Ler Mu Plaw	20. Kaeh Korh	41. Dar Gwin	
2. Sor Mu Plaw	21. Kwee Thee Hta	42. Mae Poe Kyo	
3. Takgor Hta	22. Wor Mu	43. Ler Toe	
4. Koh Wa Kyo	23. Mae Prit Hkee	44. U Thoo Hta	
5. Ler Say	24. Taung Thone Lone	45. Thaw Lae Hta	
6. Ler Klay Kho	25. Htee K'sor Mae	46. Maw Mo Kyo	
7. Ler Kwee Pler	26. Tor Thoo Kla	47. Mae Por Mu Hta	
8. Maw Pu	27. Baw Jot Lae	48. Thee Ro Hta	
9. Hgar Kho	28. Kadaing Dee	49. Mae Pa	
10. Pla Kho	29. Baw Jot Toh	50. IB 19 (head quarter)	
11. Ku Kho	30. Maw Hlot Klo	51. LIB 340 (head quarter)	
12. Pwa Hgor	31. Wad Thoe Kho	52. LIB 341 (head quarter)	
13. Maw Law	32. Wor T'Moe	53. LIB 434 Head quarter)	
	<i>Butho Township</i>	54. Heavy Artillery Company 071	
<i>Dwelo Township</i>			
14. Kho Hrgor	33. Thee Mu Hta		
15. Kwee P'nah	34. Wad Lu Kho		
16. Mae Wai	35. Mae Rit Kyo		
17. Ku Seik	36. Pa Hai		
18. Ma Htor	37. Kor Kyat Kho		
19. Htwee Thee Ur	38. Lay Kor Htee		
	39. Kor Pu		
	40. Mae Ka Hta		

* - Battalion operating since before 1990.

** - New battalions sent in during the 1992 Operation Dragon King

Note: Apart from these 4 permanent battalions, other troops are sent in and rotate every six months. The name of these garrisons are named by local villagers only.

Appendix 3: Chronology of Salween dam plans (compiled by the Foundation for Ecological Recovery, June 2003)

Chronology³¹

- 1979 EGAT made an announcement to conduct 14 feasibility studies of water releases from tributaries of the Mekong and Salween Rivers.
- 1981 EGAT presented study results of potential hydroelectric power development along the Thai-Burma border from the upper and lower Salween Dams with generating capacity at 4,540 and 792 MW respectively. Report No. 846-2409. September 1981
- 1981 The Thai Cabinet appointed a Joint Working Group to conduct a feasibility study on the development of hydroelectric power projects along the Thai-Burma border. The Joint Working Group for the Development of Hydroelectric Projects on Border River, composed of representatives from the Burma Electric Power Enterprise (MEPE), Thailand's National Energy and Policy Office (NEPO) and EGAT.
- 1991 The Joint Working Group approved the involvement of EPDC in financial support and initial studies of projects proposed by NEPO's representatives during the third meeting in Burma.
- 1992 EPDC completed the initial feasibility study and got approval from the Joint Working Group. EPDC proposed 8 hydropower dams with total generating capacity of 6,387.5 MW at a cost of about US\$5,120 million. According to a report by ADB and Norconsult the investment might need to be as high as US\$7,000-8,000 million. The upper and lower Salween Dams Projects were part of EPDC's proposal and similar to EGAT's study in 1981.
- 1993 The cabinet approved a plan to divert water from the Salween River basin to the Chao Phraya River basin with the Salween Dam Project as one component of this plan.
- June 1994 Norconsult presented a report on "Promoting Sub-regional Cooperation among Cambodia, Laos PDR, Thailand, Vietnam and Yunnan Province of the People's Republic of China" to ADB. The report recommended a feasibility study of dam construction

³¹ FER June 2003, see above

along the whole Salween River, including the upper and lower Salween Dams.

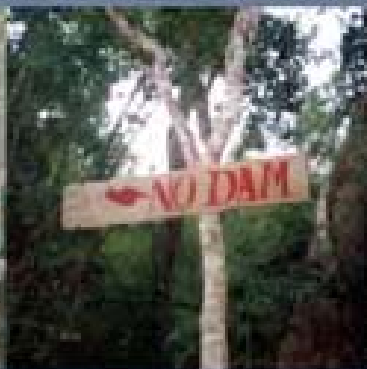
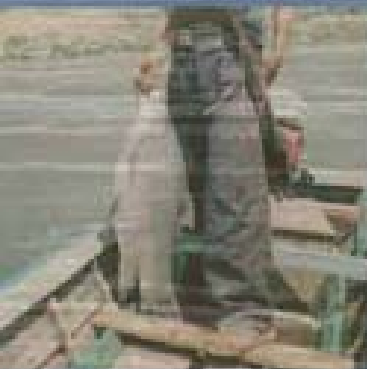
- Nov1994 High-ranking Thai officials proposed the construction plan of the upper Salween Dam in a meeting of the Joint Working Group.
- Jan 1995 After returning from a visit to Burma, then Thai Foreign Minister Thaksin Shinawatra mentioned that Gen. Khin Nyunt agreed with the results of the feasibility study and was willing to support construction of dams on the Salween Rivers in areas free of conflict.
- May 1995 Panya Consultant Company, Ltd. carried out an initial feasibility study of the Salween–Moei-Bhumibol Dam water diversion project and presented their results to the Department of Energy Development and Promotion. Later, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment (Thailand) approved this project.
- July 1996 The Thai Government signed an MOU with the Burmes regime to purchase 1,500 MW of electricity from Burma by 2010 and further announced the possibility of future MOUs to build dams with the Burmese regime.
- Dec 2002 Mr. Sittiporn Rattanopas, EGAT Governor, went to talk with the Burmese regime on the construction of the upper and lower Salween Dams. He subsequently released news to the press that EGAT would be the sole investor and for this reason, plans to privatize EGAT should be put on hold as EGAT would need to maintain its large capital base to be able to invest in this project. EGAT also announced that the two dams would reduce the cost of electricity in Thailand to 0.15 Baht/unit. During this time EGAT re-activated its campaign for the projects.
- Feb 2003 EGAT informed the Senate Commission of Foreign Affairs that the agreement with the Burma Government, the feasibility study, and the social and environmental impact assessment would begin in 2003.
- March 2003 Chinese President of the China National Machinery Equipment Company visited the Minister of Energy, Dr. Prommin Lertsuriyadet, MD. and showed interest in a 200,000 million Baht co-investment in the Salween Dams. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra told the press that the Thai Government would support the project because it would reduce

the cost of electricity generation since the hydroelectric power plant would not require expenditure for fuel.

June 2003

EGAT's Power Development Plan for 2003-2016 (PDP 2003) listed the Salween Hydropower Project as a potential addition to its main plan and that the dams would start generating power by 2013. Meanwhile, the Minister of Energy told reporters that the Salween Hydropower project was a key strategy of power supply for the country, and Minister would push the project to go ahead if the Salween could supply power at 0.90 Baht.

At the same time, China Huadian Corp; Yunnan Development Investment Co., Yunnan Electricity Group's Hydropower Construction Co, and Yunnan Nu River Electricity Group signed an agreement to form a new "Yunnan Huandian Nu River Hydropower Development Co." aimed at soliciting project finance to build a cascade of 11 hydropower dams on the Nu River (Upper Salween) in China.



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Karen Rivers Watch
November 2004