

More areas freed from regime occupation

Since the 2021 military coup, large parts of Kawthoolei previously under regime occupation have been liberated. (Kawthoolei is the Karen name for Karen State. It is larger than the borders of Karen State imposed by the central government in 1951).

The Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO) under the Ministry of Defence of the Karen National Union (KNU), have, with allies, liberated almost the entire length of Kawthoolei's eastern border with Thailand. People living in the areas are now free from the military regime's rule.

This required taking more than 55 regime bases during the last 13 months, bringing the total number of military camps taken by the KNLA and allies since February 2021 to 193, across 7 districts.



Mawdaung base in Mergui-Tavoy district captured by KNLA and allies on November 14, 2025

Junta military camps captured/abandoned February 2021-August 2025

Number	District	Captured/abandoned February 2021-July 2024	Captured/abandoned August 2024 - August 2025	Total captured/abandoned February 2021- August 2025
1	Doo Tha Htoo	18	1	19
2	Taw Oo	13	1	14
3	Kler Lwee Htoo	26	13	39
4	Mergui-Tavoy	11	12	23
5	Mutraw	43	8	51
6	Doplaya	24	11	35
7	Hpa-An	3	9	12
	Total	138	55	193

By last year, the KNLA and allies had taken back control of the entire Salween river border with Thailand. This year, they have retaken most of the Moei river border adjoining Hpa-an and Doplaya districts, north and south of Myawaddy, as well as key posts along the Tanintharyi border, adjoining Mergui-Tavoy district. This includes the Htee Khee bases at the main border crossing leading to Dawei, which were taken in April 2025.

Most recently, on November 14, 2025, the KNLA and allies seized back control of the Mawdaung Pass, the main trade route adjoining Prachuap Khiri Khan province of Thailand, with a high trade volume in items such as seafood and agricultural produce, including rubber and palm oil, from Tanintharyi region's southernmost townships. Mawdaung used to be the KNU's Mergui-Tavoy, Tanintharyi township headquarters before being captured by the military regime 35 years ago.



Mawdaung base in Mergui-Tavoy district captured by KNLA and allies on November 14, 2025



T'kawt Bi Kwee base in Hpa-An district captured by KNLA and allies on May 9, 2025

Junta scales up attacks on community buildings across Kawthoolei

The military regime has scaled up its airstrikes and artillery attacks on public infrastructure in Kawthoolei in a deliberate attempt to terrorize local populations and demoralize the resistance. There were 108 attacks on civilian structures in all seven Karen districts, including schools, medical facilities, monasteries, and churches, during the 13 months from Sept 2024 to Sept 2025, compared to just 97 attacks during the 43 months before that. Kler Lwe Htoo suffered the worst damage, with 45 buildings destroyed, including 20 monasteries and 14 schools, during the past 13 months.

Community buildings destroyed by junta airstrikes or shelling

No	District	Feb 2021-Aug 2024					Sept 2024- Sept 2025					Feb 2021-Sept 2025
		School	Clinic	Church	Monastery	Total	School	Clinic	Church	Monastery	Total	All Total
1	Doo Tha Htoo	2	2	0	4	8	7	2	1	14	24	32
2	Taw Oo	2	3	4	2	11	3	0	2	0	5	16
3	Kler Lwee Htoo	7	5	6	15	33	14	3	8	20	45	78
4	Mergui-Tavoy	0	1	0	0	1	1	2	2	1	6	7
5	Mutraw	8	4	7	2	21	5	0	0	4	9	30
6	Dooplaya	3	5	6	8	22	8	3	1	4	16	38
7	Hpa-An	0	1	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	3	4
	Total	22	21	23	31	97	41	10	14	43	108	205

Expansion of KNU schools

Despite the regime’s air and artillery attacks on schools in Kawthoolei, statistics from the Karen Education and Culture Department (KECD) and Karen Teacher Working Group (KTWG) for the 2024-2025 academic year demonstrate signs of resilience and recovery. The overall number of KNU schools increased by 23% from 1,361 in the 2020-2021 academic year to 1,671 in 2024-2025, and the number of teachers rose by 10% from 8,124 in 2020-2021 to 8,966 in 2024-2025, with a substantial increase in the number of female educators. Additionally, the number of students enrolled increased by 7.5% from 131,086 in 2020-2021 to more than 141,000 in 2024-2025.

It was only in the Mergui-Tavoy district that the regime’s attacks caused a drop in the number of KNU schools able to operate, falling from 215 in 2020-2021 to 119 in 2024-2025.



In May 2025, KTTC-North students graduation ceremony in the Kho Kay area, Bu Tho township, Mutraw district

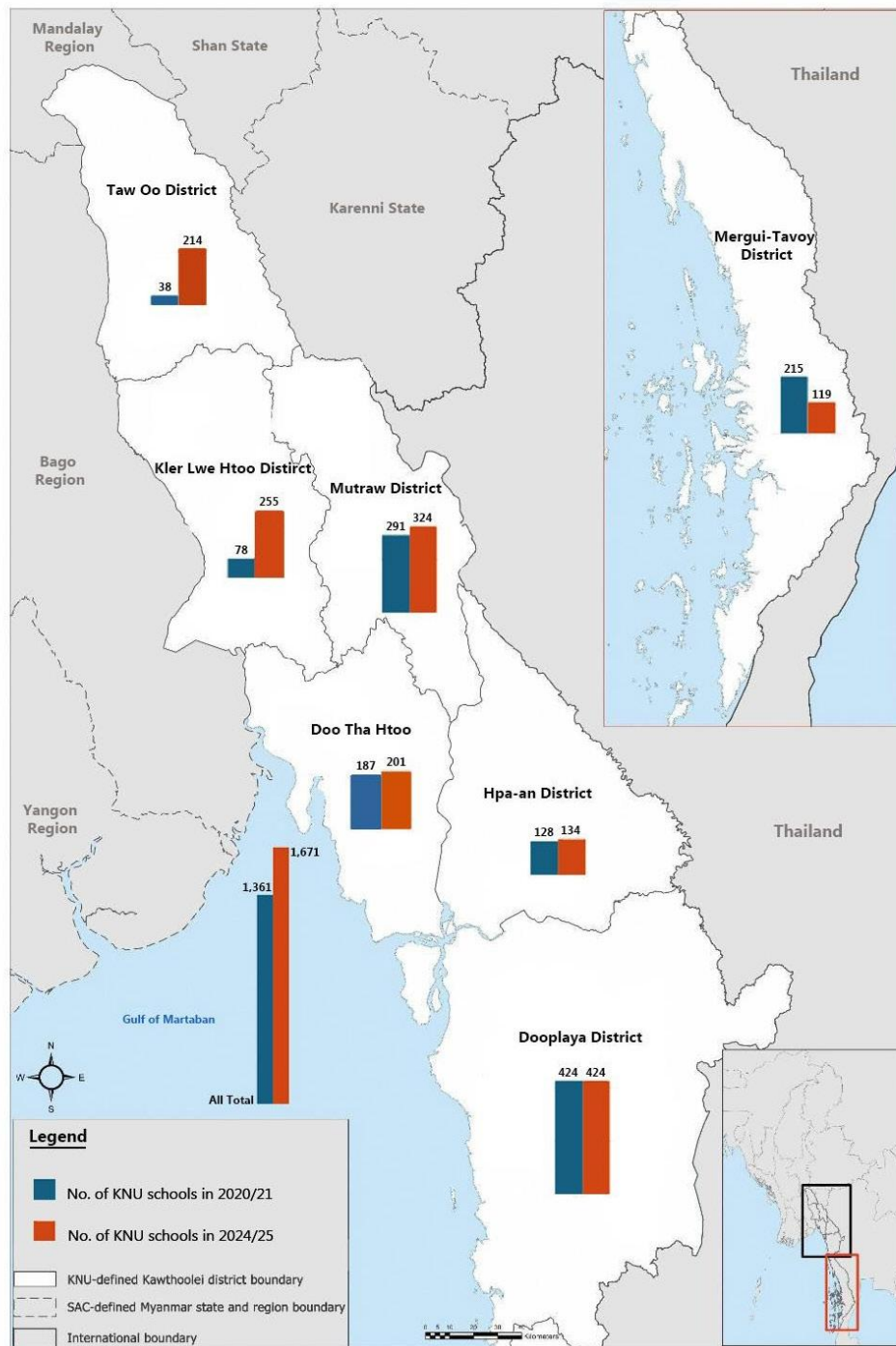


In May 2025, KTTC-North students performing warm-up activities in the Kho Kay area, Bu Tho township, Mutraw district



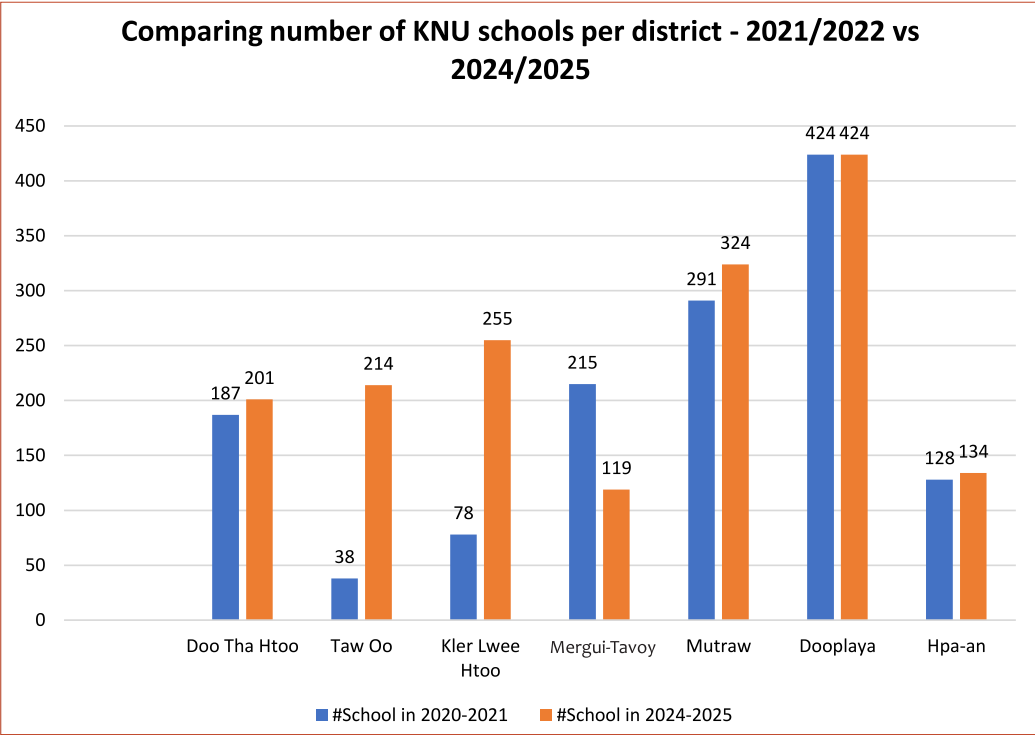
Ler Taw (Th'waw Poe) school, Noh T'kaw township, Dooplaya district

KNU Schools: Academic Years 2020-2021 vs 2024-2025



KECD and KTWG school statistics for the 2020-2021 academic year vs the 2024-2025 year

District	Year 2020-2021		Year 2024-2025	
	Schools#	Students	Schools#	Students
Doo Tha Htoo	187	19,349	201	17,850
Taw Oo	38	2,087	214	14,848
Kler Lwee Htoo	78	4,706	255	18,437
Mergui-Tavoy	215	24,334	119	8,508
Mutraw	291	21,453	324	26,753
Dooطلا	424	48,486	424	41,632
Hpa-An	128	10,671	134	12,704
Total	1,361	131,086	1,671	140,732



Expansion of KNU health facilities

In 2022, the year after the coup, the KNU’s Department of Health and Welfare (KDHW) had 60 health facilities overall, spread out over the seven districts of Kawthoolei. Through construction of new facilities as well as takeover of former junta-controlled Ministry of Health and Sports centers, the KDHW now has a total of 90 hospitals/clinics. The largest expansion of health facilities took place in Dooplaya district.

From 2022 to 2025, the total health worker staff increased by 8% to 1,177 persons now providing health care services for KDHW. In 2024/2025, KDHW documented a total caseload of 222,418 treated at all its health facilities.



Operating theatre in Lu Thaw township, Mutraw district



Health center, Htee Moh Pwar township, Mergui-Tavoy district

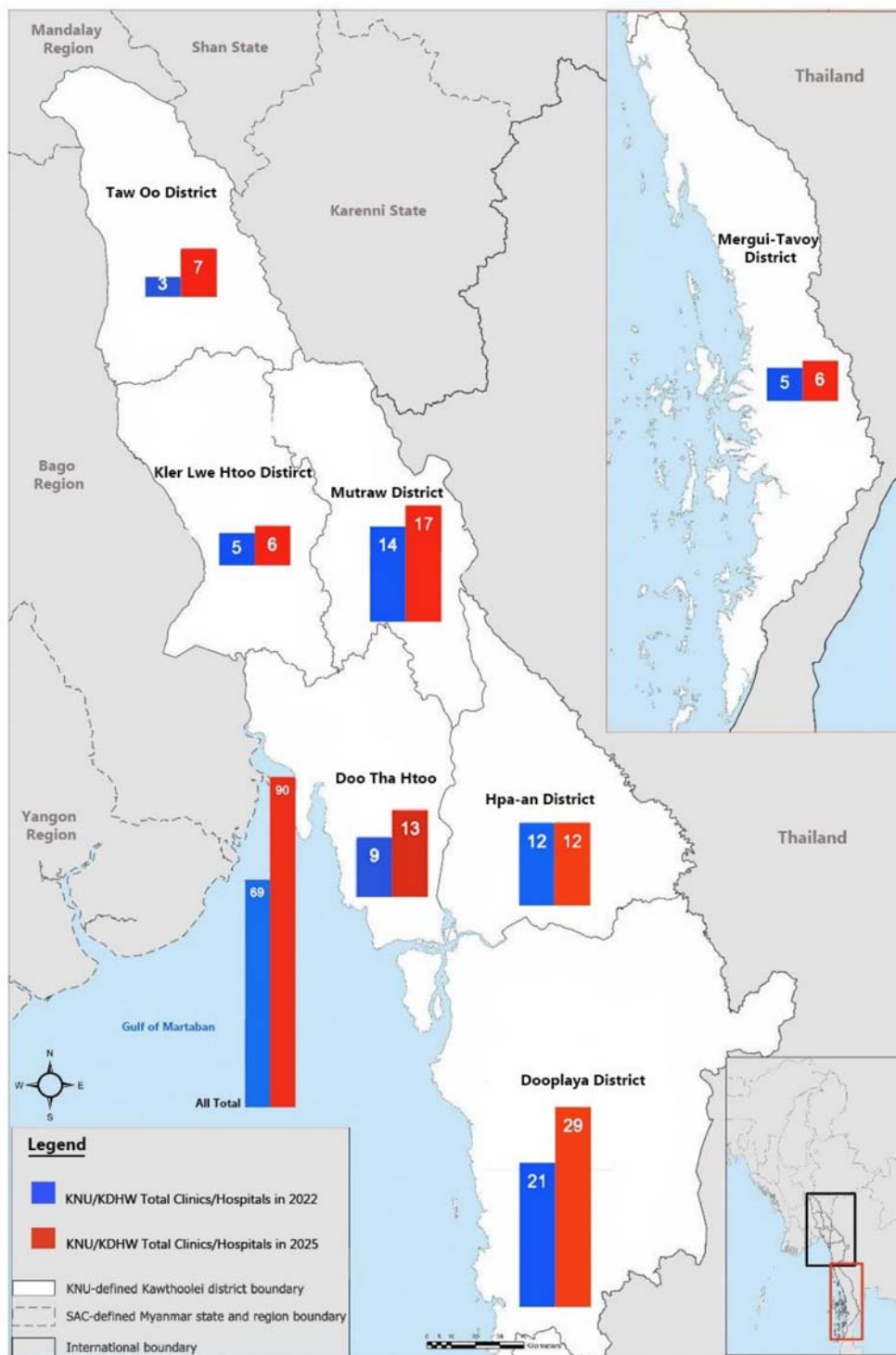


Mobile health clinic, Kaw T’ri township, Dooplaya district

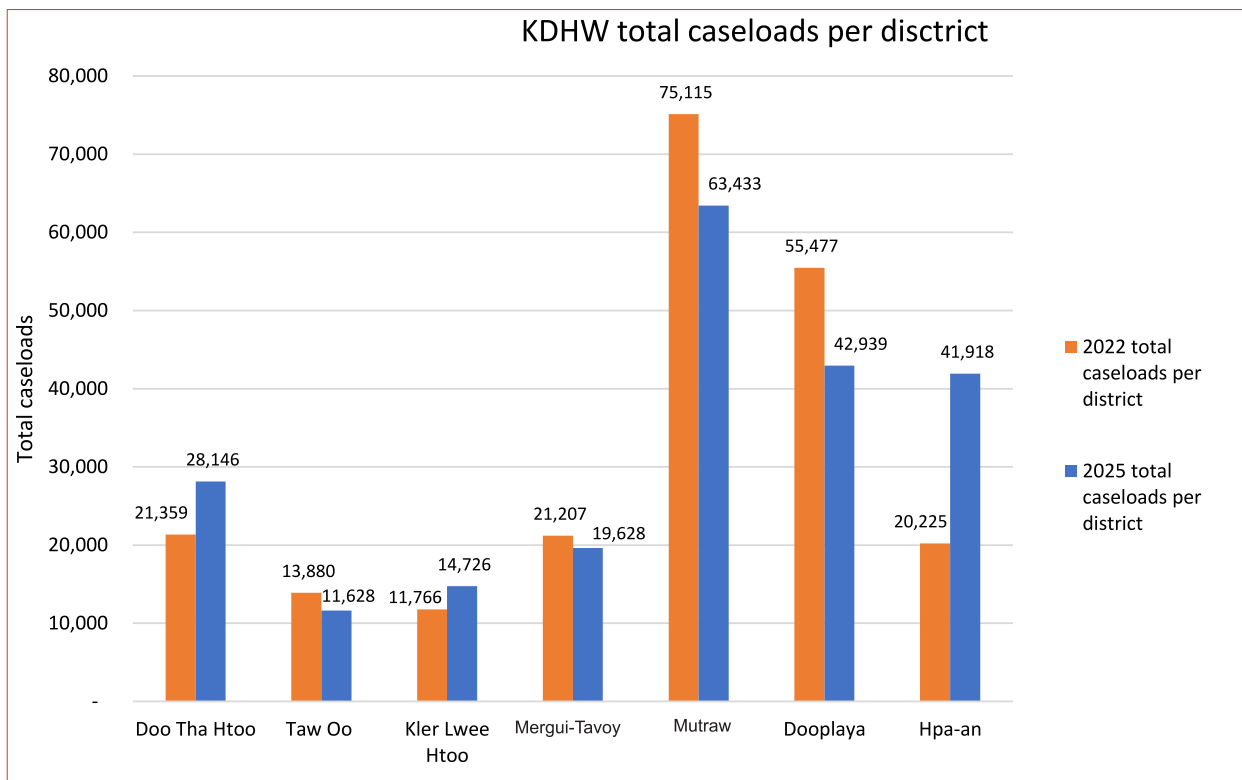


Mobile health clinic, Ler Doh township, Kler Lwee Htoo district

Expansion of KNU health facilities from 2022 to 2025 per district



On September 2, 2023, the Karen Department of Health and Welfare (KDHW) successfully hosted the Kawthoolei Medic Training graduation ceremony in the border area.



Now over 1.2 million IDPs in Kawthoolei

Due to the military regime’s scaled-up air and artillery attacks on civilians, the total number of IDPs in Kawthoolei has increased by 14% to 1,204,932 since September 2024. This included new displacement in Dooplaya and Hpa-An, due to the regime’s Aung Zeya operation to recapture Thin Gan Nyi Naung on the Asia Highway. 3,000 villagers from T’Nay Cha township in Hpa-an district, who had never fled before, were displaced by this operation.

In Taw Oo district, in northernmost Kawthoolei, displacement remains high, but there has been a slight decrease as some IDPs from other areas, including Karenni, returned back to their original locations during lulls in fighting.



Internally displaced persons in Hpa-an district.



Internally displaced persons in Mutraw district receiving food supplies

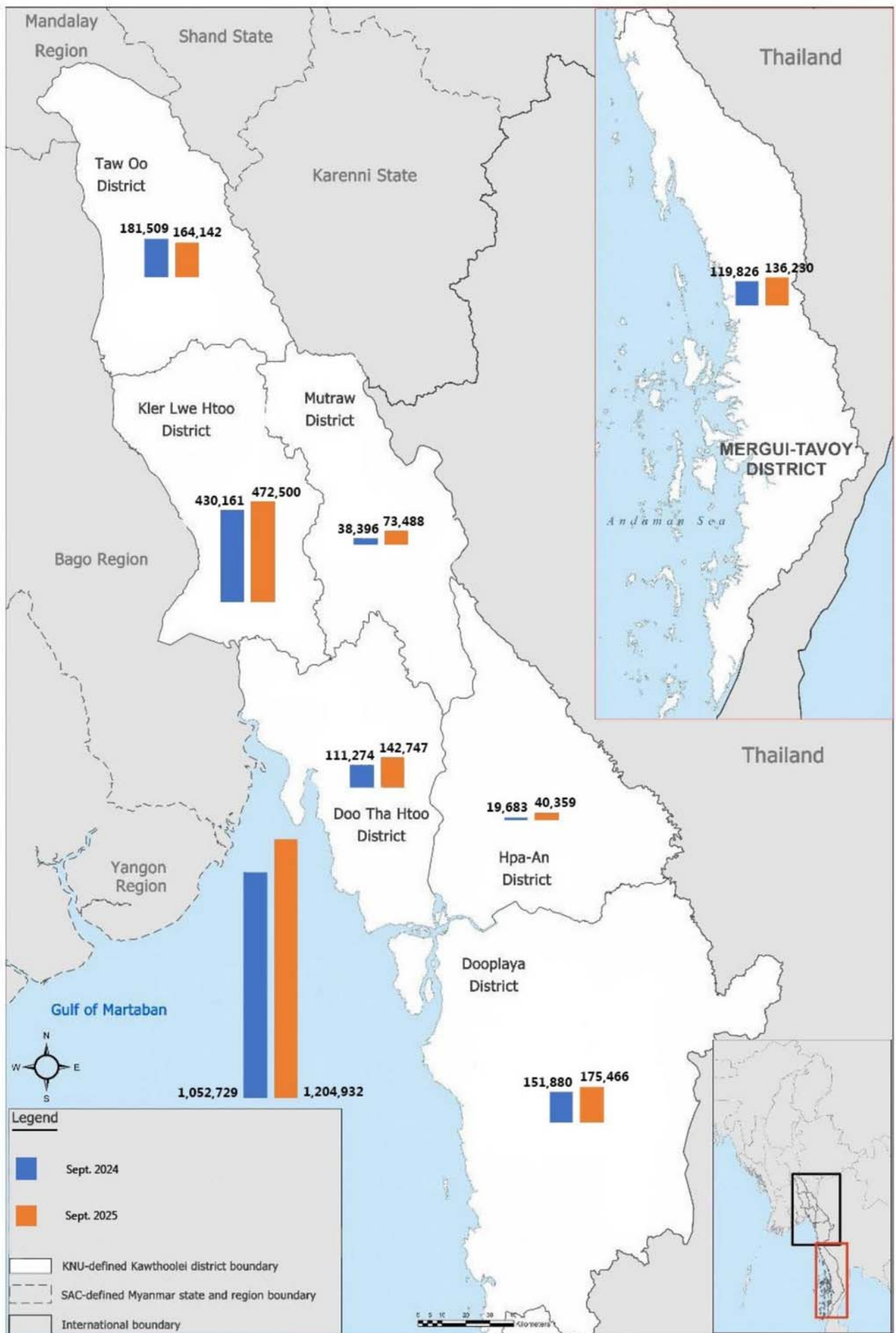


A regime fighter jet bombed a monastery and civilian building in Chan Myay Su, Ngapyawdaw village tract, Kyiketo township, Doo Tha Htoo district, where there was no fighting on August 28, 2025



Regime bombs damaged a workshop and house in Thonegwa village, Kha Ywea village tract, Kyiketo township, Doo Tha Htoo district

Comparing IDP populations Sept 2024 vs Sept 2025



IDP populations by district - Sept. 2024 vs Sept. 2025		
District	Sept - 2024	Sept - 2025
Doo Tha Htoo (Thaton)	111,274	142,747
Taw Oo (Taungoo)	181,509	164,142
Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin)	430,161	472,500
Mergui-Tavoy (Tanintharyi)	119,826	136,230
Mutraw (Papun)	38,396	73,488
Dooplaya	151,880	175,466
Hpa-An	19,683	40,359
Total	1,052,729	1,204,932

Crucial role of cross-border aid for IDPs in Kawthoolei

In the conflict-affected areas of Kawthoolei, cross-border aid is crucial for addressing the urgent needs of IDPs residing in the jungle. The IDPs flee with few belongings, and are unable to return to their farms due to the regime's airstrikes and shelling. They quickly run out of the little food they have brought, and sometimes end up eating only one meal a day, often just rice porridge. Sometimes older siblings go hungry so their younger siblings can eat. To survive they need to forage in the forest for yams, bamboo shoots and wild fruits, and catch river fish.

Cross-border aid includes provision of safe and secure shelters constructed from durable tarpaulins, as well as essential staple food items such as rice and salt. Medical supplies are also vital, particularly in remote areas that lack adequate health services.

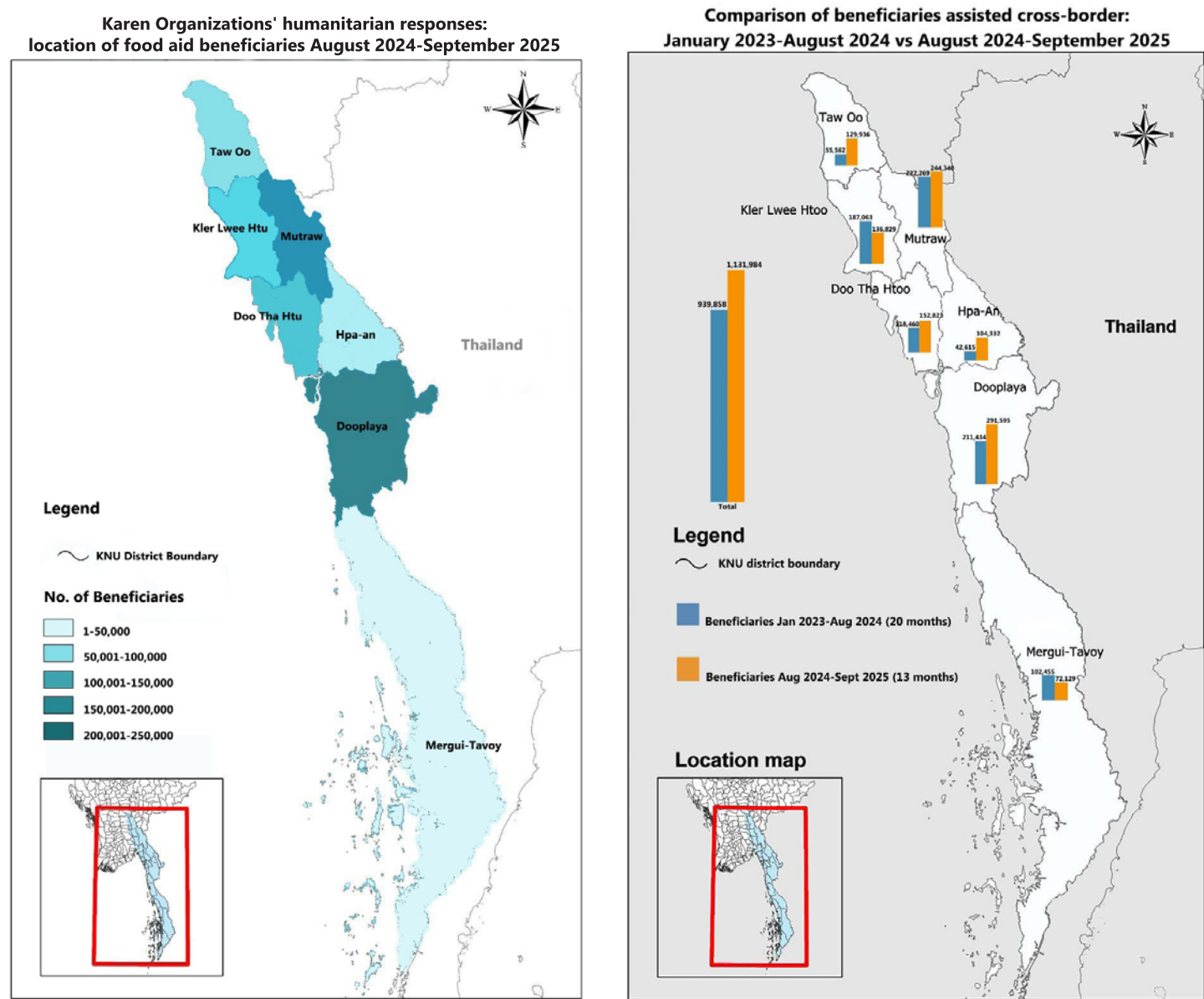
Security and civilian protection are fundamental aspects of this humanitarian response. The construction of bunkers provides safety from shelling and airstrikes for both schoolchildren and villagers. Karen community-based organizations (CBOs) give extra attention to the most vulnerable populations—the elderly, sick, and disabled—to ensure they receive the necessary support and protection during ongoing crises. This comprehensive approach to cross-border aid alleviates the severe living conditions of IDPs in Kawthoolei while maintaining access to education, healthcare, and safety.

The Karen Department for Health and Welfare also has overall responsibility for displaced people in Kawthoolei, working with the Committee for Internally Displaced Karen People (CIDKP) and other civil society organisations, including the Karen Peace Support Network

Karen CBOs increased their humanitarian aid reach from August 2024 to September 2025, compared to the period between January 2023 and August 2024, with significant increases in beneficiary numbers in five districts. Only in Kler Lwee Htu and Mergui-Tavoy regions were there decreases in aid distributions, mainly due to the US funding cuts and restrictions by some donors.

Beneficiaries by district in Kawthoolei Jan 2023 - Aug 2024 vs Aug 2024 - Sept 2025			
No	District	Beneficiaries Jan 2023-Aug 2024 (20 months)	Beneficiaries Aug 2024 - Sept 2025 (13 months)
1	Doo Tha Htoo	118,460	152,823
2	Taw Oo	55,562	129,936
3	Kler Lwee Htu	187,063	136,829
4	Mergui-Tavoy	102,455	72,129
5	Mutraw	222,269	244,340
6	Dooplaya	211,434	291,595
7	Hpa-An	42,615	104,332
	Total	939,858	1,131,984

KPSN is appealing urgently for increased cross-border humanitarian aid to the IDPs in all districts of Kawthoolei. The estimated cost to provide rice for six months to 1,204,932 IDPs is US\$111 million.



On 9 October 2025, two 300-pound bombs dropped by an aircraft exploded in Kabaw Yu Plaw village, Kyathaung Seik village tract, Bilin township, killed and injuring several people



The regime shelled and dropped bombs directly on a monastery, killing 2 monks and severely injuring 5 others, in Chan Myay Su-Cha Myay Parami monastery, Ngapyawdaw village tract, Kyiketo township, Doo Tha Htoo district on August 24, 2025

Conclusion

Local administrations in areas free from regime occupation, such as the Karen National Union in Kawthoolei, are providing essential services such as health and education in the same way governments all over the world do. In the most challenging of circumstances and with limited resources they are building governance and seeking stability in the areas they control.

The Karen National Union has also been engaging in extensive consultations for a constitution of Kawthoolei, where for the first time local people and civil society organisations are able to have a say in the laws that will govern them and how decisions which impact their lives and natural resources are made.

The Karen people are not waiting for a distant and unaccountable central government to grant them their rights and their land. They are taking it. The same is happening across Burma. This is not balkanisation, warlordism or Burma breaking up, it is people across the country working on a local level to build sustainable governance structures that work for them, rather than being imposed centrally without consultation.

Kawthoolei under the Karen National Union, and working with local civil society, is a more stable and reliable partner for international donors and neighbouring Thailand than the military regime has ever been.

The international community must step up engagement with, and humanitarian and development assistance, to local administrations such as that of the Karen National Union in Kawthoolei. Supporting the development of local administrations free from rule by the military regime is the most effective approach to long term stability in Burma.



Internally displaced persons in different districts receiving food supplies



Students at KTTC-South are training in Mae T'Raw Khee, Kaw T'rit twonship, Dooplaya district in July 2025



Students of the Summer Vacation Teacher Training (SVT) program in Mae Pree Hkee/Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw District, March 2025



In May 2025, Kawthoolei women are forming networks among (CBOs) and (CSOs) by discussing updates on the current political situation, women's participation in leadership, and various political, social, economic, and humanitarian issues

