

# The Mon Forum

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## Some Acronyms in This Issue

- SPDC- State Peace and Development Council,  
IB - Infantry Battalion (*of Burmese Army*),  
LIB- Light Infantry Battalion (*of Burmese Army*),  
AR- Artillery Battalion

## News

### Villagers forced to train as militia for the protection of the country

Mon State, October 2006

To maintain long term power over the country, the Burmese military has ordered every village headman in Mon State to send approximately 35 villagers for militia or *Pyithusit* training.

The military trains the people how to fight armed insurgencies, how to break up the people if there are protests or if the country were to have another uprising or if overseas countries were to invade Burma. To protect the country the military trains the people how to use guns. The people are trained by the local military based in their areas.

People in Southern Ye were forced to participate in the training. To avoid joining the people's militia in Southern Ye Township, residents had to bribe the Infantry Battalion (IB) No.31 Kyat 400,000 (US\$ 304).



Military training in a Mon village

## Replacing headmen can't make Burma into a democracy

General Than Shwe is trying to replace former headman and place new headman in every single village in the country. The top generals ordered the local commanders to find out the peoples preference and choose a new headman in every village in accordance with the new constitution for democracy, which is currently in process. It seems that Than Shwe is trying to reform the country to be democratic.

However "corruption exists in the whole system of government. How can the replacement of former headman help the country stop corruption and reform the country for democracy? To reform the country it has to reform all of the government system" said a commander in the military. Now former headmen bribe the local military commanders in order not to lose their positions.

It seems that Gen Than Shwe may not be aware of how corruption happens among the local commanders because of this new replacement of the headmen village. The country has become top of the poor list of the world. Because of the corruption amongst the military, Than Shwe policy of replacing headmen can't make Burma into a democracy.

The residents are being chosen to join the people's militia through a voting system. Each village has to send 35 villagers to join the people's militia but larger villages like Khaw-Zar sub-town have to send 40 people, residents said.

"They (the troops) told us 'people have to be responsible for doing their duty for the country' and they named the San Shae Mon Army Group as a rebel group. I don't want to kill our own people so I fled to Thailand," said a villager who did not want to be named.

The IB No.31 has made three rounds of selections of villagers to join the people's militia to fight insurgent groups but most people are running away from the village when they are assigned to join the Pyithusit.

Southern Ye Township area often witnesses fighting between the regime's troops and the armed rebel groups. There are many insurgent groups who have been active in the jungle since the New Mon State Party made a ceasefire agreement with the military regime in 1995.

"The troops persuade villagers to join the people's militia saying it is a chance to avoid forced labour, but they do not give us a gun for security. We are just allowed a knife," said a source.

Most telephone owners who can call to Thailand are afraid to describe the real situation in Khaw-

Zar sub-town, southern Ye Township because they are afraid troops will find out that they are sending information outside the country.

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### Village Man Beaten To Death after Domestic Incident

A villager from Pain Mahar village, Ye Township was beaten to death on the 5<sup>th</sup> of October by an army medic after a domestic incident between the victim and his wife.

Nai Ahtoo, the victim fought with his wife, he was reportedly angry at her for not taking care of the children and behaving badly. His wife Mi Thie Tha then reported the fighting to the army medic from LIB.No.31.

The medic was reportedly drunk at the time. Apparently the medic rammed the stem of his gun into Nai Ahtoo's head four times. Nai Ahtoo became unconscious and bleed profusely. Due to the seriousness of the wound the victim was sent to Ye hospital where he died three days later.

"I don't know where I can go to accuse him. Even I know where to go, I don't dare to accuse him. If I accuse him, it seems like I am boxing with the sky," said Mi Thie Tha.

## News

The LIB.No.31 medic has given the victim's wife 70,000 kyat moreover the LIB.No.31 commander Myo Myint gave further her a further 40,000 kyat. "The money they gave it is not enough for the cremation of my husband," said Mi Thie Tha.

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### Villagers suffer between the military and the rebels

Kaw-Zar Sub-town, October, 2006

Two villagers from Kwan Tamaung village, in Kaw-Zar Sub-town, were seriously beaten by the LIB



**This villager suffered a broken wrist and several broken ribs at the hands of LIB No. 31**

No.31 on 2 October, 2006 for failing to report the presence of Mon rebels inside the village.

The military accused the two villagers who were forced to provide security for the village of lying about whether they saw the rebels come into village. "When they asked us about whether the rebels came to village, we told them we didn't see them. But they accused us of not telling the truth then they beat us," said Nai Yein.

According to Mi Tie, two Mon rebels who are members of San Shae group visited her house that day. However the rebels entered through a hole in the fence and no one knew. Mi Yie was worried

that the military would make trouble for her family because the rebels came to her house so she informed the military.

However when the military went to question her further, they could not find her. Instead they found the two villagers who were guarding the gates. "They beat me with a bamboo stick. After one stick broke, they took another. I didn't know what I had done wrong. I didn't dare look at their faces when they beat me. If I looked they slashed and kick me with their military boots," he added.

They broke Nai Yein's back, several of his ribs and his hand. He and the other villager are both in the village clinic. He can't work and he has to hire people to work on his farm.

Twelve villagers have to go each day to guard the village and watch for rebels coming into the village. The six entrances to the village are guarded by two people each.

The civil war is ongoing in Southern part of Ye Township between the Burmese army and several Mon rebel groups. The Burmese troops attempts to get rid of the Mon rebels in order to control the area. As part of their strategy the Burmese army threatens local villagers who support the rebel groups, they punish them with beatings, torture and killing.

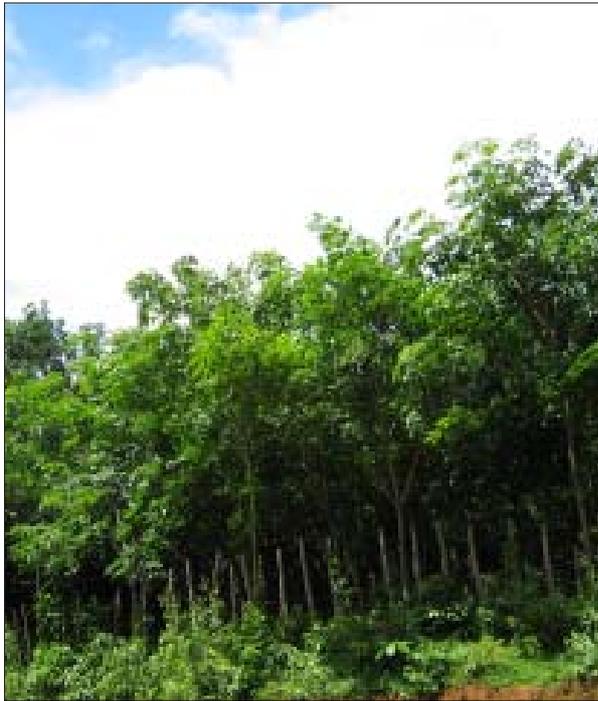
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### Land confiscation persevere in Mudon Township

Mudon Township, October 2006

Land confiscations against local rubber plantations owners have continued. It was reported that at the end of September, 2006 branch No. 22 of Light Infantry Battalion No. 209 based near Kama-Wet seized more rubber plantations near Win-pha-none Dam from the villagers of Hnee-pa-daw (new village), Abit, Kwan-Kha-Bwe and Set-twe ywa thit villages, Mudon Township, Mon State.

According to a land confiscation victim from Hnee-pa-daw village, the main purpose of the land confiscation was to expand the Army's rubber plantations, to raise the battalion's funds. According to the battalion they confiscated the land to provide security for the dam.



**A confiscated rubber plantation near Hnee-pa-daw village, Mudon Township**

“My seven acres of plantations was seized in the middle of September by troops from LIB 209 led by Captain Shwe-Lett. They said I could still work in my plantation if I paid Kyat 65,000 per year as tax.” Nai Linn, a land loss villager from Hnee-pa-daw reported.

According to HURFOM’s reporter, the confiscation of the rubber plantations in these areas is ongoing. In many cases after many acres of rubber plantations were confiscated, the troops of LIB 209 rent these confiscated rubber plantations back to their ex-owners. They charge Kyat 60, 000 to 65,000 per acre per year. Originally, these confiscated rubber plantations were owned by the local farmers for many generations.

Many victims of land confiscation have no ideas how to do other jobs or find new lands. Growing rubbers plants has been their job for most of their lives.

“It is a very hard situation for them to have to change jobs immediately,” reported HURFOM field reporter in Mudon Township.

LIB No. 209 is known as the security battalion for the Win-pha-none government dam which is close to Abit village, Mudon Township. In the past three years this battalion has confiscated about 300 acres of

lands from the inhabitants of Kamawet, Kalort-tort, Yaung-daung and Hnee-pa-daw villages.

(See the appendix No. 1 on page 5)

## **New Land confiscation in Wae-Ka-Lee village, Thanbyuzayat**

Wae-Ka-Lee village, September 2006

During September 2006 responding to an order from the Commander of No.4 Military Training Center, troops led by Captain Htay-Hlaing seized nearly 200 acres of land including rubber plantations from the local inhabitants.

According to one victim of land confiscation, Nai Apein a resident of Wae-Ka-Lee village, most of the confiscated lands are paddy fields and rubber plantations owned by villagers from the same village. Burmese troops are then selling these confiscated lands back to the original owners.

“After the battalion seized the lands, they made an announcement to the villagers that each land owner could get their lands back by giving 500,000 Kyat to the battalion. Only a few villagers who have money could pay this amount of money to battalions,” Nai Apein explained.

Some villages that had their land taken had registered land ownership documents. However when they took the dispute to the Township Land Record office, the Land Record Officer said the land was registered as wild lands.

“When we argued for our lands with the Land Record Officer in Thanbyuzayat Town, he said that these lands are on the list of ownerless lands and that they are actually wild lands. So the Army wants these lands for themselves to farm for their family. But actuality we have had land documents for our lands for many years. Now we have no lands to plant on. What are we going to do?” said Nai Sein-Chee who lost four acres of land from Wae-Ka-Lee village, Thanbyuzayat Township.

The following is a list of farmers who have had their lands confiscated. Their lands were confiscated by No. 4 Military Training Center of Wae-Ka-Lee village, Thanbyuzayat Township in the last months of this year. (See the appendix No. 2 on page 7)

**Chart of confiscated land acres, land loss victims and location of new land confiscation, Mudon Township**

No.	Name of land owner	Location	Amount of acres	Amount of tax (per acre)	Perpetrator
1	Nai Tin Maung	Hnee-pa-daw new village	8.00	65,000 Kyat	Gave the order by Light Infantry Battalion 209's command and confiscated by Captain Shwe-Lett
2	Nai Shwe	Hnee-pa-daw village	10.00	65,000 Kyat	by Captain Shwe-Lett
3	U War Ru	Abit village	5.00	65,000 Kyat	by Captain Shwe-Lett
4	U Win	Kwan-ka-bwe village	10.00	65,000 Kyat	by Captain Shwe-Lett
5	N/A	Kwan-ka-bwe village	10.00	65,000 Kyat	by Captain Shwe-Lett
6	U Sein	Abit village	7.00	65,000 Kyat	by Captain Shwe-Lett
7	Nai Mon Kyaing	Hnee-pa-daw village	5.00	65,000 Kyat	by Captain Shwe-Lett
8	Min Ko Thein	Abit village	7.00	65,000 Kyat	by Captain Shwe-Lett
9	U Hein	Hnee-pa-daw new village	10.00	65,000 Kyat	by Captain Shwe-Lett
10	U Kyaung	Hnee-pa-daw village	10.00	65,000 Kyat	by Captain Shwe-Lett
11	Daw Khin Thi	Hnee-pa-daw village	10.00	65,000 Kyat	by Captain Shwe-Lett
12	U Yaung Shein	Hnee-pa-daw village	10.00	65,000 Kyat	by Captain Shwe-Lett
13	Daw Thu	Set-twe village	7.00	65,000 Kyat	by Captain Shwe-Lett
14	U Linn	Hnee-pa-daw village	7.00	65,000 Kyat	by Captain Shwe-Lett
15	Kyaw Min	Set-twe ywa thit village	5.00	65,000 Kyat	by Captain Shwe-Lett
16	U Ta	Hnee-pa-daw village	10.00	65,000 Kyat	by Captain Shwe-Lett
17	U Yar	Hnee-pa-daw village	10.00	65,000 Kyat	by Captain Shwe-Lett
18	U Tin Oo	Hnee-pa-daw village	10.00	65,000 Kyat	by Captain Shwe-Lett
19	U Chi	Hnee-pa-daw village	10.00	65,000 Kyat	by Captain Shwe-Lett

## Personal Accounts

Name	Nai AJit
Native village	Taung-Pone village, Northern Ye Township
Sex	Male
Age	22 years old
Race	Mon
Religion	Buddhist
Family status	Single
HR violation	Forced Labor,
Perpetrator	Commander Min Min Tun and Captain Htwe Khant from Light Infantry Battalion No. 587
Date	14 <sup>th</sup> September 2006

“On the above mentioned date, while I was on the way to my parent’s paddy farm, Burmese troops, approximately about 15 soldiers led by Captain Htwe Khant from Light Infantry Battalion No. 587 and some village administration members of our village stopped me and ordered to carry bricks for their battalion. The reason they asked me was I have an old truck which is operating with a Chinese engine (known as “Phut-Chat truck” in Mon). They needed my truck in order to carry their bricks from their brick production site which based outside village to their battalion. But the problem was I could not afford to buy fuel anymore since the price of fuel has gotten higher and higher. I told them I could do it if they bought fuel for my truck and they said “yes”. Actuality, I did not want to work for them because I have worked without payment for them several times.

When I got to their brick production site, I found about 30 truck owners with their trucks from our village and Toung Pyin village, a neighboring village. At that time the Captain Htwe Khant announced the instructions from Commander Min Min Tun from LIB No. 587, each truck owner should carry 1400 pieces of bricks to the battalion. For me I told the Captain Htwe Khant that my truck was very old and not in good condition and he should let me carry just 700 pieces of bricks in my truck. Unfortunately he replied that he could not change the order of the Commander. In the end I had to carry two loads times to finish my duty. At first, they promised that they would pay for fuel cost. But when I asked them they said that not only me, but no truck owners received the fuel costs. For me, I had served like this five times already. This is the sixth time. I realized that this is the main reason that a lot of truck owner quite their transportation jobs and changed jobs or went to Thailand as migrant workers.

I told my problem to the village administration group and they replied that they themselves are scared of the Burmese

Commanders. One of the village administration members who is a friend of mine told me that the village administration is the first victim if they could not complete the instruction of the local commander. So they have to follow the order of the local Commander.

For me, I have shifted jobs from a truck driver to a farmer since the beginning of this month. Now, I am working on my parents farm. Now I want to sell my old truck, but no one wants to buy it because they are afraid of being used by the local battalion. Being a farmer in my village is not easy. Since last year Commander Min Min Tun, Light Infantry Battalion No. 587 ordered all farmers via village administration group to give 40 baskets of paddy per year to the battalion as food supply. If anyone who failed to complete this responsibility they would be punished. Moreover, we, villagers have to cover the cost of the village militia force which is known as the “village security fee”. Included in the fees is their salary, food supply and materials. For our family, we have to pay 2,000 to 3,000 Kyat for the village militia force. Most villagers are facing economic crisis because of various types of taxes, unpaid labors and movement restriction which were committed by the Light Infantry Battalion No. 587. My individual opinion is, I recognize that currently, I am living in hell and I really don’t know what I am going to do.

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Name	Nai T++ ++
Native village	Kaw Zar Sub-Township, Southern Part of Ye Township
Sex	Male
Age	35 years old
Race	Mon
Religion	Buddhist
Family status	Married
HR violation	Forced Labor
Perpetrator	U Kyaw Moe, Chairman of Township Peace and Development Committee and his troops
Date	1 <sup>st</sup> September – 13 September 2006

“Since the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2006, residents from Kaw-Zar Sub-Town were forced to work as unpaid laborers by the Township Peace and Development Committee led by Chairman U Kyaw Moe and his troops. It took me about 13 days, working seven days a week and eight hour per day. We worked to fence the Township PDC office, clean the grassland and bushes, cut the bamboo and wood and to make the frames for the fences. Including myself we have about 15 persons from our quarter and we have to bring our own food and water from our house. If anyone cannot work they hire someone else instead. The current labor fee is about 3,000 kyat for one person. I could not afford to pay the fee, so I have to go and work there. Since I am working as a farmer, I could not go

and work for myself. A friend of mine, Nai W++ ++, was also forced to join the village security group and patrolled the whole Town for nights with no payment. Since the authorities modified Kaw Zar village track into a Sub-Town, there are many types of forced labor by many administration groups. Some villagers are also forced to patrol for Infantry Battalion No 32. Another man who is also my friend, Nai K++ ++, was tortured by members of the militia force because he was found sleeping during night duty.

It seems to me that most of the people in Kaw Zar Sub-Township are getting poorer and poorer. People are jobless and most farmers quit their jobs because they cannot afford to offer food supplies to the Burmese battalions.

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No.	Name of land owner	Location	Amount of acres	Amount of tax (per acre)	Perpetrator
1	Nai Taung Tin	Wae-Ka-Lee village	10.00	-	Captain Sein Htay from No. 4 Military Training Center
2	Nai Sayar Sein	Wae-Ka-Lee village	10.00	-	Captain Sein Htay
3	Nai Hmone	Wae-Ka-Lee village	10.00	-	Captain Sein Htay
4	N/A	Wae-Ka-Lee village	18.00	-	Captain Sein Htay
5	Mi Lay Tin	Wae-Ka-Lee village	20.00	-	Captain Sein Htay
6	Nai Apein	Wae-Ka-Lee village	20.00	-	Captain Sein Htay
7	N/A	Wae-Ka-Lee village	10.00	-	Captain Sein Htay
8	Nai ATun	Wae-Ka-Lee village	6.00	500,000 Kyat	Captain Sein Htay
9	Nai Sein Chee	Wae-Ka-Lee village	4.00	-	Captain Sein Htay
10	Nai Hta-Pwe-Dut	Wae-Ka-Lee village	15.00	-	Captain Sein Htay

## Report

# A failed Development Projcet. Win-pha-non Dam, Mon State

## Introduction

**B**urma's economic problems are far reaching and complex. This report details a failed development project initiated and managed by the Government authorities in Mon State. A poorly designed damn intended to provide much needed irrigation to rice crops and enable the growing of two seasons worth of rice has instead created flooding problems which has reduced the amount of rice previously produced. This in turn has highlighted a serious problem within the government administration. Instead of reporting the failure of the project, local officials to protect themselves report that the project as a success with increased rice production figures. This is reminisant of Chairman Mao's 'Great Leap Forward', where officials hid the true extend of the failure of Mao's agricultural policies, which when combined with Mao's other policies lead to the starvation of an estimated 20 million people. It is unknown how much this underreporting occurs but is worthy of further investigation and if it was found to be widespread would go some way to explaining why the SPDC reports such high economic growth levels for Burma. It should also serve as a warning.

The creation of the damn and subsequent mismanagement directly violates the economic rights of the affected farmers. Under international law governments are charged with the responsibility of improving the conditions of their people. They must protect the economic rights of the people and under no circumstances are the permitted to violate the economic rights of the people to work and to an adequate standard of living and consequently make the economic situation of the people *worse*. Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights states:

*"right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for [him/herself and his/her] family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions"; "right of everyone to be free from hunger"; to "improve methods of production, conservation and distribution of food"; "to ensure an equitable distribution of world food supplies in relation to need"*

*"While the Economic and Social Rights Covenant does not require a Government immediately to feed, clothe, and house its residents, it does require that the Government take steps towards the full realization of those economic, social and cultural rights and certainly a Government would likely violate the Covenant if it took measures which would diminish those rights."*(Training Manual on Human Rights Monitoring).

## Background

The population in Burma is increasing, according to the Government the annual growth rate is 2.02 percent. Currently Burma has about 54 million people. In 2010 it is estimated the country will have 60 million people (Myanmar Agricultural and Irrigation Department 2005). However

it

may not have enough rice. To solve the approaching rice crisis in the country, the Government Agriculture Department instigated a nation wide initiative to produce more rice. They planned to do this by having farmers grow two harvests of paddy on one piece of land each year instead of the usual one. This policy however in the case of the Winpanon damn is largely a failure.

In the year 2000, the Ministry for Agriculture and Irrigation built the Win-pha-non dam in Mudon Township, Mon state for the purpose of growing two rice crops per season.

However since then 1650 acres of crops have been destroyed by flooding caused by the poorly designed dam. The destroyed crop fields are surrounded by seven villages, Set-twe, Htome-Marn, Kwan-Ka-Pwe, Do-Mar, Taung-Pa, Kalaw-thut, and Kaw-pi-htaw villages. The water comes from these seven villages but instead of going into the dam, the water floods the surrounding fields destroying the crops and making it difficult to grow any rice. Because of the supposed 'success' of the dam, in the future they plan to extend the irrigation to encompass another 2000 acres.

Before the dam was built local farmers produced 50 baskets of rice per one acre. In 2005 farms only produced 25 baskets of rice per acre. This year it is predicted that the farms will produce less than last year because there were heavier than usual rains this year and most of the fields were flooded for longer.



**Lt-Gen Maung Bo and his troops inspecting Winphanon Dam in Mudon**

## Burma's Economic Problems

The SPDC government is largely responsible for Burma's economic problems and is the main factor blocking the country's economic recovery in the future. Fifty years ago Burma was one of the richest countries in South East Asia, now after years of excessive government intervention in the economy Burma is one of the poorest. The fact is that the Burmese Government itself absorbs much of the profits whilst at the same time it has interfered with and dismantled many basic market institutions. Some of these contributing factors include a Government that spends around 40% of its GDP on the military. At the same time the SPDC fails to invest adequate money into Agriculture, a sector which employs 70% of the population. The Government resorts to 'printing money' as it spends far more than it can earn which has resulted in monetary chaos. Human capital has been eroded as spending on health and education totals a combined US \$1 per person. Economic mismanagement has meant that the SPDC has attracted little in the way of foreign direct investment and corruption is endemic. The outcome of these factors has seen the country plunge into poverty and economic crisis (Turnell 2006).

## The Winpanon Dam – A Failed Development Project

The dam is located on a hill to the east of the motor road near Abit village, Mudon Township. The fields affected by the dam are located to the west of the motor road that runs from Mawlamyine to

Ye. The Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation has created artificial waterways coming from the dam where the old river used to be, however they have widened it, made the sides higher and have added artificial canals and irrigation feeding into the river. The high walls of the newly built river and its tributaries have blocked the old rivers from being able to flow into the river. This is what is causing the flooding.



A canal from Win-pha-non dam near Set-thawe village

The government has widened and built up the walls of the new rivers. However they have not allowed enough space for the old rivers that feed into the new river. The walls are too high and during the six month long rainy season this creates flooding. The ministry of agriculture dam officers open small holes that let water come out only a little bit from the old rivers. This is problematic in rainy seasons when there are large amounts of water in the rivers. Most of the water from the villages continues to follow the old rivers even though new waterways were built from the villages to the new river. Before the Ministry of Agriculture set up the dam, all water from seven villages came through the old rivers and followed through to the main river. So the land dried and the rice farmers cultivated one season of paddy on dry land.

The water from the villages is cloudy and dirty with soil erosion. The water cannot pass into the new river so it floods the surrounding paddy fields. During this time the water sits on the land, the soil settles onto the paddy crops. The soil sticks to the plants and the plants are not able to stand with the combined weight of the water and the soil. So within about seven days the crops fall over and die.

The water remains on the crops during and after the end of the rainy season. Because of the high walls of the new river even in the summer season the water still remains as pools in the crop fields. Rice farmers try to cultivate crops in water.

## **Farming problems created by flooding from the Win-pha-non Dam**

Firstly people have to make rafts to harvest the crops from the water. The rafts are made with bamboo. If they don't build the rafts, they have to harvest the crops and leave them in piles in the water. If the crops are piled in the water for even one day, all of the paddy becomes black and rotten and cannot be eaten. Or if the people don't make rafts, they have to harvest the crops and pile them onto the small embankment that is built around the paddy plots. Each time they harvest the crops they have to carry the paddy to the embankment. On the one hand, it wastes a lot of time. On the other hand, rice farmers have to hire many workers to finish harvesting the crops.

Most people don't like to harvest the crops in the water. People are always wet. They have to work for the whole day standing in water; they can't rest in the water. If they want to sit and relax for a while they have to move to the embankment. Also there are leeches in the water.

Secondly because the water remains in the crops fields, rice farmers can't bring crops to their huts with carts. They have to carry the crops on their backs with bamboo sticks. This uses a lot of human resources.



In the previous rainy season water covers nearly 1650 acres of land that was previously used for growing

Thirdly because the water remains for the whole summer in the fields wild grasses grow quickly because they get water from the field. In the water the wild grasses grow faster than the paddy crops and the rice crops can't compete with the wild grasses, this results in smaller paddy plants and consequently less rice production.

## How different land levels are problematic for growing paddy.

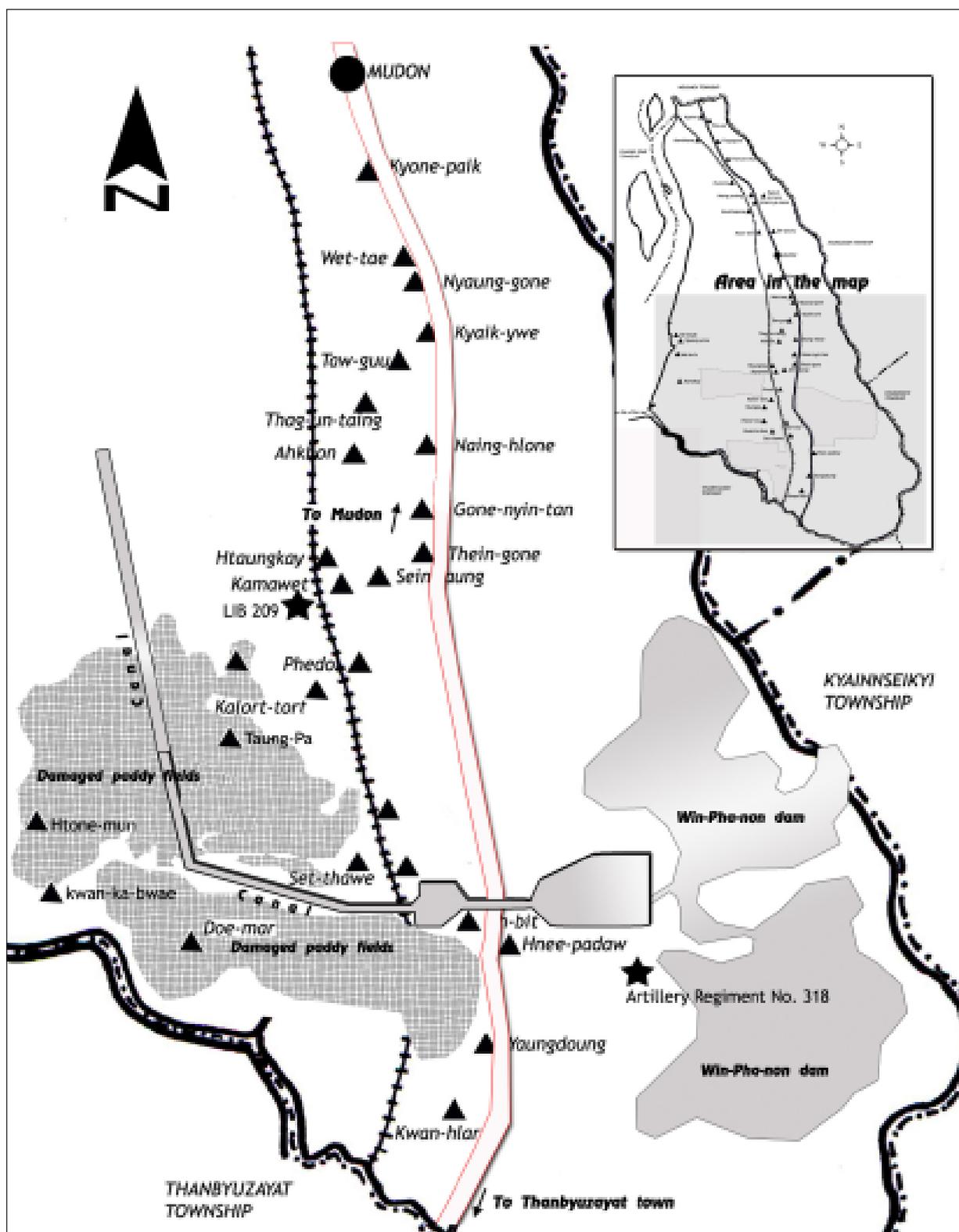
Even during the summer, farmers can't grow enough rice because the water from the dam doesn't distribute itself evenly across the fields because the ground levels are different. The new river is a low point in the topography of the area, from this point the surrounding fields gently rise up. There are some fields on high land. The water remains in the lower part of the crop fields and the land at higher levels doesn't have water. However the military regime has instructed rice farmers to grow rice in the summer even though there is no water.

There are some people who have tried to pump the water to the higher ground. However there are several problems with this. Most rice farmers don't have machines to pump water to the high lands and even if they did the gasoline prices in Burma are very high. Also because the high land becomes very dry in summer time the pumped water just runs off the land and is not absorbed into the soil.

The farmers whose land is higher up are not able to grow rice in the summer season, only in the winter season because in summer they have no water. Despite this the military regime forces rice farmers to try and grow the rice; they also forced people who don't have water to grow beans and flowers. However only sandy soil can grow beans and flowers, the type of soil in this area is not good for growing beans and flowers.

## Government Corruption

Dam officers work for the Government Agricultural and Irrigation Department, part of their responsibilities is to give ongoing reports about the success/failure of the Two Seasons Paddy



Map of Win-pha-non government dam and how the paddy fields were affected by the flooding during the previous rainy season

Project. These officials know that the Dam damages the crops and does not produce two seasons worth of rice. However they cannot fix the problem themselves and they are afraid they will lose their jobs. So the dam officers grow their own crops, there is a summer rice field which is between Kalawthut and Taung Pa villages. When the plants have grown big enough, they take photos for reporting to the higher officers. They report that the dam project is a success and they use these photos as evidence. When in fact, the rice plants that they grow don't grow big enough to be able to produce paddy, the plants flower, but do not grow into paddy.

According to government statistics there are 670 000 acres of rainy season crops and 100 000 acres of summer crops in Mon state. According to the military regime rainy season crops produce 65 baskets per acre and summer season crops produce 70 baskets. In total there are 43,550,000 baskets of rice produced in Mon state during the rainy season. The summer rice crops can produce up to 7,000,000 baskets. The total amount of rice produced in Mon State is according to government statistics 50,550,000 baskets per year ('Myanmar Agricultural Protection Section.' 1995).



A dry season paddy plantation in Mudon Township

Compare these numbers to those reported by farmers close to the Win-pha-non Dam. Those affected by flooding grow only one crop per year and produce 25 baskets per acre. They used to produce 50 baskets and indeed other farmers still produce 50 baskets per acre. But the difference between these numbers and those produced by the government are significantly different.

## Government Threats

The Ministry of Agriculture dam officers often call meetings of the farmers to insist people grow summer season rice. The military regime threatened the people that if they don't grow rice in the dry season, they will confiscate the land or extract fines. There are more than three hundred land owners. Corruption is evident as farmers who don't want to try and grow the rice don't; instead they go to the dam officers and offer bribes. The military officers accept 12,000 kyat per acre every year for those who don't grow rice in the dry season. Other rice farmers who don't know the way to bribe the officers try and grow what the dam officers' wants even though they know the land can't do it because they are afraid of the military regime.

## Government Impediments to Increased Rice Production



These rice farmers are trapped in a cycle of debt to pay for cultivation and harvesting of the rice after the dam damaged their lands

Agriculture is Burma's main occupation, it accounts for 57% of GDP and around 70% of workers work in agriculture (Turnell 2006). Despite its importance to the economy the agricultural sector has been profoundly neglected and exploited by the SPDC and Mon State is no exception.

There are a small amount of funds from the military regime that is available on loan for the rice farmers. One acre of land can receive 7,000 kyat from the government however they must pay interest, for every 100 kyat farmers pay 1.50 kyat. At the end of the harvest, the farmers repay

the money and the interest. Officially the government has set aside fertilizer at a subsidized price for farmers. However by the time the fertilizers reach the villages, it costs almost the same price as buying fertilizer from the market. Also the quality of the government provided fertilizer is not good as the fertilizer from the market. Thus farmers don't buy the government fertilizer.

## How the Dam creates debt for farmers

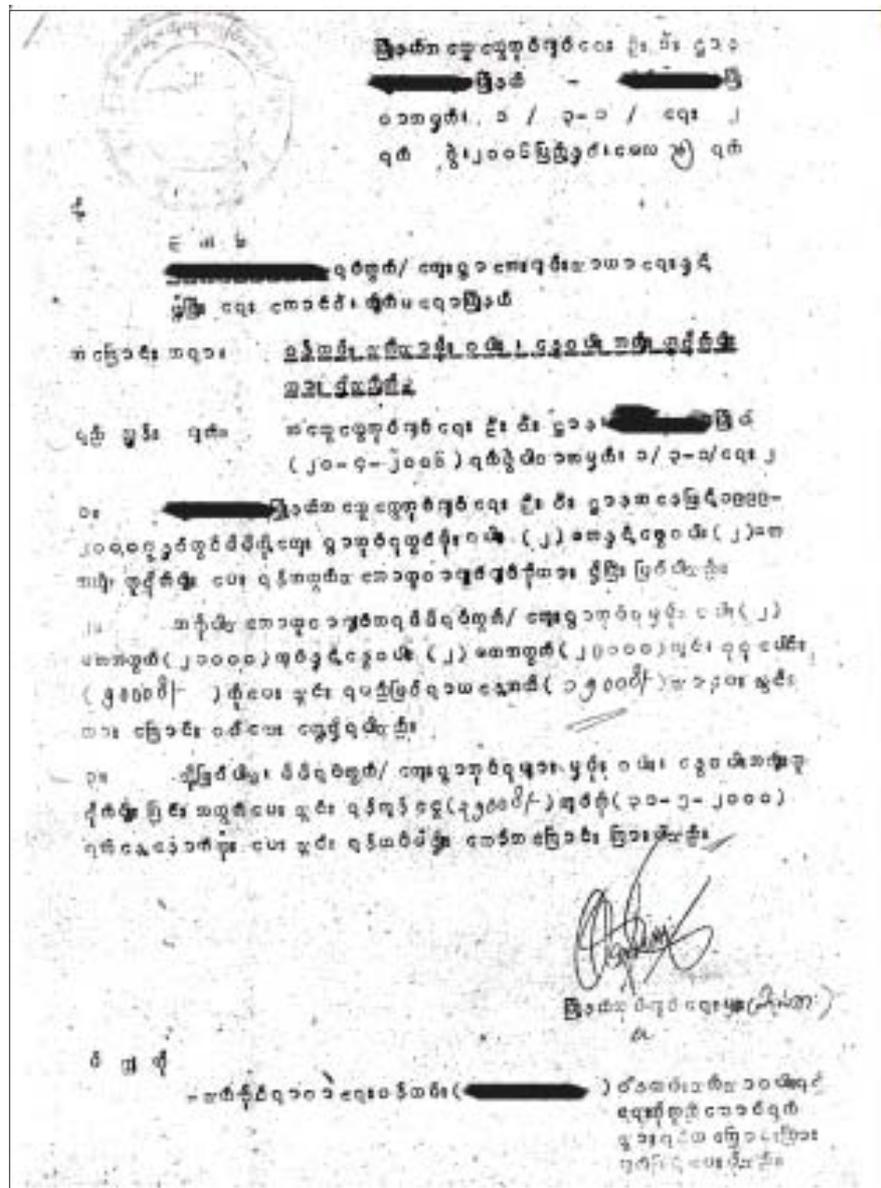
Now because the dam damages the land the rice farmers are trapped in a cycle of debt to pay for the cultivation and harvesting of the rice. Before the dam was built, the farmers got enough paddy from the crops fields. So they didn't have to borrow paddy from others to survive. Before one acre produced 50 baskets of rice, now because of flooding the affected lands only produce 25 baskets per acre. Thus farmers must go into debt to continue farming.

To grow the paddy, the farmers have to invest money and labor. When the rain starts in May, the farmers have to dig the soil with bulls. The farmers who have bulls, they don't have to hire bulls from other people. But there are farmers who don't have bulls so they must hire them. For each bull they have to pay 12 baskets of paddy.

When the farmers are planting the crops, they have to hire workers. It costs 2,500 kyat for women and 3,000 kyat for men for each day. For 10 acres of land farmers may hire 6 workers for at least ten days.

After planting the crops the farmers have to use fertilizer. The government does not give farmers fertilizer at a subsidized price. The farmers have to buy from the market and each sack currently costs 26,000 kyat. Farmers use one sack per acre.

At harvesting time the farmers also have to hire workers again at the same price as for the planting. When the land is producing 50 baskets



The statement of Township authority forced to grow dry season paddy

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Dear Readers,

Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) was founded in 1995, by a group of young Mon people. The main objectives of HURFOM are:

- To monitor human rights situations in Mon territory and other areas southern part of Burma,
- To protect and promote internationally recognized human rights in Burma,

In order to implement these objectives, HURFOM has produced "The Mon Forum" newsletters monthly and sometimes it has been delayed because we wait to confirm some information. We apologize for the delay.

However, we also invite your feedbacks on the information we described in each newsletter and if you know anyone who would like to receive the newsletter, please send name and address to our address or e-mail as below:

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With regards,

Director  
 Human Rights Foundation of Monland

of rice per acre this is fine, but when they only produce 25 baskets they will have to borrow money to cover the expenses.

As for example the story of Mi Lon Thein, Mi Lon Thein's husband passed away. She owns six acres of land. She has to hire one permanent worker for the whole year. But this year she could only hire him for half of the year because the rice she will get this year will not be enough to pay for him. She will harvest the crops herself because she estimates the crops can only produce twenty five baskets per acre. She is worried that she will not be able to pay even half the labor of the year because she has already borrowed a lot of money for the planting and still has to hire people to cultivate the remaining crops. She is worried about she will have to borrow the paddy from others next year.

Farmers have to borrow paddy if they do not grow enough paddy or if their first crops fails due to the flooding. People who borrow 25 baskets of paddy will have to pay 12 baskets in interest. Most farmers have to borrow paddy from others to invest in their own farms.

Many farmers continue to try and farm the land as they have inherited it from their parents. Many want to keep their traditional lands and they are worried their property will be confiscated if they don't grow the rice on the farms.

## The value of land destroyed

At the end of the rainy season water covers approximately 1650 acres of land that was previously used for growing rice. Some farmers were not able to farm there land because it was under water so many have left to be migrant workers in Thailand. Before the dam, the land was of average quality and able to produce an adequate amount of rice. Now the land affected by flooding has very little value and is very difficult to sell.

## Conclusion

Again and again it is easy to see the hand of SPDC incompetence in making the situation for the people worse. The SPDC government dam development project in Mon state to provide much needed irrigation to a country whose primary income is through agriculture has failed. In fact due to government corruption it has actually made the situation for the people worse, which is difficult to imagine considering just how poor Burma is. The primary problem it appears is that the



Paddy crops which were damaged by Win-pha-non Dam

dam is poorly designed and badly thought out. Instead of providing irrigation its creation instead causes surrounding fields to flood all year round. It is difficult to grow paddy in these conditions and has resulted in production being cut by half. This in turn means farmers earn less and must borrow money and paddy to survive to the following year, where they face the same problem and increased debt. The second problem is that Government corruption enables this situation to continue. Not only do farmers have to pay (or risk losing their land) local officials for not growing rice but the project is reported to higher officials as a success, thus preventing any beneficial changes from being made. In turn this corruption could account for some of the over reporting of rice production figures in Mon State and the rest of the country. This may mean that the Government thinks it has more food than it actually does, which could in turn lead to increased hunger and food shortages. As is always the case it is not the Government or the elites that will suffer from this, it is the people on the ground, the local people in the villages and the towns.

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