



**Karen Human Rights Group**

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

## **International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action**

April 4<sup>th</sup> 2018

On 8 December 2005, the General Assembly declared that 4 April of each year shall be observed as the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action. On this occasion, KHRG calls on the Government of Myanmar to take action against the use of landmines in order to better protect villagers living in mine contaminated areas in Myanmar. Decades of ongoing conflict have left villagers living in fear due to the landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) that litter the land and continue to constitute a serious threat to the safety, health and lives of villagers.

Despite Myanmar's Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) which states that all signatories to the 2015 agreement will end the use of landmines, and cooperate towards clearing all landmines, KHRG reports indicate that this promise is not being upheld. KHRG continues to receive reports on the new use of landmines and that landmines remain persistent threat to villagers in the region. KHRG reports show that throughout the last 26 years, Tatmadaw, Border Guard Forces (BGF), and the DKBA (Buddhist, Benevolent and splinter) have planted landmines as a strategy to terrorise villagers. More recently, armed actors are now planting landmines not only to defend themselves but also to protect key income generating industries of which armed groups control.

As a result, southeast Myanmar is substantially contaminated with landmines, which augments and reinforces villagers ongoing security concerns and the militarised environment in which they live. Given that landmines are often undetectable, they continue to kill and injure villagers. In order to better protect villagers and address landmine contamination in Myanmar, KHRG recommends:

- The Myanmar Government, Tatmadaw, BGF and ethnic armed groups (EAGs) must agree to and enforce a comprehensive ban on the new use of landmines and ensure that all existing landmine areas are clearly marked and villagers are informed for their safety. Before any actor starts systematic demining efforts, meaningful consultations must be held with relevant stakeholders, including local communities, as demining without consultation in conflict-sensitive areas could lead to further conflict. Moreover, removal of landmines, unexploded ordnance (UXO) and other remnants of war should only be conducted by trained and equipped professionals.

- The Myanmar Ministry of Health, KDHW and community-based healthcare providers should ensure that landmine victims and other persons whose health has been severely affected by conflict and abuse have access to free medical care. Humanitarian and development actors should assist in providing funding and building their capacity to ensure free quality healthcare for all victims.