

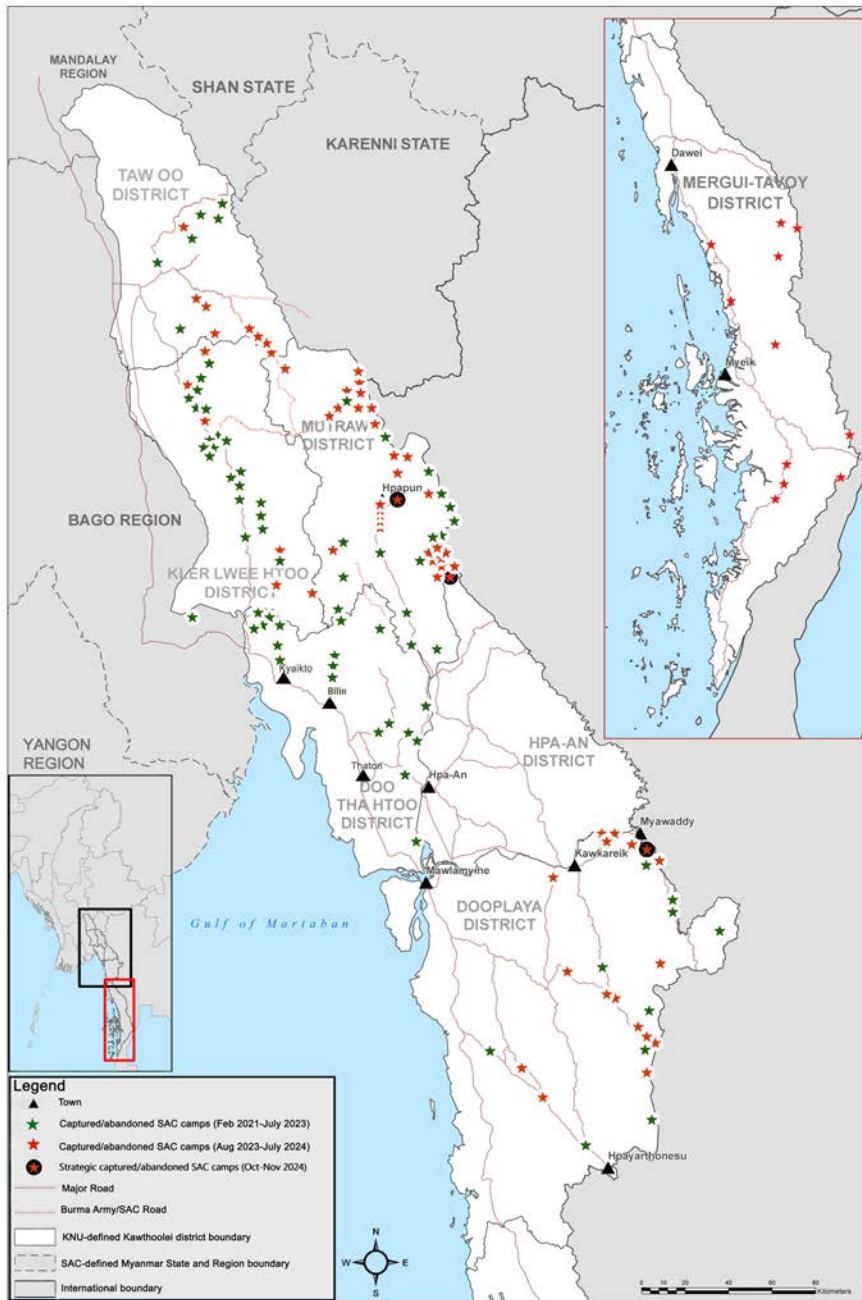


# Regaining Control of Our Lands

In the past year, the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and their allies have made significant territorial gains in southeast Burma, seizing 70 military camps of the State Administration Council (SAC) junta – half the overall total of 138 camps seized since the February 2021 coup – and bringing large sections of the Thai-Burma border back under Karen control for the first time in 40 years.

Escalated air and artillery attacks by the SAC have failed to halt the KNLA’s military expansion, but have inflicted high civilian casualties and caused the number of IDPs in Kawthoolei districts to soar to over one million. Border-based CBOs have stepped up their relief efforts to assist the growing number of IDPs – whose rice supplies have been further depleted by this year’s heavy flooding – but remain constrained by lack of support from international donors, who continue to channel most aid through Yangon-based agencies despite their lack of access to areas outside SAC control.

SAC military camps captured or forcibly abandoned since February 2021



## About KPSN

Karen Peace Support Network (KPSN) is the largest network of Karen civil society organizations in Burma/Myanmar. KPSN member organizations have facilitated humanitarian support for vulnerable conflict-affected Karen communities, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and refugees for decades. KPSN works to empower local Karen communities, document human rights issues, and facilitate advocacy for a sustainable and equitable peace in Karen areas of Burma.



## Quickening pace of KNLA expansion

| Overall total of SAC military camps captured or forcibly abandoned during 42 months after coup (Feb 2021-Jul 2024) |           |           |            | Total SAC camps captured or abandoned during past 12 months alone (Aug 2023-Jul 2024) |
|--|-----------|-----------|------------|---|
| District   | Captured  | Abandoned | Total      |   |
| Doo Tha Htoo (Thaton)  | 1         | 17        | 18         | 0   |
| Taw Oo (Taungoo)   | 1         | 12        | 13         | 7   |
| Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin)   | 10        | 16        | 26         | 7   |
| Mergui/Tavoy (Taningtharyi)  | 6         | 5         | 11         | 11  |
| Mutraw (Papun)   | 14        | 29        | 43         | 26  |
| Doolaya  | 21        | 3         | 24         | 16  |
| Hpa-An   | 0         | 3         | 3          | 3   |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>53</b> | <b>85</b> | <b>138</b> | <b>70</b>   |

Out of the total 138 SAC military camps lost to resistance forces in Karen Districts from the February 2021 military coup until mid-2024, over half were lost during the recent period of mid-2023 to mid-2024. This shows the increased pace of military expansion by the KNLA and its allies during the past year.

Over a third of the camps recently gained were in Mutraw (Hpapun) district, which is now almost completely under Karen National Union (KNU) control, including its entire Salween river border with Thailand. 16 camps were gained in Doolaya District, mostly along the Asia Highway and other road links to the Thai border. In Mergui-Tavoy, all 11 camps taken since the coup were during

the last year, showing the significant increase in KNU military activity in the southern region.

The SAC has also lost several strategically important camps just in the past month. The Shwe Daw Gone hilltop artillery base, a key vantage point over areas along the Thai border south of Myawaddy, was seized on October 17. The Kaw Pu base, one of SAC's last strongholds in Hpapun, housing troops from four battalions, was overrun on October 29. And on November 1, the K'Saw Wah Lay mountaintop base near the Salween-Moei confluence – whose seizure by the military regime precipitated the fall of the KNU's Manerplaw headquarters in January 1995 -- finally returned to Karen control.



SAC base captured in Mutraw District, November 9, 2024



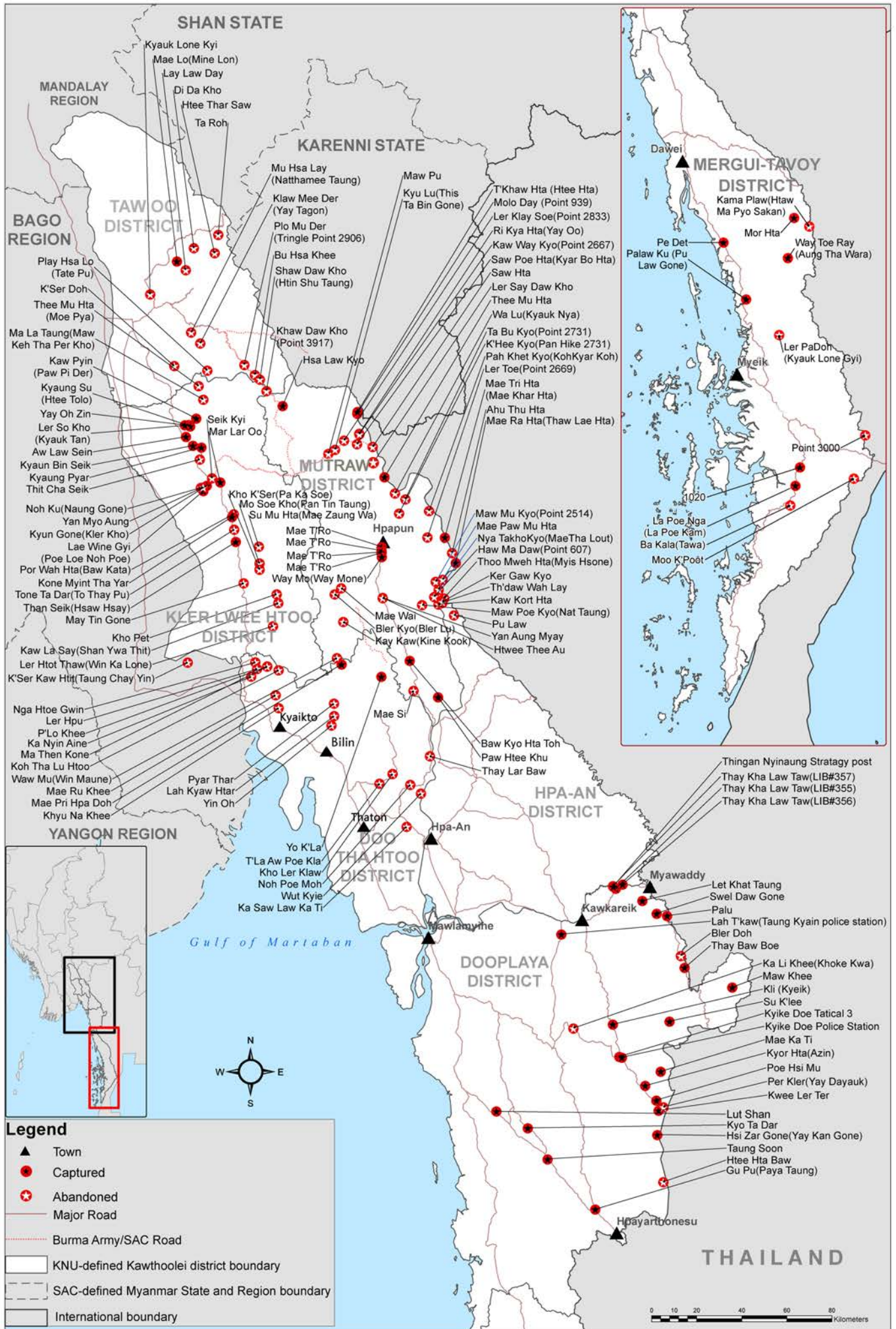
SAC base captured in Mutraw District, November 9, 2024



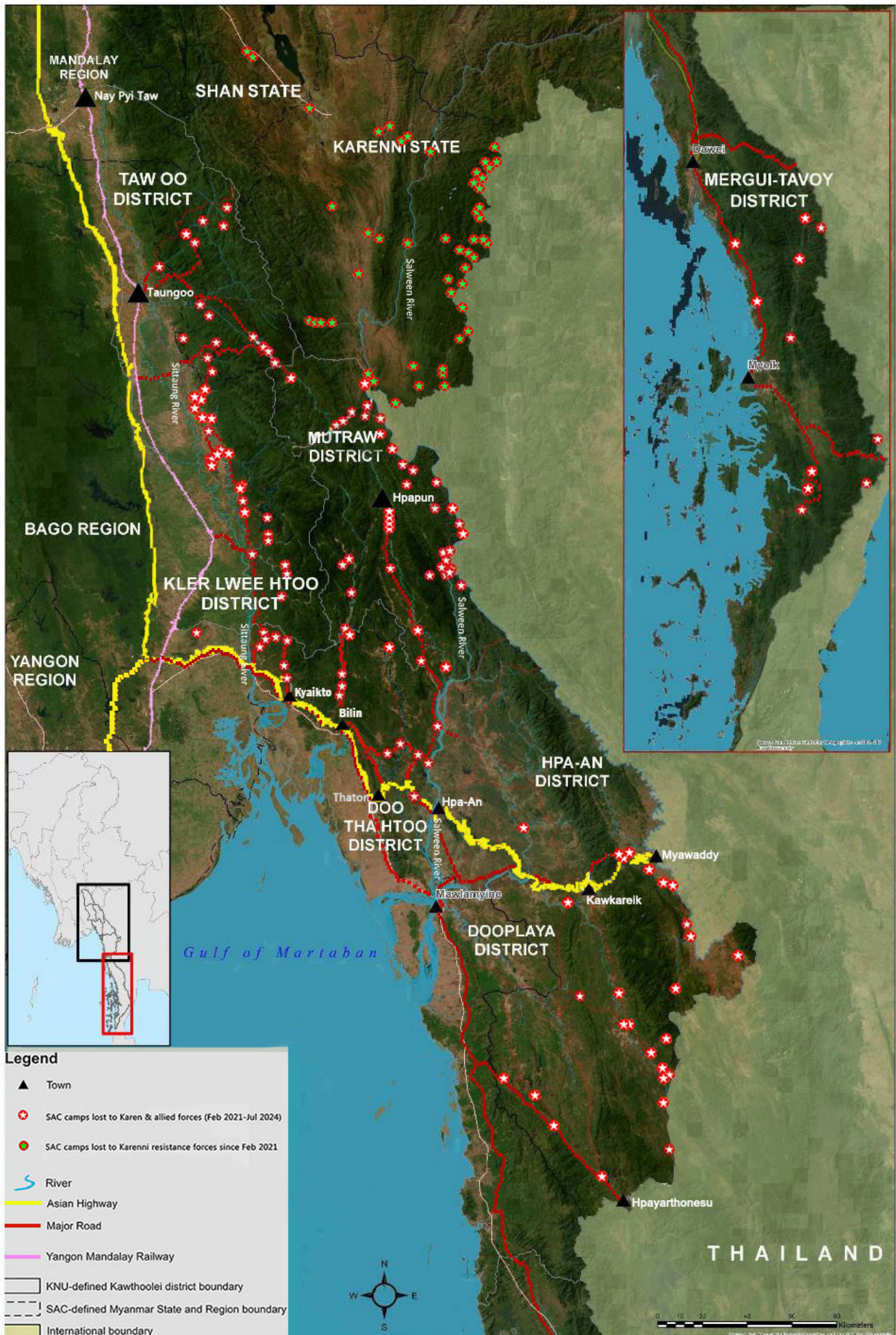
SAC base captured on the Shwe Daw Gone hilltop in Doolaya district



Names of SAC camps captured or abandoned (February 2021 to July 2024)



Topographic and infrastructure map showing SAC camp losses in southeast Burma from February 2021 to July 2024



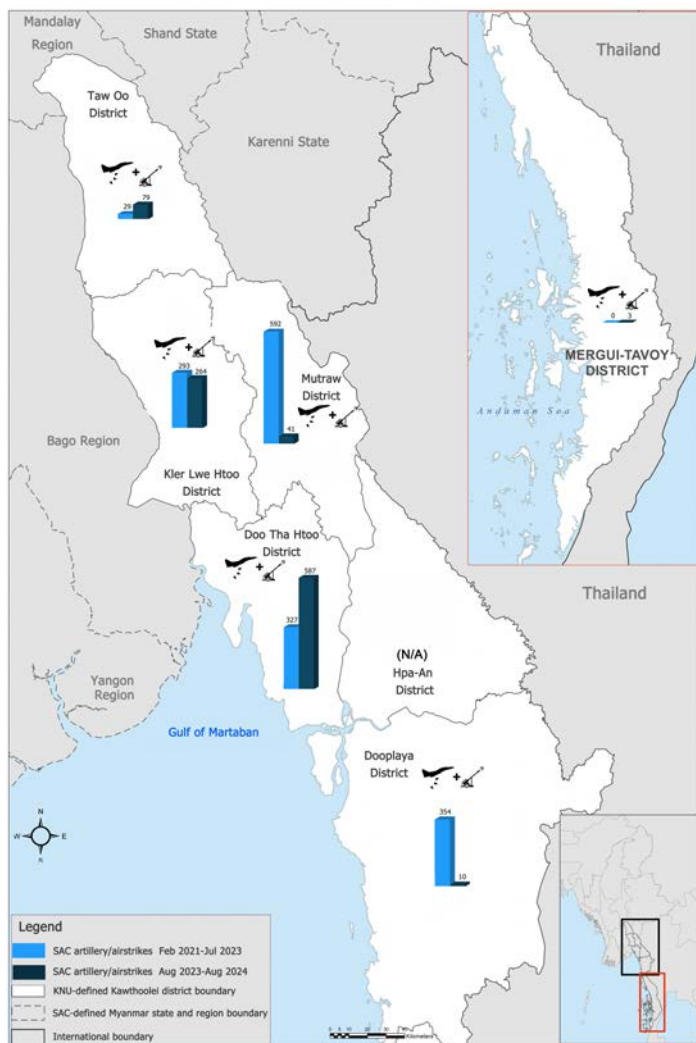
Locations of SAC camps lost to Karenni resistance forces since Feb 2021 are based on data from the Karenni Civil Society Network

The topographic map shows that resistance forces are consolidating control over the mountains on the eastern edge of the Sittaung river valley, thereby increasingly threatening the regime’s central transport artery between Naypyitaw and Yangon. They are also progressively encroaching northwards, to within only 80 kilometers from the regime’s central command hub at Naypyitaw.

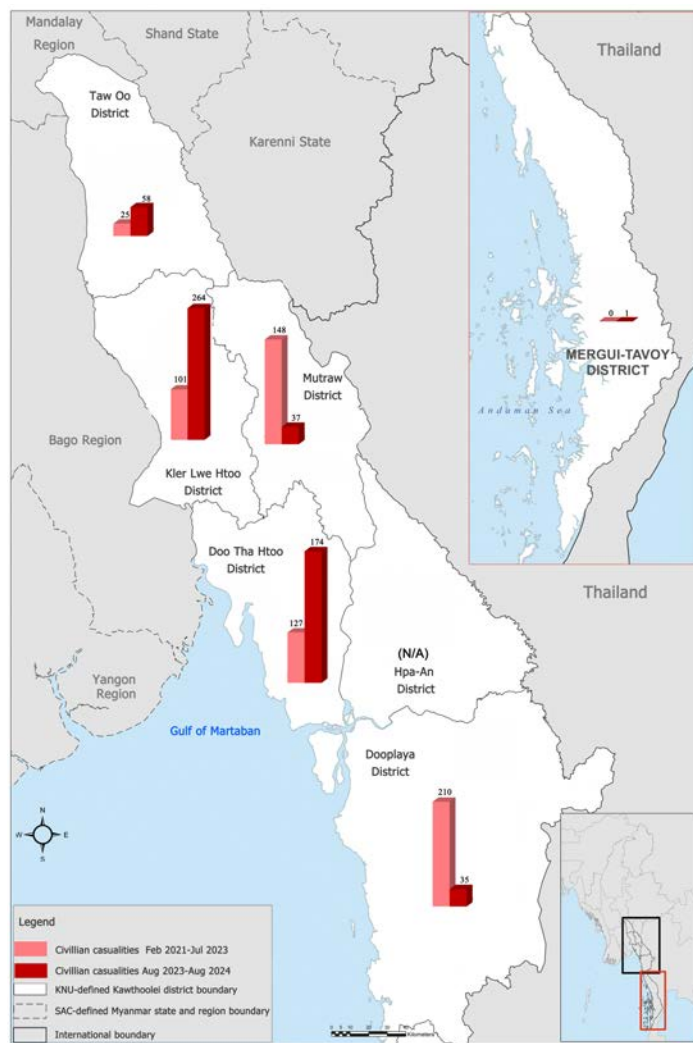
The map also shows that large stretches of the Thai-Burma border have been taken over by resistance forces. The SAC has lost control of the entire length of the northern Karen and Karenni State borders adjoining the Thai province of Mae Hong Son, as well as much of the Thai border south of Myawaddy, adjoining southern Tak province.

## Increased SAC air and artillery attacks on civilian targets during past year

Comparison of frequency of SAC air/artillery strikes: early post-coup period vs current period



Civilian casualties from SAC air and artillery strikes: early post-coup period vs current period



| Number       | District       | Attillery/airstrikes |            | Casualties             |            |
|--------------|----------------|----------------------|------------|------------------------|------------|
|              |                | Feb 2021 - July 2023 |            | August 2023 - Aug 2024 |            |
| 1            | Doo Tha Htoo   | 327                  | 127        | 587                    | 174        |
| 2            | Taw Oo         | 29                   | 25         | 79                     | 58         |
| 3            | Kler Lwee Htoo | 293                  | 101        | 264                    | 264        |
| 4            | Mergui-Tavoy   | -                    | -          | 3                      | 1          |
| 5            | Mutraw         | 592                  | 148        | 41                     | 37         |
| 6            | Dooplaya       | 354                  | 210        | 10                     | 35         |
| 7            | Hpa-An         | -                    | -          | -                      | -          |
| <b>Total</b> |                | <b>1,595</b>         | <b>611</b> | <b>984</b>             | <b>569</b> |

The map of SAC air and artillery strikes on civilian areas shows these attacks have significantly increased in several districts during the past 13 months compared to the previous 30 months, despite less than half the period of time. In the Karen districts of Doo Tha Htoo and Taw Oo these strikes have sharply increased, while remaining high in Kler Lwe Htoo.

The SAC attacks have mainly been in defence of its bases in the central lowlands and its supply routes into the mountainous regions of these districts where the KNLA is gaining control.

The number of SAC strikes in Mutraw and Dooplaya has fallen significantly during the past year, compared to the previous 2 ½ years, mainly because of the loss of SAC control in these districts, and the resulting inability to use artillery.

As for civilian casualties, these have mirrored the changes in artillery and air attacks, increasing in Doo Tha Htoo and Taw Oo districts and decreasing in Mutraw and Dooplaya. However, the number of casualties in Kler Lwe Htoo has more than doubled despite a constant number of attacks, due to KNLA's expansion into the more densely populated lowland areas, such as Mone and Kyaukkyi, where SAC air and artillery strikes can inflict higher casualties.

| Community buildings destroyed by SAC airstrikes or shelling<br>(Feb 2021-Aug 2024) |               |           |                       |           |             |
|--|---------------|-----------|-----------------------|-----------|-------------|
| No   | District      | Schools   | Hospitals/<br>Clinics | Churches  | Monasteries |
| 1  | Doo Tha Htu   | 2         | 2                     | 0         | 4           |
| 2  | Taw Oo        | 2         | 3                     | 4         | 2           |
| 3  | Kler Lwee Htu | 7         | 5                     | 6         | 15          |
| 4  | Bli/Dawai     | 0         | 1                     | 0         | 0           |
| 5  | Mutraw        | 8         | 4                     | 7         | 2           |
| 6  | Doo Pla Ya    | 3         | 5                     | 6         | 8           |
| 7  | Hpa-An        | 0         | 1                     | 0         | 0           |
|  | <b>Total</b>  | <b>22</b> | <b>21</b>             | <b>23</b> | <b>31</b>   |

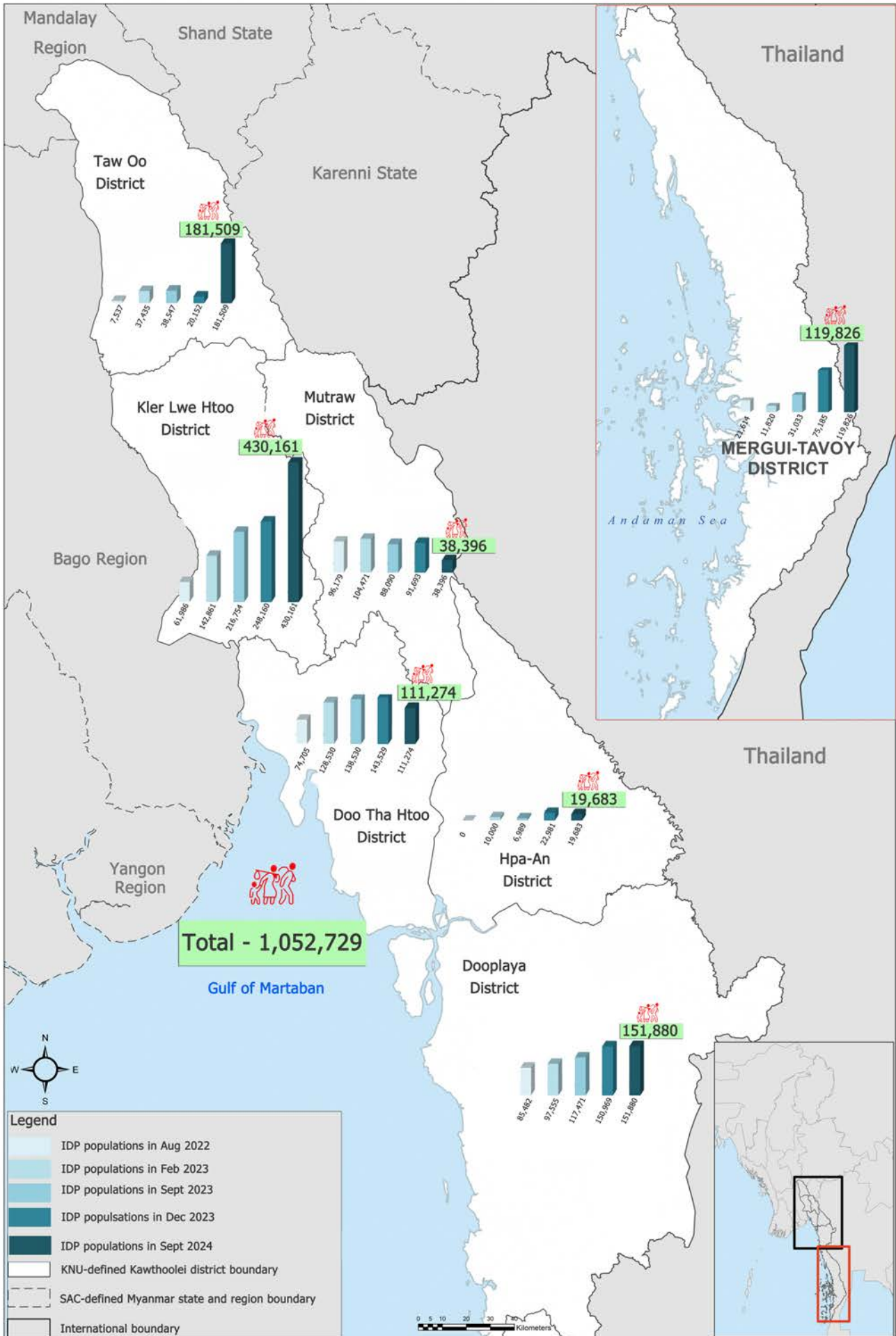
The chart of schools, hospitals and religious buildings destroyed by SAC airstrikes or shelling since the coup shows a clear pattern that of directly targeting local community centres, with the deliberate intention of maximising civilian casualties and sabotaging community cohesion.



SAC air and artillery attacks force children to study in the forest, Mutraw District

# Kawthoolei IDP numbers soar to over one million

Changes in IDP populations in Kawthoolei districts: Aug 2022-Sept 2024



Changes in IDP populations in Kawthoolei districts: Aug 2022- Sept 2024

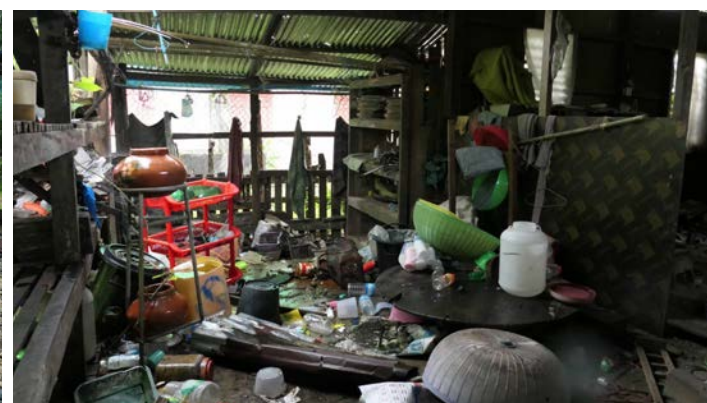
| No | District      | Aug. 2022      | Feb. 2023      | Sep. 2023      | Dec. 2023      | Sept. 2024       |
|----|---------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|
| 1  | Doo Tha Htoo  | 74,705         | 128,530        | 138,530        | 143,529        | 111,274          |
| 2  | Taw Oo        | 7,537          | 37,435         | 38,547         | 20,152         | 181,509          |
| 3  | Kler Lwe Htoo | 61,986         | 142,861        | 216,754        | 248,160        | 430,161          |
| 4  | Mergui-Tavoy  | 21,614         | 11,820         | 31,033         | 75,185         | 119,826          |
| 5  | Mutraw        | 96,179         | 104,471        | 88,090         | 91,693         | 38,396           |
| 6  | Dooplaya      | 85,482         | 97,555         | 117,471        | 150,969        | 151,880          |
| 7  | Hpa-An        | -              | 10,000         | 6,989          | 22,981         | 19,683           |
|    | <b>Total</b>  | <b>347,503</b> | <b>532,672</b> | <b>637,414</b> | <b>752,669</b> | <b>1,052,729</b> |

In September 2024, for the first time since the February 2021 coup, the number of IDPs in Kawthoolei reached to over one million, an increase of 40% from the end of 2023, when the total was 752,699.

The highest increase in IDPs was in Kler Lwe Htoo and Taw Oo districts, where the KNLA and allies have expanded control of the mountainous eastern regions of these districts, moving ever closer to the SAC's lowland bases in the Sittaung Valley and the command centre at Naypyitaw. SAC's air and artillery strikes to defend against KNLA expansion into the lowlands, particularly in the densely populated Mone and Kyaukkyi areas, have resulted in large numbers of IDPs.

While SAC air and artillery strikes have caused high numbers of civilian casualties in Doo Tha Htoo district during the past year, this has not caused such high levels of displacement as in Kler Lwe Htoo, mainly because the attacks have been in defence of troop reinforcements along supply routes into Mutraw, and have not been part of sustained fighting in Doo Tha Htoo itself. Many villagers fleeing attacks have therefore been able to return home after the fighting died down.

The KNU's expanded control of Mutraw has enabled two-thirds of the IDP population to now return home.



During March and April 2024, SAC artillery and airstrikes damaged civilian homes and buildings in Anan Kwin village, Dooplaya District



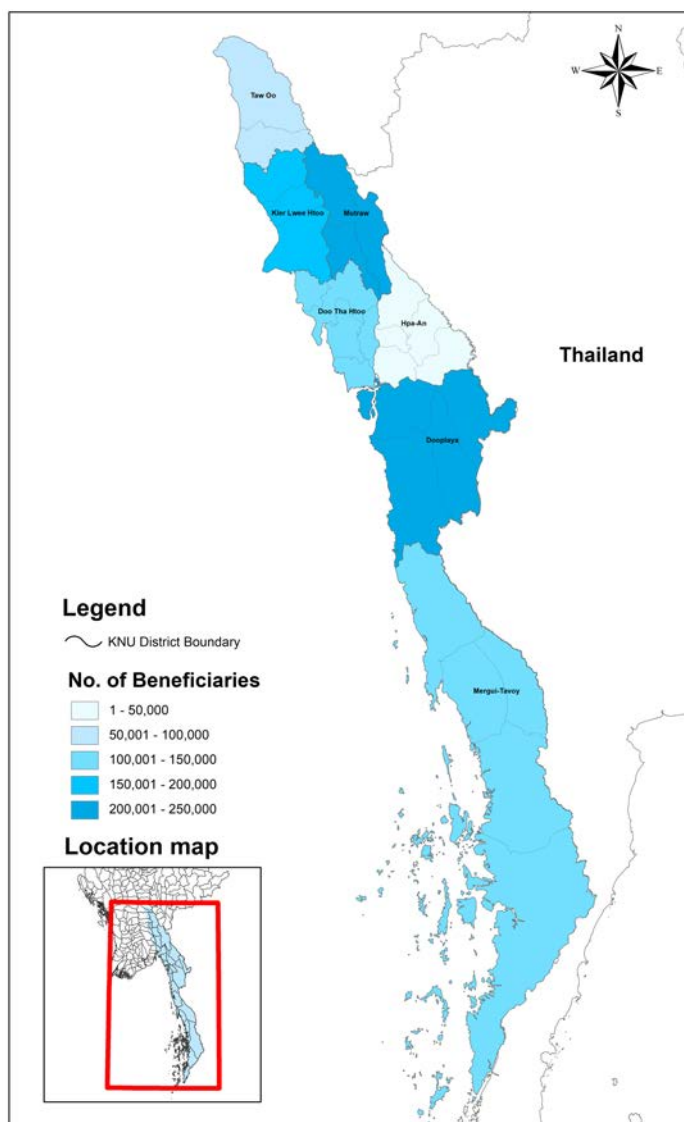
Crater from SAC airstrike on Kyone Kha Wan village, Win Yae township, where there was no fighting, on Sept 9, 2024

Monastery and clinic in Anan Kwin village, Dooplaya District, burned down by SAC troops in August 2024

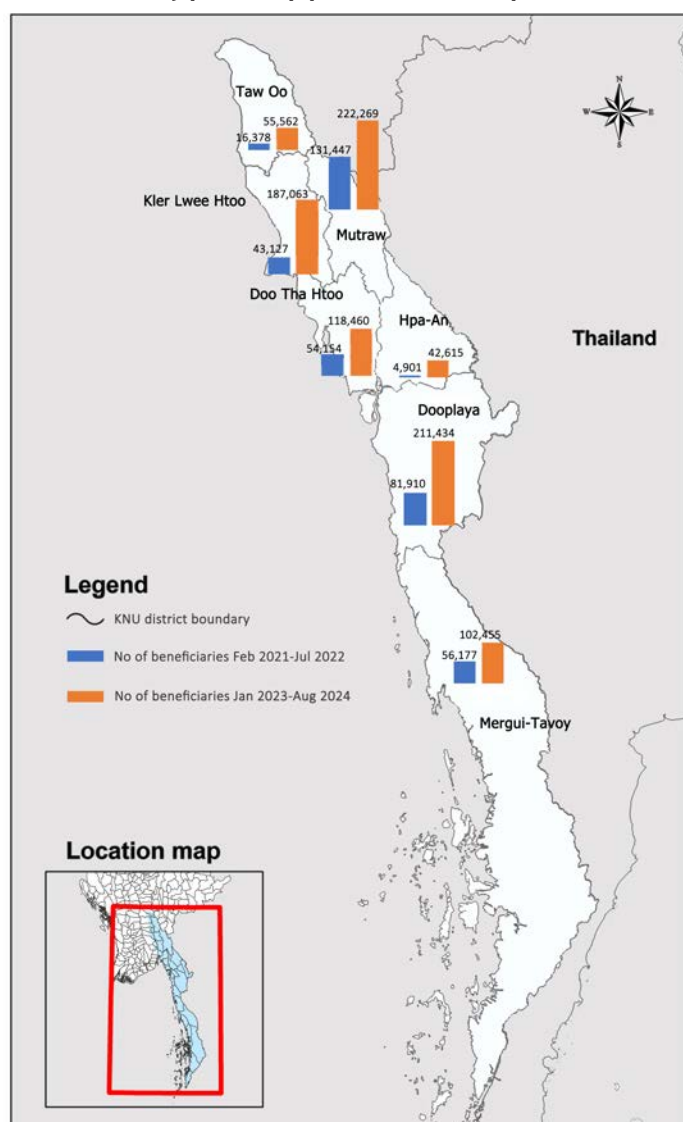


# Expanded distribution of cross-border food aid to IDPs in Kawthoolei

Karen Organizations' humanitarian response:  
Location of food and beneficiaries January 2023-August 2024



Comparison of beneficiaries assisted cross-border:  
early post-coup period vs current period



Comparison of beneficiaries assisted during early post-coup period vs current period in each district

| No | District       | Beneficiaries<br>Feb 2021–July 2022<br>(18 months) | Beneficiaries<br>January 2023– August 2024<br>(20 months) |
|----|----------------|--|---|
| 1  | Doo Tha Htoo   | 54,154   | 118,460   |
| 2  | Taw Oo         | 16,378   | 55,562  |
| 3  | Kler Lwee Htoo | 43,127   | 187,063   |
| 4  | Mergui-Tavoy   | 56,177   | 102,455   |
| 5  | Mutraw         | 131,447  | 222,269   |
| 6  | Dooplaya       | 81,910   | 211,434   |
| 7  | Hpa-An         | 4,901  | 42,615  |
|    | <b>Total</b>   | <b>388,094</b>                                     | <b>939,858</b>  |

As the total number of IDPs has now tripled from about 347,000 in August 2022 to over 1 million by September 2024, the response by Karen humanitarian relief organisations has likewise nearly tripled, providing aid to nearly 940,000 beneficiaries from January 2023 to August 2024, compared to about 388,000 during the previous 18 months.

Karen relief organisations have also been able to expand their delivery capacity in response to the growing needs. For example, in the district of Kler Lwe Htoo, bordering the Sittaung river valley in central Burma, they have been able to more than quadruple their assistance from about 43,000 beneficiaries in the early post-coup period to now over 187,000 in a similar time period up to August 2024.

Despite being able to distribute assistance efficiently and effectively in all areas of Kawthoolei, the biggest challenge remains underfunding by international donors, who continue to provide the vast majority of aid through Yangon-based agencies – who are confined to areas under SAC control and therefore unable to access the neediest conflict-affected populations -- instead of providing assistance directly cross-border.

Thus, despite reaching larger numbers, Karen organizations have only been able to provide amounts of food assistance sufficient for up to 3 months per person, instead of the amount actually needed, lasting 6 months.



IDPs from different villages in Doo Tha Htoo District



IDPs from different villages in Dooplaya District



IDPs receiving cross-border cash support in Doo Tha Htoo District



IDPs from different villages in Dooplaya District



IDPs from Krutu Township, in Dooplaya District



Villagers injured by airstrike in Doo Tha Htoo District



Children injured by airstrike in Doo Tha Htoo District



On September 13, 2024, SAC artillery shelling destroyed a civilian rubber farm, killing animals, in Kyaikto township



## Heavy flooding exacerbates IDP food crisis in Kawthoolei

While the SAC's increasing attacks on civilians, civilian infrastructure and food stocks have been the main cause of displacement and resulting food shortages, extreme weather conditions in 2024 have exacerbated the food crisis facing the over one million IDPs in Kawthoolei.

Heavy rain and floods from July to September damaged large numbers of rice fields in Taw Oo, Mutraw, Hpa-an and Doo Tha Htoo districts of Kawthoolei. The floods also led to increased pest attacks on rice plants. As a result, affected districts will be unlikely to produce even 50% of the paddy harvested in 2024. Rice crops are normally harvested in October/November and the next crop will not be until the end of 2025.

This will have dramatic impacts on food supplies. First, the price of local rice will jump accordingly and current assistance levels providing 1-3 months food support will only be able to purchase a fraction of that. Second, there will simply not be enough local rice available to meet minimum survival levels.

Communities in some areas are already planning to address the rice shortages by developing new irrigation projects to enable rice to be planted in the dry season, and by planting alternative crops, such as cassava, instead of rice as a staple food source.



Snail eggs

Heavy floods and pest infestation have destroyed crops in Mutraw District



IDPs from Krutu Township, Dooplaya District



IDPs from Krutu Township, Dooplaya District

## Urgent need for funding to address IDP food crisis

With a population of 1,052,729 IDPs in Kawthoolei at the end of September 2024, and with current rice prices, at least US\$114 million is required to provide six months' rice assistance for each IDP for 2025.

This does not take into account the shortage of local rice supplies, and the necessity to import rice from other areas, which will require extra funding. Funding is also needed to support new community agricultural projects to address the food security crisis.

Unless the IDP food crisis is addressed, it is likely that refugee outflows from Kawthoolei will vastly increase.



Shwe Daw Gone (a.k.a. Wa Me Thu Khee) SAC camp captured by resistance forces on October 17, 2024



SAC camps captured by resistance forces



Mae Kha Hta SAC camp captured by resistance forces, March 2023