

Report on domestic violence problem in Karenni Refugee Camp 1

October 2014

Researched and written by Khu Seh Reh, Khu Mi Reh Nge and Meh Mo

Translated by SDC staff and volunteers



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Section 1

Introduction

This report was researched by Seh Reh, Meh Mo and Mi Reh Nge. It is about domestic violence in Karenni Refugee Camp 1 for 2014-2015. We are all students in Karenni Refugee Camp 1. Before we wrote this report, we met with many organisations in the camp. We have also used information from a book about domestic violence in the camp library. After, we tried to learn more about differences between genders so that we could write this report. There are 2 places for protection of women in camp. One for the part of camp named BK and one for the part of camp named BT. This organisation is called Women's Community Center. It has been running, with International Rescue Committee (IRC), since 2007. The board of the organisation has a general meeting once a year. They



Houses in Karenni Refugee Camp 1

think about how to improve the organisation. Most of the violence in camp occurs between women and men. However, marriage contracts, in our community, do not allow violence between husband and wife. Some families cannot solve their problems by themselves so this organisation sends them to court to get justice. This method is a good way to reduce violence. We hope all people can understand, follow this report and violence will reduce because of it.

Anyone is free to copy or use this report.

Methodology

We prepared questions to ask about domestic violence and we went to meet some people. We went to ask women about their experience of domestic violence. After, we had more information about this issue. People who have experienced domestic violence and also people working on this issue at organisations have more information and details about domestic violence. When we interviewed people who had experienced domestic violence, we used a phone to record the interview. After we got all of this information, we wrote this report.

Purpose of field work

Our purpose is to help people from Karenni Refugee Camp 1 on the Thai-Burma border share their experiences of domestic violence. Therefore, all people will know about domestic violence. In Karenni Refugee Camp 1, people are not aware of domestic violence and rape cases. By writing this report, people will know about these issues. In Karenni Refugee Camp 1, after people read this report, everyone will understand about domestic violence.



Summary

In Karenni Refugee Camp 1 in October 2014, we looked at how people are feeling and what is the real situation. After that, we wrote this report. The organisations working in Karenni Refugee Camp 1 try to eliminate domestic violence. Organisations that go to meet women that have experienced domestic violence are; Women’s Community Center (WCC); Justice; and Security. This report is about domestic violence but there is also some information about healthcare and education. These problems are connected. Domestic violence is not independent of these other issues.

All organisations try to stop this violence. However, in Karenni Refugee Camp 1, we still have a problem. It is important for organisations to know about this issue. In Karenni Refugee Camp 1, people lose their rights because of violence and rape. To make sure this does not happen again, we have written this report. Then, everyone can be aware of these issues.

History of Karenni Refugee Camp 1

Since 1986-87, Karenni people have been displaced. Later they stayed in the jungle for 7 days and traveled to the Thai-Burma border. 60 families totaling 2500 people arrived to the border on the 4th July 1987. At this time, they relied on themselves for food and living. They worked on agriculture. At the beginning after they arrived, it was very difficult to make money. It was especially difficult to get water as they had to carry it very far to bring it to the village.

Since 1990, Karenni people came into contact with Thai people. At the time, Thai people contacted with The Border Consortium (TBC) to support the Karenni people with food. At this time, TBC supported enough food. Everything was okay. If we compare with today, we can see that is very different to then. When Karenni people arrived there, there was a small population. At the start, they could cut down trees for wood. 24 years ago, Thailand created a policy to protect the forest and organised people to protect the forest. Nobody could cut down trees. If you needed to cut down a tree for building a house, you would have to ask for permission. One interviewee said “In 2000, we had a lot of trees and bamboo. We had a lot of big trees but now all of the trees are destroyed. After that, we did not get much income from trees and bamboo. They can only find income through slash and burn cultivation and agriculture. A few years ago, they just make agriculture to grow rice or crops. When they made agriculture, only a few trees were cut down because there was only a small population. At that time, they also could not get enough water. Now the population has grown more. They no longer need to carry the water. They can use pipes and have enough water. If we compare before and now, it is very different. Before there was forest all around us and we got clean air to breathe. Now, there is overpopulation so we don’t have enough trees, bamboos and water.” This interviewee shared all about Karenni Refugee history to us.

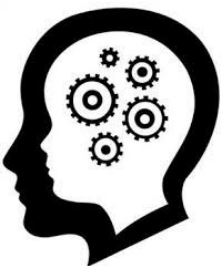


Section 2

History of domestic violence

Many different actions can be domestic violence. Most of the problems are alcohol related. When people are drunk, they have problems in their family. This can affect their families. After drinking alcohol, they return to their homes and argue or cause problems with their family. If they do this repetitively, there can be misunderstandings within families. Some families separate and some members resettle to another country because of domestic issues.

After people drink alcohol, they cannot control themselves. Therefore, they often abuse their wife. They argue with their children. Sometimes, they also throw household materials. They do not allow people to criticize or question their actions. If you criticize them, then they will threaten you. If they don't have money to buy alcohol, they take household materials and sell them in order to buy alcohol. This can cause conflict and violence. Everyone has problems for survival. Some parents can't find money to support young children so it is very difficult for them. After that, there are arguments between husband and wife. There can also be violence. Some families that have gold and money are greedy. They don't look after their children. If their child wants to do something, they just buy it for them. These families can also experience violence. If the family separates the parental responsibilities over children, this can also cause domestic violence. Everyone has a different opinion. If you marry with someone of a different religion, there can be misunderstandings and violence. Everyone has rights because we are human. However some people are not aware of their rights. If someone wants to do something, another person can try to stop them. This can cause violence. In families where they have enough materials and everything is okay, other families can be jealous. People shouldn't listen to their neighbour's gossip. They should think critically about what their neighbours say because their neighbour's words can create conflict. In Karenni refugee camp 1 some people have UN registration but some people don't have UN registration. Some members of families have an opportunity to resettle. However, other members do not. This can create misunderstandings within families.



Psychological Violence

"I always feel under suspicion by my husband, family and friends. He doesn't allow me to contact with my relatives. He uses strong words and threats. He looks down on people and discriminates against them. These insults affect me emotionally. He also hides and throws materials around the house. These actions can affect someone who has already experienced violence. Therefore, these actions are domestic violence. "

Meeting with people who have experienced domestic violence in Karenni Refugee Camp 1

The women we spoke to feared physical violence. They felt sorrowful after arguments. They wouldn't speak out about domestic violence. They felt jealous of other people. Their husbands threatened them with eye contact. They also experienced death threats and materials were threw at them. etc.



Interviewee number 1:

“When my husband argued with me, he would kick all of the pots and pans in my house and then throw them away. He also threatened me with guns.”



Interviewee number 3:

“He controlled all of my rights. If I wanted to visit with my friends, he would not allow me. I don't have any rights. In my neighbour's house, they are embarrassed of me. I try the best for my family. I try to look after and take care of my children. However, he tells me I am good for nothing. He also tells me I have relationships with other men. He always misunderstands on me. When I go to work, he tells me the time I must come back. If I do not come back when he says, he will argue with me and he can be violent. I could not control him myself, so I went to WCC. My husband came and lied to WCC. After this, I stayed at WCC. My husband wanted me to come back so he tried to get my mother to force me to come back. He threatened my mother to give him money so he can see me and then he can kill all of the boys he said I had relationships with. When he came to meet me, he lied to me about everything. He told me my mother and baby was in the hospital. After that, he called me to go back to the house. When I came back to my house, nothing had happened to my mother or my child. When we lived together again, I realised my mother was also scared of him.”



Interviewee number 5 and 8:

“My husband doesn't do anything. He just stays at home and eats every day. I have to get all of the money. Then, he argues with me every day. Every day, he is drunk. He doesn't cook for me. If I cook a curry that he doesn't like, he will throw it away. For cooking, I asked him to make fires if he doesn't want to cook. However, he is only drunk all the time. Every morning, he wakes up very late and I tell him to wake up but he argues with me. Sometimes, if I leave him to do something, he tells me that I do not respect my husband. The next day, when I come back from my work, he tries to take my money. When I don't have any money to give, he argues with me. After this, he says to me you have money but you don't want to give it to me. I think you are keeping it for someone else. He tells me that you want to keep all of your money in someone's house. I say to him that I don't have any money so how can I give it to you. I heard my daughter trying to cook for dinner and asking my father to make the fire. I requested my husband to do for our daughter. After that, my husband took two pieces of burning firewood and pointed them at my daughter. He told her that her mouth is the same as your mothers. My son grabbed the firewood and hit my father. At the time, I tried to call camp security to get my husband. Before camp security came to the house, he told me your son hit me this time, when I come back, I will kill him. After this, my son was afraid of his father and ran away to the forest. My son was scared to come back so he stayed with his friend in another home”



Interviewee number 11:

“Thank you for providing me with an opportunity to open up. I hope someone wants to know about me. I hope some people are feeling like me. I don’t want it to happen again and again with my husband. My husband just drinks and comes home and argues with me. At first, when my husband was very drunk, I started to argue with what he says. At that time, I didn’t know about my husband. When he is drunk, he tries to get money for me. If he cannot get it, he will look all over the house. When, he didn’t get any money, he would argue with me, pull my hair and rip my clothes. He would hold a knife in his hand to threaten me. My husband always wants to gamble. He doesn’t want to do anything. I cook for my family but if he doesn’t want to eat, he throws away my food. Honestly, my husband is very brutal. Sometimes if he has money, he gives it to me. However, the next day he comes to take it back. Most of the time, I am scared of my husband arguing with me. Usually, he threatens me with his hand or with a knife. Once when we were cooking, he took a knife and split the top of the pot. I have experienced this many times. When I wash, drink, eat or sleep with him, these incidents happen many times. It happens again and again so sometimes I don’t want to cook for my husband. I leave far away. However, there are only two people in my family so when I come back, I need to cook again. If he argues with me or says anything, I do not reply to him. I keep it secret. I do not want to speak out. When I go anywhere, my husband asks me for details. Even if we don’t have a problem, he tries to create one. During my time staying with him, I didn’t have enough food or shelter. This was happening all the time. I couldn’t control myself. So I lay down on my bed and tears fell from my eyes. I don’t have any opportunity to be friends with other women. I just stay alone at home and work alone. Since we have been married, I have tried to separate from him many times. Before he said to me, you don’t have to leave I will leave. However, he would leave for a few days and then return. After this, I could not say anything to him. He left my house many times. He is rude to my parents. He tries to get me to separate from them. My husband says that when we married, it was in front of judges. If you leave, I don’t have to pay you anything because it was legal. My husband calls me a whore. He says I don’t need to think, everything will be fine, I will not do anything for you, I will try to overpower your emotions. He always says to me that I can return to live with my parents. Later, I learnt he had already married another girl and he has one child with her. He told me, this other woman and I broke up because of you. Then, he took all of my clothes and he threw them out of the house. At night, when my husband goes to visit some places. I try to return to my parents. Then for three days, he followed and watched me at my parent’s house. When I saw my husband again, I was very scared. I am scared of him all the time. After, I tried to control myself, to avoid having any further problems. Once I stayed with him again, I tried to change my mind and behavior for him. I did not want it to happen again. When I stayed at the house, I cried out in secret. I know if I cry like this it is not good so I try to stop myself. Though, sometimes I wonder when I will be able to be happy with someone. Everyone wants to be happy but this is my fate. Sometimes, I think about when will I be crazy and when will I die. Sometimes, I think about having babies. I want to have children but he doesn’t want me to have children. These are my real feelings. When I stay with him, I feel like this. Sometimes, I want to live far away from him. I want to open up about how I feel to someone when he is not with me. At night, I try to write my diary. All of my neighbours do not understand so well. They think that it is not only my husband’s fault, it is also my fault. Sometimes, I don’t feel good. This is all.”



Examples of physical violence

Household slaps; pulling hair; kicking; hitting; pushing down; throwing boiled water on body; strangling throat; beating; using weapons; using sticks, using knives, using glass. These are all examples of physical violence provided to us in our interviews. There are also many other kinds of violence that can be created between wife and husband. Sometimes when there is serious violence, it can result in death

Questions about physical domestic violence in Karenni Refugee Camp 1

A person who had experienced physical violence said:

“My husband hit me and pushed me. He hit me over the head. He pushed me again. He grabbed me by the neck and strangled me. He pulled my hair. He kicked me. He stood on my chest.”

From interview number 1:

“When my husband argued with me, he got weaving materials and hit my calves with them. He also pulled my hair and put my head in a basket with oil. Then, he tried to burn my hair. At that time, someone saw and came to protect me.”

From interview number 3:

“When my husband went to work outside the village and got drunk, he pulled my hair. He tied me to a tree with a rope. At that time, I was unconscious for three hours. He hit my head. I had a headache. He hit my face and strangled my neck.”

From interview number 6:

“During the time I stayed with my husband, he stood on my chest. I lay down and he hit me on the head with a bottle.”

From interview number 8:

“After my husband hit me, every time he would pinch me. Then, I went to stay at WCC. My husband followed me there. He followed me into my bedroom. In my bedroom, he took a vase and tried to hit me but I held him back. When I stopped him, the vase smashed and cut my fingers. After, I went to the clinic to get stitches for my hand.”

From interview number 11:

“My husband has ripped my clothes once”





From interview number 14:

“My husband has hit me on my arm with roof thatching. When he hit me with this, I felt pain in my back. After, He pinched my arm and my back. He always hit me where I would feel pain easily.”

From interview number 16:

“When my husband was drunk, he tried to hit me, pull my hair and strangle my neck. When he struck my neck, I couldn’t breathe very well. Then my neck was bruised.”

They tried to separate from each other and went to the court. We listened to this woman speaking to the judges. She said “When I sat with my husband, he tried to take materials around him and hit my head. After he hit my head, I lay down under the altar. Then, he kicked me. He has hit and kicked me before.”

Sexual violence

If you live with your wife and you try to have sex with her against her wishes, this can be sexual violence. Also, there can be cases of rape between wife and husband.

Questions about sexual domestic violence in Karenni Refugee Camp 1

From interview number 5:

“Sexual violence usually happens at night.”

From interview number 14:

“He was always violent to me. I did not want to have sex with him anymore. This violence mostly happened at night. In our culture, we don’t want this to happen again and again. If someone does like this, it can be physical and psychological.

Section 3

Follow up of problems

Follow up of domestic violence against women

All of the women who have experienced domestic violence are frightened. All of the women who have experienced this are scared and do not want to participate in society. They can’t sleep for one week. They are shy to go with other people. They feel like everything is difficult for women. Then they can be embarrassed to other people. Some women, who are really scared and embarrassed, try to commit suicide. In our society, we have many problems.

Some women think that they have no value. They do not think about their lives because of their experience. Some of them are so shy and embarrassed that they do not find friends to stay with. They only stay alone. When they stay alone, they have nothing to do. They face problems for living. They have a lot of problems in their family. If some women think too much about domestic violence, they can have a problem with their health. If there is violence against pregnant women, there can be danger for their baby and a bigger effect on children. Some of the women are educated people. However, if there is violence in their house, their friends and neighbours misunderstand on them. Most people do not respect them. When their husbands hit or kick them, they do not forget this easily. They keep all of it in their mind.

Follow up of domestic violence against children

If households experience domestic violence repetitively, it can affect children. The children only feel scared. Some children feel other children discriminate against them. Some of the children feel shy and don't have a good relationship with other children. They feel very lonely. If children just think about domestic violence too much. It can affect their examinations. If their parents argue and their children see, the children will be scared of their parents and they will hate one of their parents. When parents argue, it can also affect children. Some parents may hit or kick children when their children try to control them. This happens again and again so children don't want to return home. They only visit. They don't go to school. They don't want to do anything. Some children don't want to continue to study. They only drink alcohol or smoke. Most of the children in our society don't want to study. They only want to visit in camp or drink alcohol. Many people do like this until they are old. If children see their parents argue every day, they can follow their parents example after they get married. If children follow their parents' example, it can be very dangerous for them. They will follow their parents' violent example until death. This happens again and again so children can't see happiness in their life. In their mind they only think about how to fight and domestic violence. The children also face problems if their parents separate. They feel lonely and miss their parents. If people ask children where is your father or who are your parents, they will cry because they are shy to say. This evidence is from our interviews and experience speaking to people in camp.

Societal response

WCC's vision: 'We established WCC to protect our women and children. It is for everyone who has experienced domestic violence. We want to stop domestic violence. Therefore, we established WCC'

For women and children who have experienced domestic violence, we protect them. We stop overs from abusing their rights again and again. WCC provides protection for women under 18 who are at risk of rape. Most women do not know their rights. WCC gives trainings so women can learn about their rights. WCC organisation just gives training about male domestic violence. WCC has had 2 safe houses since 2003. There is one in section 9 and one in section 20. A women or child who fears domestic violence and has nowhere to stay can stay at the safe houses. WCC organisation is not just for domestic violence. It is also for any kind of danger. People can come to stay temporarily. The safe house is not for permanent residence. WCCs vision is to protect anyone who has experienced domestic violence and to create a safe place to stay temporarily. They have 2 safe houses in Karenni Refugee Camp 1. We stand with WCC because we hope that this can protect people.

Section 4

Conclusion

In our view, this domestic violence is happening in our community. We went to collect this information and we wrote this report. We tried to explain in detail about people who have experienced domestic or survival problems in Karenni Refugee Camp 1. We also need to reduce discrimination between sexes and create non-violent social change in our refugee camp. Everyone should know that we are all animals but humans can make decisions. Also, people who have skills like educated people should not bully other people. If this happens again, then we will misunderstand on each other. All female animals and people are more prone to suffering and abuse than males.

If we are educated people, we should know what to do. We should decrease discrimination and also create non-violent social change. We have a responsibility to reduce sexual violence and all violence around our society. We have a responsibility to stop these problems. Domestic violence means physical violence, psychological violence and sexual violence. All of these types of violence affect more women than men. When we marry in our society, we have a symbol that husband and wife will be happy for each other. This symbol can support and remind married couples of their responsibilities to each other. For all people living in camp to have a good relationship and easily manage their lives, WCC can guide them. The most important thing is that we follow this symbolic message. If you are experiencing or thinking about domestic violence, you need to explain to WCC first-hand about it. Then, they can help you. Also, we need to follow the rules that our organisations in camp have to guide people. Every three months, women leaders and members have a meeting to discuss and plan for WCC to run more effectively. Also, when we wrote this report and we didn't know all about violence, we used a book from Karenni National Women's Organisation (KNWO) to help us. This report is important for all of the people living in Karenni Refugee Camp 1 who have experienced domestic violence. We write and show this report to make people aware of domestic violence in Karenni Refugee Camp 1.

Recommendations

By the headmen and public:

- Can every family who has experienced domestic violence, try to stop as much as you can
- We don't need domestic violence to repetitively discriminate against family members

By WCC:

- We should eliminate discrimination against women
- We should eliminate gender-based violence
- Empower women
- Women, children and men should have the same rights
- Everyone has a right to privacy



- Women and children who have experienced domestic violence should be supported with healthcare and education, as much as possible

By the court:

- We should not be biased between two people
- When we see domestic violence problems we should decide for sure

By camp security:

- If we don't act on domestic violence, it can create bigger social problems
- We should resolve all problems

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'The vision of Social Development Center is to promote the lives of the people who have suffered human rights abuses, to teach non-violent skills to build up a new society, to develop the rule of law, to value human dignity and to protect the environment.'



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Thank you!



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