

Reduction of rations in Karenni Refugee Camp 1

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1) Acronyms

1. TBC - Thai Border Consortium
2. FRC - Finnish Refugee Council
3. NGO - Non Governmental Organisation

2) Introduction

This is a report by SDC students, class of 2013-2014. This research was conducted and written by Sue Reh, Shar Myar Kay and Nang Sang Hoe. We met with departments and spoke to people who were given permission to speak to us. This report is about the reasons for reduction of rations in Karenni Refugee Camp 1. To collect these reasons we recorded our interviews and then prepared this report. This reduction has caused a serious problem for citizens in Karenni Refugee Camp 1. Therefore, we will describe the reductions in rations.

3) Summary of report

This report is about the (2013-2014) reduction of rations in Karenni Refugee Camp 1. TBC began supporting Karenni Refugee Camp 1 with rations in 1991. At that time, they supported rice, salt, yellow beans, soy beans, chili and oil. People over 5 years old got 16 kilograms of rice. People under 5 years old got 8 kilograms. This was enough but following regular reductions the current rations are not enough. Therefore, the camp citizens have a crisis.



Rice being weighed in camp 1

Karenni Refugee Camp 1 has received rations from TBC for 23 years. These reductions in rations are due to political change and economic crises. Previously, they only supported the refugee camps but now they support inside so the budget for the camps has decreased. Due to this situation, there is a challenge to support rations.

Due to the reductions in rations, the camp citizens have been affected by many problems. This has caused citizens to leave the camp and cut down surrounding forest. They try to make their own livelihood. Although the rations have been reduced, the camp citizens have vocational work like pig farming or shop keeping.

TBC only reduced rice because TBC supports a variety of rations to ensure refugees are healthy. If they reduce other rations, there may be a negative health impact for camp citizens. Even though TBC have reduced rice, the cost of their support is still very high. Therefore it is necessary to reduce rice. Their budget is not enough to give everybody the same amount of rice as before. Citizens have left camp because of the reduction in rations. Citizens have had difficulties so refugee citizens face challenges for their livelihood. This is due to the reductions in rations.

3) Background of rations in Karenni State and Karenni Refugee Camp 1

Karenni State is a separate state. It is governed by Saw Phaya and Saw Bwo. Karenni ethnic groups fought together against enemies outside of Karenni State. Karenni State is the smallest state in Myanmar. It is wide and its area is 4582 square miles.

Karenni State is the least populated state in Burma. In Karenni State the population is an estimated 5 million people. Kayah is the majority ethnicity. Other ethnicities are Kayaw, Kekho, Keba, Karen, Kayan, Kayaw, Manee Manaw, Yinbaw and Yetalee. All of these ethnic groups stay in Karenni State.

In 1875, the British government and the Burmese King agreed and signed for an independent Karenni State. After World War II in 1948, Burma got independence from the British. Following independence, the Burmese government's military attachment invaded Karenni State in August 1948.

After that, the Karenni National Revolution Organization leader, Oo Be Htu Reh, was killed. This led to the formation of the Karenni Revolution Army. They went to the eastern side of Salween River and stayed there. At that time, there were about 60 houses and about 200 people. These people were revolutionaries. They had not received support from any organizations. They tried to support for their livelihoods. They cut down forest and began agriculture to grow rice. Later, they arrived at the Thai-Burma border in 1986.

The families of the revolutionaries began receiving support from NGOs in 1991. They were supported with rice, salt, yellow beans, soy beans, chili and oil. After, they also supported pots and dishes. In Karenni State, the Burmese army called people to be porters. They made citizens do forced labour. They moved villages so villagers were displaced and a lot of people came to Karenni Refugee Camp 1 on the Thai-Burma border.



Karenni Refugee Camp 1

Now, in Karenni Refugee Camp 1, the population is about 12,649. TBC has supported Karenni Refugee Camp 1 for 23 years. Resettlement to third countries began in 2005-2006, this reduces the population. However, new people continue to come to the camp, this increases the population. In Karenni State, if people continue to see human rights violations as well as religious, economic and cultural discrimination, the population in camp will continue to increase.

Chapter 1

1) Reasons for the reduction of rations

TBC provides rations in 9 refugee camps along the Thai-Burma border, including Karenni Refugee Camp 1. Now, TBC's rations are less than before. This is due to changes in currency values and increases in transportation costs. They provide the refugee camps for not only emergencies but also, due to political changes, they are now planning development projects. 50% of their budget is provided for emergencies and 30% for development. The remaining 20% is for preparation. For development, camp citizens are given vocational training to get earnings so that when they return to their homeland they can live independently.

There are 10 vocational trainings in camp. Due to increased political change, the budget now also provides for projects inside Myanmar. Therefore, the budget for the refugee camps is less. Captain Lee Reh, who had permission to explain about the ration reduction, said "There is development and preparation so TBC has reduced the rations budget. The donors for the refugees are not only from Europe but also New Zealand, Australia, Japan and South Korea. The reductions are only for rice, not for other items.



A camp resident weighing chilis

Only rice has been reduced. Irais, the manager of the rations storeroom, said "Rice does not contain as much vitamins and nutrients as yellow beans, oil and salt. Therefore, only rice is reduced."

2) Food crisis causes increased numbers of people to leave the camp

Due to TBC's reductions of rations, camp citizens have a food crisis and are now leaving the camp to work. By going out to work, camp citizens have experienced many problems because camp citizens are staying temporarily in Thailand. Their problems are due to their lack of legal identification cards. Once outside of the camp, they also worry about their personal safety. They leave the camp for their livelihood but this activity is illegal and they are afraid of being caught by Thai authorities. If they get income, they have to save money for their safety.

"Work is very dangerous because we don't have Thai identification cards"

There is also fear and danger at the workplace. Nga Reh said "At the workplace, a lot of people drink alcohol, fight and people can die. This is from personal experience. To go out and work, for your livelihood, is very dangerous because we do not have Thai identification cards." We also worry about money when we return to our home.

For people who stay in camp, they have problems and their children cannot study so a lot of them leave camp to find jobs and they can make a little money. There are also a lot of children who go out to work and lose their opportunity for education. Some people go out and make enough money that they can solve their food challenges but for people who cannot work they always have problems. If people leave the camp for a long time and are unable to return, they can lose their rations. If the rations are never enough they need to be able to get food, so they always leave the camp to work.

3) Difficulties for camp citizens

In Karenni Refugee Camp 1, there are 12,649 people. TBC supports the camp citizens for their livelihood. Examples of support are bamboo and wood for building as well as leaves for roofs. Previously, they received enough support from TBC. In 1991, people over 5 years old received 16 kilograms of rice and children under 5 years old received 8 kilograms. Moreover, TBC also supported rice, salt, yellow beans, soy beans, chili and oil. In 2010, it was reduced to 12 kilograms for people over 5 years old and 6 kilograms for Children under 5 years old. Over time, they also reduced oil, salt, yellow beans and stopped supporting soy beans and chili. As TBC reduced rations, the camp community was faced with challenges.

A Camp citizen, Meh Mo, opened up to us about her feelings on the rations reduction. She said "I face many difficulties because of the ration's reduction. I borrow money from other people to buy rice because

"I borrow money from other people to buy rice because I don't have any money"

I don't have any money." As the rations are reduced, the camp citizens have been worried. The camp citizen's lives are unstable because they stay in another country temporarily. The camp citizens cannot find any income freely. They only support their livelihood by working as staff in departments in the camp. They cannot buy anything else except rice because they have very little income. However, for people who have income in the camp, their lives are comfortable.

Illiterate people face difficulties and only wait for their support from TBC. They also do tiring work on the farm, to support their livelihood. When they work on the farm, they feel afraid of the Thai military because this is not their country. The camp citizens will continue to be faced with difficulties, to support their livelihood, until they have legal status for work. This is because the support from TBC is not enough for them.

4) Unemployment problems

The camp citizens don't have any jobs and there are many unemployed people. They can't do anything except rely on the food support and other items from TBC. Most of the unemployed people are illiterate. Unemployed people are currently faced with difficulties because of the ration reductions. They are also suffering from stress because of the ration reductions. This stress is causing more people to turn to alcohol in an effort to solve their problems. Both adults and children suffer from alcoholism. This causes them to behave badly. Oo Pray Reh, who looks after his

children, said "I can't do anything. This is a problem for me. I also don't know how to do anything else because of the rations reduction." Even though most of the unemployed people are very young, they have already got married. These young people should be studying. However, because of their livelihood problems, they don't study and leave school. The families who are unemployed are more prone to domestic violence, in their household, because there isn't enough support for their family. We have found that the number of people unemployed is increasing daily.

5) Deforestation for farming purposes

Due to the rations reduction, people are trying to support their livelihood by cutting down trees and growing vegetables or rice. Although some people can grow rice or vegetables, not all people can do this. This deforestation issue started in 2010. It is difficult to find money so people do not have money to buy rice. People try to sell vegetables so they can get money to buy rice.

"If there are further reductions, we will have to cut down trees"

When vegetables are grown, the crops are not rotated. This means the soil is of a low quality. Ree Reh said "This year the rice is less than before because we use these farms again and again. So, we worry that there is not enough rations."

Some people cut down trees and use their traditional knowledge to grow rice. Each year, the weather is different. This year their rice is less. Due to deforestation, camp citizens have experienced difficulties. Some people are afraid of the Thai authorities when they cut down trees because it is not their land. We spoke to Pree Meh when she was harvesting her rice. She said "Now, when we cut down trees, we are very scared. Sometimes when the helicopter comes overhead, we are even more afraid. We are worried that in the future we will not be allowed to grow rice."

If there is another rations reduction, camp citizens will decide to cut down more trees in order to grow rice. Some people cut down trees to grow rice near the camp. Other people travel to areas along the Thai-Karenni border. Karenni people in camp can only grow vegetables and rice. Due to these reasons, Nga Reh said "If there are further reductions, we will have to cut down more trees. We cannot do any other jobs" During the period after the most recent rations reduction, Camp citizens have continued to cut down more trees.

6) Situation of boarding houses

There are 7 student boarding houses in Karenni Refugee Camp 1. They are future star boarding house, the orphanage boarding house, St Mary's boarding house, Panwe Aye La boarding house, Galaxy boarding house, Freedom boarding house and Social boarding house. Although TBC has reduced rations for citizens, it has not reduced the ration for boarding houses. Teacher Tae Bu spoke to us about not reducing rations for boarding

houses. He said "The children who usually stay at the boarding houses are teenagers. They are still growing up so they eat a lot of rice."

Last year in the boarding houses, they supported 12 kilograms per person. It was not enough. Now it is better because they support 13 kilograms. Due to boarding houses receiving this amount of rations from TBC, they have not experienced serious difficulties. Although rice is enough, they have to buy oil and salt every month. They receive 0.5 liters of oil per person per month and are supplied with one tub of salt once every four months. This is not enough. New students from inside Karenni State come to the boarding houses every year.

Chapter 2

1) Vocational work

There is vocational work available for camp citizens in social development. This vocational work is part of a project provided by TBC and FRC.

Some camp citizens do not follow through on their obligations after receiving the money

1.1) Vocational work from TBC

TBC has reduced rations. On the other hand, they provide vocational work for citizen's social development. This is provided so citizens have a way to get income. The intention of the vocational work is for citizens to be able to get income, for their future, despite the rations reduction. Camp citizens try to do vocational work, provided by TBC, to get income. There is vocational work in pig breeding or shop keeping.

To get this job, camp citizens need to fill in an application form and complete a job interview. If they pass the interview, they are given training for a week. After this week, they are provided with money. Their first payment is 2,400 Baht. They need to manage the money to run their project. If they are successful at their job, they are provided with a further 2,100 baht. However, if you are unsuccessful, you will not be provided with anymore support.

Some camp citizens do not follow through on their obligations after receiving the money. They are corrupt with this money. The shopkeepers, who have received support from TBC, have to list their exact income and expenditures. The organisations that provide individuals come to examine those individuals once a month. Individuals have to report to TBC if they are ready to sell their pig.

Currently due to the rations reduction, breeding pigs is difficult too. TBC only provides money but they do not provide other items. Furthermore, other organisations are also providing vocational work.

1.2) Vocational work from FRC

FRC are also included in the social development vocational work. For social development, vocational work in pig breeding is provided by FRC. Citizens, who do this job, receive one month training. After their training, they are provided with 4,000 Baht. They have to manage on their own to buy a pig to breed with the money that they have received. They provide a bucket and chopping hoe for the pig breeding work.

FRC also provides two buckets of pig feed a month for the first six months. FRC comes to examine once every month or two months. If they are ready to sell a pig, they need to make a request to FRC. For every pig that is successfully bred, they must return the pig or 1,000 baht to FRC. The vocational work by FRC is advantageous work for camp citizens.

The vocational work by FRC is advantageous for camp citizens

2) Work of CMT

In Karenni Refugee Camp 1, we have seen that there have been many changes to the rations that are provided for citizens. These changes are about development. They have also been affected by the international economic crisis and reductions in currency exchange rates. Therefore in camp due to the issue of rations reductions, there is an organisation to educate people about this issue. It is called CMT. CMT educates every section about this issue. When they have met with citizens, they have experienced difficulties. Some people understand about the rations reduction, however other people still argue about this issue. This coming November, they will provide 10 kilograms per person equally. However, there is a plan to distribute this December's rations based on each family's status. This plan is for all nine refugee camp along the Thai- Burma border. To examine the family's status, there are four categories: 1. Standard family 2. Vulnerable family 3. Most vulnerable family 4. Self-reliant families.

When rations are provided based on family status, they will only separate adult's rations. This change will not affect other rations beside rice because if other rations are reduced the reduction in vitamins will have a negative effect on all families.

3) Project management of rations

The rations management is dependent on the population in Karenni Refugee Camp 1. There are 9 storerooms in camp. There is one manager and 9 assistants in each storeroom. When new people arrive in camp, they give the rations books only if the people meet the criteria to receive rations. Captain Lee Reh said "When they ask new people, they have a procedure. If they are appropriate following the procedure, then they will be added to the ration's list. They also have to come when the administrator makes an appointment with them."

More new people are coming this year. Especially, children who want to continue their education. Some people go

to work outside the camp and they cannot come back to the camp to collect their rations. When they cannot collect the rations, the section leader collects their rations and uses it for funds. When they distribute the rations it is dependent upon the population. The storeroom manager, Poe Reh, said "Sometimes, there are very few people. Sometimes, there are a lot of people. Therefore, there is not the same amount of rice for each month."

TBC checks the quality of the rice, for every month. Sometimes, there are less kilograms of rice. Sometimes, the quality is low. If the quality is low, the rice company gives compensation. Iris, the rice storeroom manager, said "I sometimes receive fewer kilograms of rice but in the rainy season the kilograms are increased. There are 50 kilograms in one sack. When they bring the rice, there are sometimes holes in the sack so some of the rice is lost. They replace the lost rice with the rations of people who have recently resettled."

As TBC reduced the rations, some camp citizens have misunderstood the situation. Due to citizen's misunderstandings on them some storeroom staff want to leave. Rice storeroom manager, Irais, said "The camp citizens think that I have reduced the rations. We don't know how to explain to them. If they misunderstand us, we just leave this work. We cannot do anything."



Families count rice in Karenni Refugee Camp 1

November 2013 table for distribution of rations in Karenni Refugee Camp 1

| Rations type | Age group | Self-reliant family | Standard family | Vulnerable family | Most-vulnerable family |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Rice | Adults, over 18 years old | 0 kilograms | 10 kilograms | 12 kilograms | 13.9 kilograms |
| | Children 5 years -17 years old | 12 kilograms | 12 kilograms | 12 kilograms | 13.9 kilograms |
| | Children, 6 months - 5 years old | 6 kilograms | 6 kilograms | 6 kilograms | 7 kilograms |
| | Adults, over 18 years old | 0 kilograms | 1 kilogram | 1 kilogram | 1 kilogram |
| Yellow split peas | Children 5 years -17 years old | 1.2 kilograms | 1.2 kilograms | 1.2 kilograms | 1.2 kilograms |
| | Children, 6 months - 5 years old | 0.6 kilograms | 0.6 kilograms | 0.6 kilograms | 0.6 kilograms |
| | Adults, over 18 years old | 0 litres | 0.5 litres | 0.5 litres | 0.5 litres |
| | Children 5 years -17 years old | 0.9 litres | 0.9 litres | 0.9 litres | 1 litre |
| Oil | Children, 6 months - 5 years old | 0.9 litres | 0.9 litres | 0.9 litres | 0.9 litres |
| | Adults, over 18 years old | 0 kilograms | 0 kilograms | 0 kilograms | 0 kilograms |
| | Children 5 years -17 years old | 1 kilogram | 1 kilogram | 1 kilogram | 1 kilogram |
| | Children, 6 months - 5 years old | 1 kilogram | 1 kilogram | 1 kilogram | 1 kilogram |
| Asiare mix | Adults, over 18 years old | 0 kilogram | 167 grams | 167 grams | 167 grams |
| | Children 5 years -17 years old | 1 kilogram | 1 kilogram | 1 kilogram | 1 kilogram |
| | Children, 6 months - 5 years old | 1 kilogram | 1 kilogram | 1 kilogram | 1 kilogram |
| | Adults, over 18 years old | 0 kilogram | 167 grams | 167 grams | 167 grams |
| Salt | Children 5 years -17 years old | 167 grams | 167 grams | 167 grams | 167 grams |
| | Children, 6 months - 5 years old | 167 grams | 167 grams | 167 grams | 167 grams |
| | Adults, over 18 years old | 167 grams | 167 grams | 167 grams | 167 grams |
| | Children, 6 months - 5 years old | 167 grams | 167 grams | 167 grams | 167 grams |
| Charcoal | - | For a one person house (20 Kilograms) For each additional person another 5 kilograms. | For a one person house (20 Kilograms) For each additional person another 5 kilograms. | For a one person house (20 Kilograms) For each additional person another 5 kilograms. | For a one person house (20 Kilograms) For each additional person another 5 kilograms. |

4) Recommendations

To TBC:

- Please provide the same amount of rations as before because the camp citizens do not receive enough. Therefore, the camp citizens cut down trees causing deforestation.
- Please provide more rice for people that are unable to work and people that are unemployed.

To Camp Citizens:

- Please try to make use of the vocational work provided by TBC.
- Please don't cut down trees because TBC can provide you with vocational work.
- Do not conflict with each other due to the rations reduction.
- Try to stay at the refugee camps so the camp can continue to receive support

To TBC officers:

- Please try to explain to citizens about vocational work and how to do it.

5) Acknowledgements

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References

1. Karenni Refugee Committee functions and measurements report, January - June 2013.

2. Karenni national development party's report on the role of National work.

Interviewee List

| | Name | Age | Sex | Nationality | House and section number | Date of inter-view | Marital status | Occupation | Place of Interview |
|----|----------|-----|--------|-------------|--------------------------|--------------------|----------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | Toe Moe | 23 | Female | Kayah | 6/111 | 11/10/2013 | Single | In charge of boarding at St Mary's | St Mary's Boarding house |
| 2 | Sue Meh | 30 | Female | Kayah | 6/118 | 11/10/2013 | Married | Unemployed | Home |
| 3 | Poe Meh | 30 | Female | Kayah | 5/116 | 11/10/2013 | Married | Unemployed | Home |
| 4 | Tu Reh | 70 | Male | Kayah | 14/43 | 11/10/2013 | Married | Market vendor | Home |
| 5 | Nga Reh | 29 | Male | Kayah | 14/27 | 11/10/2013 | Married | Pig farmer | Home |
| 6 | Kay Reh | 54 | Male | Kayah | 14/26 | 11/10/2013 | Married | Section leader | Home |
| 7 | Kuu Reh | 26 | Male | Kayah | 12/24 | 11/10/2013 | Married | Section leader | Home |
| 8 | Lee Reh | 57 | Male | Kayah | 11/22 | 11/10/2013 | Single | Camp Committee office (C.M.T) | Home |
| 9 | Poe Reh | 35 | Male | Kayah | 5/114 | 12/10/2013 | Married | Rice storeroom office worker | Home |
| 10 | Ee Reh | 64 | Male | Kayah | 17/83 | 12/10/2013 | Married | Administrator | Home |
| 11 | Ree Meh | 56 | Female | Kayah | 19/35 | 14/10/2013 | Married | Unemployed | Home |
| 12 | Mi Reh | 70 | Male | Kayah | 19/43 | 14/10/2013 | Married | Unemployed | Home |
| 13 | Pray Meh | 50 | Female | Kayah | 12/92 | 14/10/2013 | Married | Unemployed | Paddy fields |
| 14 | Soe Meh | 50 | Female | Kayah | 12/46 | 14/10/2013 | Married | Unemployed | Home |
| 15 | Sue Meh | 30 | Female | Kayah | 12/17 | 14/10/2013 | Married | Market vendor | Home |
| 16 | Bu Meh | 20 | Female | Kayah | 3/20 | 14/10/2013 | Married | Pig Farmer | Home |

Interviewee List

| | Name | Age | Sex | Nationality | House Number | Date of Interview | Marital status | Occupation | Place of interview |
|----|--------------|-----|--------|-------------|--------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 17 | Sue Meh | 20 | Female | Kayah | 4/12 | 15/10/2013 | Married | Unemployed | Home |
| 18 | Heh Meh | 24 | Female | Kayah | 2/170 | 15/10/2013 | Married | RCH Clinic | Home |
| 19 | Bu Meh | 30 | Female | Kayah | 13/32 | 15/10/2013 | Married | Unemployed | Home |
| 20 | Meh Moe | 31 | Female | Manu | 13/27 | 15/10/2013 | Married | Unemployed | Home |
| 21 | Ree Reh | 45 | Male | Kayah | 6/146 | 15/10/2013 | Married | Unemployed | Home |
| 22 | Irais | 48 | Female | Kayan | 19/78 | 16/10/2013 | Married | Rations storeroom manager | Ration's storeroom office |
| 23 | Hte Bu | 48 | Male | Kayah | 18/167 | 16/10/2013 | Single | In Charge of a Boarding house | Boarding house |
| 24 | Pray Meh | 20 | Female | Kayah | 8/8 | 17/10/2013 | Married | Unemployed | Home |
| 25 | Lu Meh | 51 | Female | Kayah | 8/4 | 17/10/2013 | Married | Unemployed | Home |
| 26 | Day Day Htoo | 41 | Female | Kayah | 17/34 | 17/10/2013 | Married | Unemployed | Home |
| 27 | Taw reh | 46 | Male | Kayah | 17/46 | 17/10/2013 | Married | Unemployed | Home |
| 28 | Law Rine | 60 | Male | Karen | 17/91 | 17/10/2013 | Married | Unemployed | Home |
| 29 | Soe Meh | 36 | Female | Kayah | 10/109 | 17/10/2013 | Married | Unemployed | Home |
| 30 | Nan Lu | 43 | Female | Pa-Oh | 11/29 | 18/10/2013 | Married | Unemployed | Home |

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Finally, we would like to thank you the reader for showing an interest in supporting the cause of our people with your support we can go from strength to strength in the future.

Thank you!



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