

Report on the Resettlement process and the follow up within Karenni Refugee Camp 1

October 2013

Researched and written by Maw Lu Meh, Khu Khar Reh and Maw Kay Meh Htway

Translated by SDC staff and volunteers



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Introduction

This report is written by Khu Khar Reh, Maw Lu Meh, and Maw Kay Meh Htway. We are all students at the Social Development Centre (SDC). We went to interview some organisations to collect facts and information about resettlement. We studied for ten months. For one month of this 10-month period, in October, we conducted fieldwork. As students we studied about the environment, rule of law, and human rights. The information from our courses helped us to complete our fieldwork.

For our group, we wrote a report about the issues relating to resettlement in Karenni Refugee Camp 1. We interviewed people in their homes. Usually we would interview people from morning to evening.

Methodology

To make this report, we visited Karenni Refugee Camp 1. The information in this report is from people who have experienced the resettlement process.

We had one week of training about research methodology before doing the research for this report. Before we conducted our interview, we prepared our questions. Before we interviewed people, we scheduled a time for the interview.

During the interviews, we used cassette tapes and microphones to record the interview. We also noted information in our books and took photos during the interview. We took photos of buildings and the signboards for evidence. When our informant was not available, we instead interviewed their neighbours about their knowledge of the resettlement process. After the interview, we made a draft of our findings. Later on, we created the final draft for the report.

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Thank you also to our friends, siblings, teachers, staff, and the camp committee, for sharing your knowledge and helping us to collect more information for our report. Thank you also to our donors for supporting us with materials.

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Additionally, thank you very much for taking the time to read our report.

Karenni Camp History

Karenni people lived near lake Mongolia for over 2,000 years. When they lived in Mongolia, they had a lot of enemies from the neighbouring countries. Some of their enemies often criticised them. Some of the Karenni people moved to an island called Dawnee and then to Deemawso Nyedonsel.

At that time, they were ruled by their own government. The Thai people came to colonise them. After that, the Thai people came to rule over them for 100 years. They experienced problems of persecution, land confiscation, and slavery. They revolted against the Thai.



Karenni Refugee Camp 1

In 1986, the Burmese military started to infiltrate the area along the Salween River and began to persecute the Karenni people. The Karenni endured persecution for a long time and felt that there would be war. Many Karenni people ran to the Thai-Burma border and created Karenni Refugee Camp 1. At the time, no organisations came to support the Karenni people. Only the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) came to support the people.

In 2005, the leader of the camp committee, Khu Ee Reh, tried to discuss with the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) to create opportunities for the Karenni refugees to study. UNHCR opened opportunities for the refugees to resettle.

Summary

The Karenni people who are living in Karenni Refugee Camp 1 on the Thai-Burma border have suffered from poverty for a long time. To escape more suffering, Karenni refugees try to resettle to another country. After resettling to another country, they experience a lot of problems.

During the resettlement process, some members of the family who do not have a UN card often get left behind. Families become separated. Members of the family who are left behind feel abandoned, fall into depression, and become mentally ill. Some married men who are left behind fall into alcoholism. Some married couples that become separated sometimes re-marry.

Because of resettlement we often lose leaders in our communities, leaders of the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), and our political advisors.

For education and health care, some of our doctors and nurses also resettle. There are not enough people to provide education and health care.

We have to try to start a new life in another country. Due to the new country having a different culture and a

different language, resettled people have a lot of problems. One out of 3 women experience domestic violence.

Karenni Refugee Camp 1 Resettlement

Procedures for Resettlement

The resettlement process started in 2005. There are steps someone must take before one can resettle. First they need to go to the office of UNHCR to register their name for resettlement. It takes one month for UNHCR to decide if it is possible for someone to resettle or not. If a person is accepted, then they need to go to RCS/OPE. They must have an interview with DHS. Then they need to have a blood check with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) to check their overall health. After the health check, they must go through some cultural training for their new country. After taking medication for 3/5/6 days, IOM will escort them to their new country.

About Resettlement

Many people in Karenni Refugee Camp 1 resettle because of difficult living standards. In camp, there are no jobs. Families have problems to find shelter. This woman says:



Families being organised into resettlement cars

“When I stay here, UNHCR gives us a ration but it is not enough for my family to eat. I have a bad level of education. This causes problems. There are no jobs. I have a lot of problems with my family. I just think about my children’s education. This makes me feel like resettling.”

Purpose of Resettlement

Most of the people in Karenni refugee camp 1 resettle to get a better life and to access more education for their children. Everybody is thinking about his or her children’s future. For this one person:

“When I stay in camp, the education level is changing – not like before. Before when we were grade 9 and grade 10, we could speak English very well. I want to speak English, so I want to resettle to another country.”

Changes in Education

Karenni refugee camp 1 has experienced a lot of changes because of resettlement. At the beginning the level of education was really high. There were enough teachers to teach students, students were interested in their studies, and both teachers and students tried hard. Students in grade 9, grade 10, and post 10 could speak English well. After many teachers resettled, the level of education has decreased and many changes could be seen.

Effect on Teachers

Many teachers have had the opportunity to resettle, so now there are not enough teachers to teach. Now every school does not have enough teachers resulting in problems for students.

Effect on Students

Every school does not have enough teachers so students have become lazy and do not come on time. When students do go to school, they do not study. They are not interested in studying.

Changes in Health Care

The situation with doctors and nurses has also changed after resettlement. About 2 or 3 years ago, Karenni Refugee Camp 1 had enough staff in the clinic. They also had enough skills to manage various health care issues. They could solve the health problems of the people. They could promote health care in Camp 1. Older staff have had the opportunity to resettle to other countries. Now, it is often difficult for the clinic to find new staff to replace those who have resettled.

“They have training for new staff, but the trainers do not have strong experience to guide the new staff. I hope that the new staff will be able to work effectively later.”

There are no professional trainers so it is difficult to heal people. So the people have a lot of problems, but the new staff try as much as they can to take care of the patients.

Public Condition

When we did our research in Karenni Refugee Camp 1, we saw a lot of families become separated from each other. Some of the people became alcoholics. One man's wife and children went to resettle. He was left alone in the camp. Some of the people who really want to resettle, are not interested in their own jobs. They don't want to eat anymore. They only think about resettlement. Married couples argue and struggle to live together. We see a lot of people resettling. A lot of people are interested but they can go only if they have a BMN card.



Lost Human Resources

We lose a lot of our human resources when people in Karenni Refugee Camp 1 resettle to another country. Members and leaders of KNPP have resettled. Karenni Women’s Organisation (KnWO) and Karenni Health Department (KnHD) have also lost valuable human resources.

Terms

The UN decided that August 2013 would be the last opportunity to register for group resettlement to the USA. Many people came to the UN office to register. Those that did not come in August 2013 will not have an opportunity to resettle again even though some families still live separately from each other.

“Some family that are separated should have the opportunity to resettle and become reunited again. Secretary One, Saya Aung Myint, informed us this.”

Resettlement will continue for individuals based on a case by case basis and for other countries.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Resettlement

There are advantages and disadvantages to resettlement for refugees.

Advantages

Refugees can go to a better place to start a new life. They can support their relatives who remain in the camp through remittances.

Disadvantages

Resettlement causes problems between wife and husbands. When the husband wants to go for example, but the wife does not, this can result in a separation.

Post-resettlement problems

Refugee emotions

If refugees resettle to another country, they will lose their family, their homes, and their friends. Refugees have a lot of problems when they begin to study a new language. It takes a long time to study. It is not easy or possible to get a good job. Many have to start again, as if it is the beginning of their life. It is very difficult to follow the new



Refugee people wait to be resettled



culture. Refugees worry about how they can support their relatives back in the camp because they do not have enough money to use on themselves. It is also difficult to do things because it is not our homeland.

Domestic Violence

1 out of 3 women experience physical violence. More and more women begin to have psychological problems because they have a lot of changes in their families. More and more women support their husbands. Neighbours will follow each other's movements. They will try to resettle to the same country.

If refugees move to another country, they do not know the culture or the language. It is a weakness and a disadvantage for refugees. They get a low salary. They lose their close connections with their families and their friendships with their neighbours back in the camp. Because of this, they experience a lot of physical problems. Most of the psychological problems are experienced by women and the elderly. Due to losing a lot of their friends, they feel lonely. It affects their mental health.

Conclusion

Many Karenni refugees who live in Camp 1 have experienced war for a long time. They ran from their homes to find another way for them to live and they try to resettle to another country. Those who are living in Karenni Refugee Camp 1 do not have enough money to support their children. There is also a lack of educated people. They do not know how to solve this problem. They do not know how to solve the problems within their family. They just think about resettlement to another country as a way to solve the problem.

After they choose to resettle, they experience problems in their family from being separated. Those who remain in the camp lose a lot of important human resources.

We want people to know about this problem, so we wrote this report.

Recommendations

- To UNHCR

Try to find a way to reunite families who have been separated from each other.
You should explain more details about the country that people will resettle to
Try to make the resettlement process faster

- To the Public

If you decide to resettle, you need to ask all the people in your family first about their interest to resettle.





'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.'



Mae Hong Son,
Thailand
PO BOX 20
58000
+66 0898526619
officesdc@yahoo.com

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Thank you!



The Curriculum Project

