

## Report

# Election preparations round off a year of abuses against farmers in Mon territory

### Introduction:

As preparations by the Burmese State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) for the elections slated for 2010 mount, an increasing amount of pressure will be placed on already burdened rural agricultural communities in Mudon, Thanbyuzayat, Ye and Kyaikmayaw Townships. As previously noted in HURFOM's October and November election reports, these preparations have targeted rural communities with the intention of securing political dominance in advance of the government's announcement of the 2010 electoral rules. In taking farmers and community members from their time sensitive-cultivation and harvests of rice crops that are critical for community survival and economy, these preparations have place an excessive burden on agricultural populations.

This HURFOM report will explore how the last 3 months of agricultural disasters and excessive human rights abuses committed by the SPDC have impacted farming communities, so that election preparations undertaken by the government will dramatically impact the livelihood of farmers involved. The 1<sup>st</sup> section of this report will begin by laying out the background conditions that have contributed to the regional agrarian instability. The 2<sup>nd</sup> section will focus on the most recent instances of abuse documented by field reporters in Mon State that have most severely impacted agricultural communities. The 3<sup>rd</sup> section documents instances of militia and "fire brigade" trainings that take farmers from their crops at crucial times during the agricultural season, after which in the 4<sup>th</sup> section HURFOM will offer analysis on the seriousness of the burden election preparations now place on Mon state farming communities.

### Devastation in the 2009 crop season:

To better understand the significance of the human rights abuses carried out against farmers in Mon state, HURFOM will detail briefly the impacts of the environmental catastrophes explored in this report.

Due to a series of environmental catastrophes, both natural and man-made, that have befallen farmers during 2009-2010 rice harvests, the livelihoods of many farmers in Mon state have been severely undercut.



Farmers are cultivating monsoon rice in the previous crop season

This year's abnormally heavy rains and subsequent mass flooding, coupled with the invasion of insects and rodents into rice farms, has impacted Mon State's rice industry in a manner far more catastrophic than anticipated. Many Mon State farmers have lost significant portions of rice crops for the 2009 rainy season, leaving them with no income or monetary resources to invest in summer paddy farming.

The Win-pha-non dam in Mudon Township, and the Katiak dam in Paung Township, have also contributed to significant crop loss through flooding. The dams, originally erected to reserve water for dry season rice paddy agriculture in Mon state, suffer from several design flaws. Neither dam is large enough to accommodate the amount of water that annually pours into the reservoirs during rainy season, and poorly designed spillways must routinely open to flood surrounding paddy fields with water, during the time of year when the nearby agricultural fields need it the least. These conditions have been exacerbated by the August 2009 rainfall in Mon State, leading to the loss of over 70,000 acres of rainy season rice paddies in the resultant flooding. Extensive crop damage has also been sustained in 2009 due to pests. Farmers in Mon state have reported crop losses of un-hulled rice paddy to mites and rats. Furthermore, a blight of insects that lay their eggs in the stem of rice plants has surfaced. The infested rice plants wither and die in the fields, and massive crop losses have been reported in Mon State; rice prices for the remaining harvest have doubled since December 2008.

### Ongoing Abuse:

The following abuses are those most commonly committed against farmers living in the Mon State townships of Kyaikmayaw, Mudon, Thanbyuzayat and Ye. These abuses have continued unabated since the SPDC began placing pressure on Mon state communities for support in the election.

### Arbitrary seizure of farmland:

The seizure of farmland by the SPDC has been a long-standing human rights abuse committed against Mon State farmers. Farms that have often been owned by generations of families are taken for use in government building projects or to use as state run farms. This abuse is inarguably one of the most crippling committed against farmers. With millions of kyat invested in cultivation, and few alternative economic opportunities, farmers whose land is sized end up destitute.

During late October 2009, over a hundred acres of farmland were confiscated from 22 farmers living in the Kamawat Sub-Township area in Mudon Township, Mon State. According to a source from Kamawat, the confiscated farmland is largely land that has been left to lie fallow for the past year due to the financial problems faced by many farmers in the area.

According to Nai Sa Neh, a Sein Taung resident who lost 5 acres, starting in May 2009, a number of high ranking battalion commanders from Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) No. 209, and authorities from the Mudon township land record department, arrived in a number of villages in the Kamarwat region. The battalion commanders and land authorities collected the names and information of farmers who had opted to leave portions of their fields unfarmed during the 2009 rainy season, the areas of fallow land were measured. This resident informed HURFOM's reporter that LIB No. 209 and the Mudon township agricultural authorities returned to Kamarwat near the end of October 2009, and confiscated unfarmed land in question for the Burmese Army's use.

According to Mi Yin Aye, a Sein Taung village resident:

My farmland was involved in this, 5 acres [were confiscated]. Last year after I farmed I had nothing because my



**A confiscated paddy farm by Light Infantry Battalion No. 209 in Kamawat, Mudon Township**

crops were flooded. This year, I thought it would be the same situation, so I didn't want to farm all of it [my land]. In summer time, the authorities don't allow us to farm the crops we want, they allow us to farm only what they want us to plant.

HURFOM field reporters learned that farmland has been confiscated by LIB No. 209 from many residents of Kamawat Sub-Township, as well from citizens of several nearby villages, including Sein Taung village, Htaung Kay village, and Hbae Doe village. HURFOM's reporter was also able to speak with individual villagers who had lost farmland. These residents include Nai Bai, a Sein Taung resident who lost 2 acres; Nai Sa Neh, a Sein Taung resident who lost 5 acres; Nai Hla Myint, a Sein Taung resident who lost 6 acres; Nai Poe Ta, a Sein Taung resident who lost 5 acres; and Mi Ma Yee, a Htaung Kay resident who lost 5 acres.

### Maintenance duty for gas-pipelines:



**Villagers from Waeyet and Waekhami are gathering to work for the gas pipeline [Photo taken on December 4th, 2009]**

During the last few months, research conducted by HURFOM field reporters shows that many farmers in Mudon and Thanbyuzayat townships, Mon State, whose paddy lands are located along the Kanbauk Myaing Kalay gas pipeline, have once again been ordered to perform pipeline maintenance by the Burmese army battalions in charge of the pipeline's security. This process often requires lengthy time commitments and the use of the farmers' own food supplies and work tools. Farmers suffer particularly when sentry duty is required during harvest time, as unattended crops will languish.

A HURFOM reporter living in southern Thanbyuzayat observed that in the second week of November, roughly 70 individuals, most of them paddy farmers from 4 different villages located along the pipeline in Thanbyuzayat Township who were busy with their rainy season crop harvest, were ordered to work along the pipeline. The residents of these villages have been charged with the task of building fences for the pipeline and reburying areas of pipeline that had become exposed by heavy downpours during the recently-ended rainy season.

A 50 year-old Karen resident of Waekhami village named U Tar Tar told HURFOM's field reporter that the headman of his village received orders from two gas pipeline security battalions, Infantry Battalion (IB) No 62, and Artillery Regiment (AR) No.315, to take responsibility for pipeline maintenance. In Waekhami village, every household has been ordered to provide one individual for pipeline labor. Each worker has also been commanded to supply his own materials for covering and fencing the pipeline, such as bamboo and coconut branches. Missing a day of pipeline labor results in a 3,000 kyat fine.

"We villagers have had to take responsibility for these kind of activities every single year [after rainy season ends] since the gas pipeline arrived [in 2001]," A villager, U Tar Tar, said, explaining why this duty has caused him troubles. "Even though we are busy on our farms we have to work on it [the pipeline] first."

According to Mi Aye Myint, a Waeyet villager, both men and women from her village are being forced to work on the gas pipeline; many must bring their small children with them to the pipeline, since failure to arrive for a day of work means paying a fine of 3,000 kyat to Sergeant Sa Yar Kyi, from the Thanbyuzayat-based IB No. 62.

A second Waeyet resident complained, "Villagers in Waeyet have to work on the pipeline nearly every single month. Even though we pay for security, 2,000 kyat a month, every month we still have to work on it. This



gas pipeline is a kind of hell for the villagers. Since it arrived [in 1995] it not only fails to benefit us, it also harms us.”

### **Extortion of money for cost of tractor:**

SPDC military battalion extortion of villagers and farm communities is a common abuse in Mon State, one that saps farmers of what little financial or material wealth they may have. Instances of cash or farm animal extortion is widespread. Often seeking some financial gain, battalion soldiers, or village and township peace and development councils, will make demands of ‘taxes’ under the pretense of legal justification.

On October 25th, the Mudon Township Peace and Development Council (TPDC)’s chairman U Kyaw Maung, his secretary, 5 members of the General Administration Department (GAD) and the agriculture committee held a meeting in Kamawat village to order local residents to donate money towards the purchase of a farm tractor to be used within the region.

The three villages that were included in the meeting were Kalotort, Kamawat, and Taung Pa villages. At the meeting the Mudon TPDC informed the three villages that each would have to pay a total of 200,000 kyat. The TPDC and individual VPDCs began collecting the money, however, according to HURFOM field reporters, during the collection process TPDC members collected more money than was originally decided by the TPDC at the meeting. This taxation will continue into 2010 and 2011, according to villagers.

Residents in the area’s villages were skeptical of the proposed intention of purchasing a community tractor. “I don’t believe the TPDC chairman when he talked about buying the farm tractor. But, we need to pay if they collect money from us because they are the ones with power,” said Nai Myoe, a 55 year-old Kamawat villager. “If I estimate the extortion payments I’ve had to pay in October, the cost is over 7,000 Kyat [not including the cost of the tractor].”

Previous TPDC proposals to purchase community mini tractor have yielded nothing, making area residents skeptical of this new proposal. Min Shin, a 36 year-old Kamawat Ywa-thit villager explained, “A couple years ago they said they would buy a mini tractor and collected residents’ money. But we have not seen any mini tractor they [supposedly] bought. I think now again they will make me play the same role.”



**A farm tractor which purchased with the community’s donation money in Mudon Township**

For farmers in the area, the cost of a tractor puts even greater pressure on the already trained funds available to farmers after this year’s poor harvest. “For farmers like us, it is not sustainable to live for long term in this village. We are only relying on our farm products [to earn a living],” Nai Myoe clarified to the HURFOM field reporter. “This year, we only harvested 60% of our farm’s produce. The authorities don’t know the plight of their residents. They just know about collecting money. It’s

the reason our life is difficult to continue in our future.”

### **Forced summer paddy cultivation:**

Rice paddy farmers in Mon state are now regularly forced to grow a summer season rice crop in addition to the normal rainy season yield. These summer crops provide little financial benefit to farmers that have already spent the previous few months growing rainy season crops. Farmers are often forced to choose between



**Members of Myanmar Agriculture Service (MAS) and Township Irrigation Department meeting the local rice farmers in Mudon Township**

planting the summer season crop or paying hefty fines to local battalions. Farmers that do agree to plant summer season fields often then must pay for large quantities of fertilizer to prepare their fields for a second crop.

On the third week of November 2009, the Mudon TPDC commanded farmers in Mudon Township to plant summer paddies on their farmlands. According to the Nai San Nyunt, who was forced to plant 5 acres of summer rice paddy, “we don’t have enough money to plant summer paddies. We also lost about 2,000,000 kyat on our rainy season paddy this year. We cannot plant a summer paddy without money. I think our family must borrow money from our neighbor to plant the 5 acres of summer paddy commended by the TPDC.”

Information from HURFOM’s field reporters proved that the forced planting of summer paddies between the years of 2008-2009 was the result of a direct command from the Burmese government in Naypyidaw to authorities in the Mon State townships of Ye, Mudon, and Thanbyuzayat.

According to a government staff member, who is working in the Township Administrative Department:

They [Naypyidaw government, Township Administrative Department] already know that the farmers did not get enough rice from their rainy season paddy crops. The orders are related to the country’s economy. If we compare it with the previous years’ rice paddy production, this year is only one-third [of the expected production rate]. The only thing the government can do to increase the rice production for this year is by forcing the farmers to plant summer rice paddies.

In second week of November, HURFOM’s field reporters went to the two villages in Thanbyuzayat Township where authorities have already commanded farmers to plant summer paddies. 10 farmers were interviewed about the struggles they faced planting summer paddies.

Nai Pan Htun, a 50 year-old who was forced to plant 5 acres of summer rice, explains why he was ordered to plant more rice paddy:

The Township Agriculture Committee and Land Survey Department commanded us to plant summer paddies in the places that VIPs [government officers] can see when they are traveling. The Agriculture Manager promised that they would give gasoline for the water pump engine, and that they would give us fertilizer. They also promised this last year, but nothing happened. Last year, we could plant rice well because we succeeded in our rainy season paddies. But I can imagine for this year [how bad planting rice will be].

Nai Mya Maung, who was forced to plant 6 acres of summer rice paddy, explained the difficulties and risks that endanger farmers forced to plant a second rice paddy crop:

If we begin planting our summer paddies, it will cost us at least 70,000 kyat for each acre. If we plant, there are many steps to worry about: In May, the paddy plants will sprout; in March, the rice paddy plants will bloom, and the final step is cultivation in June. If the rain falls in June, our entire paddy will be destroyed. It’s the primary steps to worry about when planting the summer paddies. Our farmers never get support from the government if we compare ourselves with other countries. We saw how in other countries, the governments give farming materials and money to support their local farmers to help them implement their farms. But, we have to stand on our own feet and use our own money to implement summer farms here. At the end, nothing will be left from our farm. We will just waste our money and time implementing summer paddies.

Forced summer paddy planting has also been noted outside of southern Thanbyuzayat Township. Farmers in the western Thanbyuzayat villages of Kwan Tart, Kyone Kadat, and Kyaikami, have been pressured by local authorities to plant summer rice paddies.

Mi Than Kyi, who owns 20 acres of farmland in the area, said:

Only one-third of the expected rainy season rice was received in this year, we had not finished cultivation yet... In total we got around 4 cow carts of rice. Now the local authorities have pressured us to plant summer paddies. They forced us to plant 5 acres of summer crops. The village headman said 'if you do not want to plant, you have to pay 50,000 kyat for one acre.' If we plant rice, we also have to spend that same amount of money [50,000 kyat] to plant one acre's worth of a summer rice paddy crop.

According to HURFOM's field reporter, local authorities have decided to plant 80 acres of summer paddies as a token gesture in Kyaikami and Kwan Tart areas. At the end of November, the authorities collected about 30 farmers in the region, and pressured them to plant summer paddies.

### Forced labor on agriculture projects:

Forced labor details often take villagers from their homes and farms for long periods of time. Without financial compensation, villagers are expected to provide for their own food. In addition to being physically demanding, the forced labor can come with risks of construction accidents or the rare assault from insurgent forces. Here, HURFOM examines recently documented cases of forced labor suffered by farmers living near two of Mon State's dams, Win-pha-non and Azin.

Due to the previously mentioned heavy rains of 2009, the Win-pha-non and Azin dams' water runoff canals filled up with excess silt. The Mudon authorities ordered farmers in region who live near the dams' water canals, to dredge the canals during the first week of November.

In early November 2009, Mudon TPDC chairman U Kyaw Maung, and authorities from the Mudon Irrigation Department led by U Win Maung, commanded farmers living near the dams to spend a week deepening the water canals that run across their farmlands; the forced labor occurred during the farmers' rice paddy cultivation periods. The villages in question that are crossed by the water canals are the settlements of Mayan, Kwan Tar, Kawkapone, and Hmeinkancin.

Mi Aye Than, a 40 year-old of Kawkapone villager, explains how she and her family were forced to dredge the canal rather than attend to their crop:

The Irrigation Department came to our farm and measured how many feet deep more we had to dig the canal. They wanted the canal to be 5 feet deep but we needed to dig 3 feet to get 5 feet. They said



**Summer rice farmers are digging a water canal near Abit village, Mudon Township**

that if we didn't want to dig deeper, we had give them 5,000 kyat a day, while they dug it deeper for us. We stopped our cultivation for a while and our family dug deep into the water canal.

Nai Pan Sein, a farmer from Kwan Tar village, Mudon Township, had to pay for the costs of dredging the portion of canal near his house:

My farm is one in the area that the water canal flows across the most. So the Irrigation Department comes to my farm for digging, but I had to pay them 25,000 kyat for their gasoline [for excavator digging the canal]. About 100



farmers' land has been cut across by the water canal. Some farmers dig the canals on their own but some pay money. The authorities get a lot of money.

### **Forced sales of discounted rice to the Army:**

The SPDC practice of forcing farmers to sell their rice products below the cost of market value is a significant financial abuse. Farmers invest millions of kyat in seeds, fertilizer, manual labor and other preparations, and are dependent on the intended profit to allow their families to survive in the off season as well as to pay for next years rice cultivation. Though the SPDC announced in 2003 that it would no longer be collecting this 'rice tax', the abuse continues in Mon state with SPDC battalions forcing the sales of rice at 2/3rds to 1/2 the market price.

Local farmers who live in Kyaikmayaw told HURFOM's reporters that the local Burmese army battalion has been collecting rice but only giving farmers low amounts of payment.

Ko Myo Wai, 26, a son of a farmer with a 15-acre farm living near Kyaikmayaw town explained:

They [Burmese privates] are still collecting rice paddy from the local Mon farmers with a price two times lower than the current market price. The village headmen told us that the instructions came from the local Burmese battalions Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) No. 210 which is based in Kyauk Tha Lone. The village authorities and 3 quarter masters from LIB No. 210 formed a paddy-buying committee in our village on this November 25th. Then, they demanded our help selling rice with discounted prices to the army's food supply programs. Thus, villagers who cultivated the rainy season rice paddies this year were instructed to sell out their rice at the rate of 3 baskets per acre. They [the army's food supply program] paid 2,500 kyat per baskets but in the market, a basket cost 5,200 kyat in Kyaikmayaw.

Similarly, the residents of Pain-nae-gone village who cultivate rice have also has been forced to sell their crops at low prices for LIB No. 210's food supplies program. "All of us, approximately 145 farmers, were ordered to sell our rice, 15 to 30 baskets each, to the LIB No. 210. I just received half of the current market price," a Burmese-Indian farmer who live in Pain-Nae-Gone village told HURFOM reporter.

Similar instances of forced rice discounts were reported in the Infantry Battalion (IB) No. 61 controlled areas of Ye township of southern Mon State, in the last week of November 2009. IB No.61 is operating under the command of Military Operation Command (MOC) No.19, based in Ye. These abuses reportedly occurred in Andin and Duya village-tract.

Nai Ong Than, a witness from Duya village, told HURFOM's reporter on November 26<sup>th</sup>:

According to their [army officers'] orders, people have to send their rice to the VPDC compound, located in the middle of the village. They have been taking rice from the local farmers, about three baskets of paddy per acre [a basket contain 66 kg], they ordered this yesterday, and about 200 paddy farmers from my village were ordered to send the rice in on time, and the deadline is December 1st, 2009. They promised that they [the officers] will pay 2,000 per basket.

A 55 year old ethnic Mon farmer from the area explained to a HURFOM field reporter why he fears that he and his family will face a food crisis in 2010:

Battalion and VPDC official told us that they will pay 2,000 to 2,500 depending on how good our rice is...at this time, I am really concerned about next year. I don't think I can feed my family with the 50 baskets of rice that I produced from 7 acres of paddy fields. I am worrying about this all of the time.

### **Impacts:**

The human rights abuses documented above by HURFOM are a sampling of the daily conditions under which farmers in Mon state hope to make a living. The difficulties that these farmers report operating in are

the climate in which the current SPDC 2010 election preparations occur. For the vast majority of villages with in these 4 townships, it is the agricultural community that will bear the full brunt of these preparations.

This means that in addition to the disasters and abuses farmers in Mon state face, they also must bear the full weight of requirements by SPDC election organizers to participate in 2010 election training and activities.

**Ongoing SPDC trainings for 2010 election:**

Sanyaie, a 56 year-old farmer, from Kropie Village, Thanbyuzayat Township, told HURFOM’s field reporter, “The training was in Thanbyuzayat Township from November 1<sup>st</sup> through the third week of November. It took about 15 days total. The organizer for my village was the chairman of the VPDC, Nai Kharton, who is also the leader of the village militia.”

HURFOM’s report learned from Sanyaie that 5 farmers from his village, including him, were forced to take part in the fire-brigade training in Thanbyuzayat Town; he was forced to attend, despite his age, because all of his children work as migrant workers in Thailand and Malaysia, and he had no sons to take his place in the training course.

First I understand that it was a fire brigade training, because they gave the course the title ‘Upgrading Fire Brigade Skills Training’. In reality, the trainer spoke in Burmese and focused more on basic militia training, including using weapons and guns. During the training period all participants got a chance to use the gun in their own hands. In the course, most of the participants were Burmese speakers. They were people who back them [the Burmese military government]. Also there were a lot of people from different villages...I left my job in the village at that time – my monsoon paddy had not been finished harvesting yet. I had to hire other laborers and it cost another 15,000 kyat.

A villager from Kyone Kadat village worked as a laborer on his family farm, who wished to remain unnamed out of security concerns, explained:

As my village is close to Thanbyuzayat town, in the training the majority of the participants were from my village...We were collecting rice from the farm and were nearly finished at that time. So he and his laborers were working and I went to the town to join the training. That was in November – other people are now forced to join [the training] as well. Some villagers already knew that the trainings are not only fire-brigade training. Most people are not interested in the training subjects. And also there were a lot of rumors about the trainings that those who trained the people are going to use them in the 2010 election period. It means they are very well organized. During the 15 days we were trained to use ammunition, to use guns, and clean weapons.

According to this source, the training also involved trainings on beating people and dispersing protests with through violence, as well as how to surround and contain protests. The Joan Kahdet villager continued:

It seemed like a really advanced training. There was also a political subject training included. Our participants’ education levels were not the same. Some had basic education while others had higher education levels, so



**An information board from the fire brigade advanced training, Thanbyuzayat Township**





for those with basic education, they [the trainers] focused more on how to use guns and sticks. For those who are graduated or have some higher education, they learned how to organize the people. How to conduct a census, and how to give the education of the people for the coming election.

In the case of another villager who refused to give his name due to security concerns, from Taung Pha Lut village, commented on the forced training in his village, and what he believes will be the result of the trainings:



In my village there were a total of 10 participants forced to join the training in November. I cannot say how many farmers had to go – however most of the villagers in my village are paddy farmers and rubber farmers. What I can say is that they had to leave their work and go and join the training, so the rest of the households had to support them by paying 3,000 kyat per household and we have 700 households in this village. We are the tax payers, we are the supporters, and we are forced to support this training. There is no doubt that they are going to use the se people in the future political movements.

**Villagers were forced to take part in the fire-brigade training in Thanbyuzayat Town, Mon State** [Photos taken on November 7th, 2009]

### **Impact of election preparation trainings on farmers:**

For farmers in Mon state, it is a cruel coincidence of fate that the year 2009 has brought such pressure on efforts to grow crops. However with that being the condition farmers have worked under, pressure by SPDC government forces to coerce farmers into participating in junta backed “fire brigades” and village militias will threaten their already precarious agricultural situation.

The problem is that from each of these abuses, farmers in Mon state face significant economic impacts after an extremely limited rice paddy harvest. For many of the farmers, with reduced volume of paddy they were able to harvest, the addition of these abuses puts an extreme strain on budgets, plunging many farmers into debt. Even in instances where SPDC administration insists on farmers growing a summer season paddy crop, the costs to farmers outweigh and financial benefit that might be gained.

For farmers that have been dependent on cultivating and harvesting their remaining undamaged crop of, missing 1 to 2 weeks of work in paddy fields to attend training can be catastrophic. Farmers that are able will hire laborers to complete the cultivation or harvest for them; however this also adds an additional unconventional cost. The concern that HURFOM hopes to highlight is the long-term negative impacts these preparations will have on farmers. In addition to the possibility to losing any profit, there is an even greater

### Information on HURFOM and Invitation for Feedbacks from Readers

Dear Readers,

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

- monitoring the human rights situations in Mon territory and other areas Southern Burma,
- protecting and promoting internationally recognized human rights in Burma

In order to implement these objectives, HURFOM produces the monthly "Mon Forum" newsletter. If publication is delayed it is because we are waiting to confirm information, and it comes with our heartfelt apologies.

We encourage you to write to us if you have feedback or if you know someone who you think would like to receive the newsletter. Please email or mail a name and address to:

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Website: <http://www.rehmonnya.org>

With regards,

Director  
Human Rights Foundation of Monland

danger of food crisis. Without a large enough harvest, farmers and community member will be forced to choose between rice as a commodity to be eaten, and the means to plant next season rice harvest.

### Conclusion:

As these preparations for the 2010 election continue, communities in Mon state, including farmers, will face extreme difficulty surviving. The pressure of the abuses noted above is immense, and each plays a role in undercutting the ability of farmers to survive for another season of farming. Government seizure of farms is



Farmers from Kwan Tar village transferring their undamaged crop to their homes on December first week, 2009

an obvious killing stroke for a farmer's livelihood. Forced sowing of summer paddy wastes farmers' resources, energy, and time in the cultivation a weak crop for government benefits. The extortion of funds, and the forced labor farmers must perform on agricultural and gas pipeline projects, steals the few resources farmers have to cultivate their crop with – money and time.

With much emphasis being place on election preparations by the government, there is little to no demonstration of understanding of economics in the region. By taking farmers who work at the time-sensitive job of growing rice, and placing them in militarized election training, the Burmese

military government's election preparations threaten to undermine the livelihood of the entire region. HURFOM hopes to strongly emphasize that these practices are ongoing, and will continue as SPDC forces continue to aim for removing community autonomy in the coming election. Without successful rice crops, or legitimate support for farms to renew their capacity to cultivate next season, these 4 townships will likely encounter issues of food shortages and economic stagnation in the following years.



**These undamaged crop were not harvested yet in Mudon and Kyaikmayaw townships [Photo taken on December 16th, 2009]**



**Personal Account from Page No. 5**

residents went and collected cogon grass from the rubber plantations, they had to give investors half of their gatherings, despite the fact that these investors never helped with the harvesting.

Many residents are facing a very difficult situation in the camp, because they have no jobs in Halockhane camp, and they do not get enough food from the

MRDC. Many residents also have moved from Halockhane to work outside of the camp, but they face many difficulties, because the income they earn as laborers is not enough for daily expenditures.

Mi Myint Than informed HURFOM that the lands near Halockhane camp are planted with rubber plantations and residents cannot collect rice stubble, as they previously used to do to earn their incomes.

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