

# Monthly Publication Of KSDC

## Thai political turmoil from a Karenni refugee's perspective

Recently our organisation and community has felt the effects of the Thai military coup.



Thai military arrive in the camp for the headcount

Thai authorities have completed a headcount in Karenni Refugee Camp 1. It was organised after a meeting between the Burmese and Thai military heads. At the meeting, repatriation of the estimated 130,000 refugees living

in camps on the Thai-Burma border was discussed. The headcount following this decision has caused fear and

challenges amongst camp residents. The residents of the camp are vulnerable people. They fear returning...  
CONTINUED ON P5

## A word on SDC and its coordinator

SDC is located in Karenni Refugee Camp 1, on the Thai-Burma border. It was founded in 2002 by three alumni of EarthRights School Burma (ERSB).

The ERSB alumni had learnt about subjects including democracy, law and environment at the school.

They wanted young people in their community to be able to study these subjects so they founded SDC.

SDC has produced over 200 activists for the environment and human rights, since its formation.

Our coordinator and co-founder, Aung Sun



Aung Sun Myint speaking at the 2014 enrollment

Myint, continues to work with our team to realise the vision he set out with his fellow ERSB alumni in 2002.

Issue 2

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### SDC updates from July 2014:

- SDC basic course students receive training from the Legal Assistance Center (LAC)
- SDC advanced course students begin studying International Law and campaigning
- We have started a twitter. Follow us at @SDCKarenni
- We published a report on rations reductions

### Inside this issue:

Principal's report	<b>2</b>
SDC future plans	<b>3</b>
SDC school news	<b>4</b>
Karenni Refugee News	<b>5 - 6</b>
Student's work	<b>7 - 8</b>
Student's story	<b>9</b>
Acknowledgements	<b>10</b>

## Principal's Message



July has seen progress on our courses but also challenges due to the Thai political situation.

We have already been running our courses for 2 months. For the basic course, we have taught about human rights, environment, the rule of law, democracy for all and English skills to 50 students in the camp by SDC staff. Regarding our schedule, starting in July, on every Friday we arrange for 2 hours information sharing about the

hot issues around the world, on the basic course in camp. We hope this encourages and develops the students' confidence, speaking skills and increases the students' self-study skills.

As with every year, on Fridays during July, the Legal Assistant Center (LAC) located in Karenni refugee camp 1 comes and provides the basic course about general legal issues, especially about Thai law and how it influences our refugees, as well as about the judicial system, which is practiced in camp today. We hope it will be quite useful to our students and indirectly our community because by learning and knowing about it, our students and community will be aware of their movement and what things they need to do and avoid doing, when living in Thailand.

For the advanced course, we have been providing English (ESL) and computer skills to 16 students. Starting on 28<sup>th</sup> July, we began

providing about International Law, Campaigning and Lobbying .

Unfortunately, we had to move the students on the Advanced Course to the camp, for 5 days, because Thai military troops entered and checked the population in the camp. This was quite annoying for all camp organisations including our SDC.

Our future plan for August, is to continue providing the students about the issues of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Fair Trial, Environment, Democracy and English skill by the staff members of SDC on the basic course in camp.

On the Advanced Course, we will continue to teach about the issues of International Law, Campaigning and Lobbying by a volunteer and Computer skills by a staff member of SDC.



Basic course students in Environmental studies



ACMTC students studying International Law

## SDC plan for August

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
				1 Basic Course Test	2	3
4	5 Meeting with our donor, AJWS	6 Discussion with UNHCR and civil society groups	7 ICCPR course begins on the basic course	8	9	10
11 Civil law begins on the basic course	12 Thai Queen's birthday	13 Criminal law begins on the basic course	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28 Project planning begins on the ACMTC	29	30	31

## Future event: meeting with donors and INGOs

This month, we will meet with our donors, AJWS. This is an opportunity for us to discuss the progress of our project, along with our future plans. After meeting with them, we will accept an invitation to submit a proposal from our organisation. We meet with all of our donors, every year.

We will speak with them about three issues. Firstly, our past achievements. Secondly, our current activities and finally, our future plans. They will also share information about their organisation, activities and current situation. AJWS has already supported us for 7 years.



A former meeting between SDC staff and our donor, AJWS

Our teachers will also meet and consult with other INGOs such as the UNHCR on a monthly basis. This is in addition to continual liaison

with our local community based organisations, where many of our alumni now work.

## SDC Information sharing

Many of our students have known nothing outside of the camp's boundaries for their whole life. It is common for ethnic students along the border to have precious little knowledge of news and current affairs. For our SDC students, we aim to change that. This month, students on SDC's basic course were introduced to a new activity: Information sharing.



Our Coordinator, Aung Sun Myint Steven, explains about information sharing, to our students

Beginning on the basic course, this year, every Friday, our students will present information about current news, either in Burma or Internationally, to their fellow students. The students will present their information, individually, and each week different students will be selected to provide information.

This week, 15 students shared information. They shared information about the issues of electricity supply, Karenni literature, better transportation, health information for women, religious conflict in Mandalay and safety of Burmese migrants in Malaysia.

We believe this activity will both further our students' knowledge of the world around them, as well as provide a valuable opportunity to improve their public speaking and presentation skills. The activity fits in well with our school policy of providing learner centered activities for our students. This activity will also soon be implemented on the SDC Advanced Management Training Course.



An SDC Student shares her information for this week with her fellow students

## Thai political turmoil from a Karenni refugee's perspective

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1....

because the situation is not yet safe. Hte Ree Moe, a high school teacher said "I don't believe the Burmese government. I don't want to go back to Burma. I want to resettle in the USA but I don't have a U.N card". The headcount has exacerbated anxiety among residents.

There were reassurances from UNHCR and section leaders that this was only a population count. Khu Ee Reh, section leader, said "They come here because they want to know the population. They want to know who has a UN card." The actions in the headcount followed this official word.

Despite this, rumours spread. Suspicions arose Thai authorities may be looking for the illegal drug, *Yabba*, an amphetamine derivative. Khu Law Reh, an elderly camp resident, said "The Thai military has not come before. I think they want to know the population and assess *yabba* use. A lot of people outside camp say they are refugees but really they sell *yabba* and use being a refugee as an excuse. The Thai military is not sure so they have come to assess our population and find information. I worry if they find *yabba*, they will force us to move."

Other rumours concerned property theft. Nge Meh, an accountant for section 8, said "When I first heard the Thai military will come, I was a little afraid. I wanted my husband to hide our valuable property. After this, I went to a meeting. They told us that the Thai military will not do anything only check the population" Not all residents attended or relied on the word from the meetings.



Camp citizens wait ahead of the count

Due to the rumours some people hid portable televisions and solar panels in the jungle. They also hid things under the ground. Rain caused these items to be damaged. When asked about this, Khu Ee Reh said "Other camps such as Umpiem and NuPo, told KnRC that earlier the Thai military took the solar panels" Rumours had spread that in other camps these things were damaged. Even with the reassurances, it can be difficult for camp residents to trust information.

*"I worry if they find yabba, they will force us to move."*

This period of instability in Thailand is not just a source of fear among residents in the camp but also a challenge for organisations. Part of our center is outside the boundaries of the camp, due to the lack of internet access and restrictions on volunteers within the camp. For the headcount, all refugees were ordered to return to the camps. Not attending could mean being removed from the rations list so the vast majority of refugees returned. Tight travel restrictions were also enforced. This situation affected our organisation and our ACMTC students had to study in camp.

Situations like these cause challenges for organisations and fear among the refugee community.



Thai Military officials counting a family

## Is your resource looting making refugees afraid to return?

By Sue Meh for Kantarawaddy Times. Translated and edited by SDC students, staff and volunteers.

For a long time, the east side of the Salween River had a lot of natural greenery, resources and animals. If there is a sustainable ceasefire and true peace, Karenni Refugees hope they can return to live there interdependent on the natural resources. But, their hope cannot materialise. The government and the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) have signed and had a ceasefire agreement since 2012. During the last three years, there has been a lot of deforestation on the east side of the Salween River.

Nobody can say if the ceasefire is stable enough for safe refugee repatriation. During the ceasefire period, some of the refugees have gone back to visit their old area. There is less forest than before. In Karenni Camp 1, there are 15,000 people. Khu Ee Reh said they are hopeful and excited to go back in Karenni State, but they are not sure. "In my opinion, I don't want them to cut down more trees. I want them to only use wood from trees that have already been cut down. We have told them they have no right to cut down more trees. So, if they cut down more trees the forest will disappear. Because we want to return to our homeland, we are dependent on these trees. If there is no forest, we will be depressed"

During 1995, when KNPP had a ceasefire, for three months, with the Burmese government, there were 100 villages on the eastern side of the Salween River. These villages experienced deforestation in this period. Even though in 1995 to stop the deforestation repeating itself, they agreed, with villager's requests to protect and replant trees, Private companies have returned and deforestation has continued. "If we return, the trees for living are gone. In this area, there are only a few trees left around *Sotashar* Mountain. They are ignoring me." said, forest defender committee member, Khu Heh Reh. The main point is members of the armed groups, KNPLF and KNPP, have participated in logging this area.

KNPP has set up a company to find funds for themselves. Their objective is good but this way is not good for the public. The public are encouraged to cut down trees by this. If they do like this, there will be more corruption and logging some KNPP leaders said. KNPP general, Aung Myant said, "No one asked, how can you help us? Usually, they only ask to cut down trees, mine lead and borrow money. This is my honest experience. Our people only have this viewpoint. They only ask

to borrow money so they can buy a car. They want a car because other people have cars and they don't have enough money. They ask me where to find money."

On April 16th, when UNHCR and refugee committee discussed plans for repatriation, they talked about international standards not about places. The three main requirements for repatriation are that it is voluntary, safe and with dignity. The refugees should understand these three points clearly so they can go back freely, said refugee committee member, Naw Htu Lwe.

The environmental exploitation has broken some refugees' dreams of returning. Some have resettled to a third country instead. Most of the people who would like to return to their native land try to participate as a forest defender. However, most of the members have resettled and the organisation is becoming increasingly weaker. One member of this committee, Khu Ee Reh said "At last, if I have no choice to go anywhere else, I must go back. When I return, I think we will need to loot resources to survive."

## Student's Work: Essay about The Pianist by Lu Meh

I have seen a movie about World War II. It is what happened and the events and what they were doing in World War II. In World War II, Wladek lived in Warsaw, Poland with his family. He was a Jewish person. He played piano at a restaurant and he was a famous pianist. He was clever, brave, kind and good-natured. There were a lot of Jewish people. Wladek had 6 people in his family.



An advertisement for The Pianist movie.

His family heard on the radio that Great Britain declared war on Nazi Germany. Nazi Germany occupied and fought in Warsaw. About 1000 people were walked through the streets of Warsaw. A lot of Jewish people went to the ghetto. Wladek got to play piano at a restaurant. His brother found a little money to buy food. This was difficult for their family.

After that, the Nazis started to transport Jewish people to the concentration camp. Wladek stayed in the ghetto because the Jewish Policeman pulled him away from the train. He lived in the ghetto when Jewish people were moving to the concentration camp.

*Nobody was helping him... He nearly died*

After he hid, he began doing labor at a construction camp with Majorek. Wladek wanted to escape this work. When he was working with the Polish workers, a German Soldier beat him.

After, Wladek left the Ghetto with the polish workers. He was helped by Janina and her husband. He couldn't go outside. So, Janina brought food for him. After that, Janina and her husband were arrested. Wladek was alone. Nobody was helping him. After one day, he moved to a flat. Dorota helped and looked after him. And then he escaped there. He hid in a building.

*The story was bad because a lot of Jewish people died*

One day, a German Army Captain helped and gave him food. He nearly died. After one day he came back home and returned to play at Warsaw Radio Station. At Warsaw, they were freed.

When I was watching the movie, the story of Wladek made me very unhappy. Jewish people were very hungry and sad. The story was bad because a lot of Jewish people died. About 6 million in world war II.

## Student's Work: Domestic Violence in camp 1 by Nar Mo

The purpose of this essay is to show WCC (WCC) that they need to share information about domestic violence in Karenni Refugee Camp 1. The reasons WCC should share are people need to know more about domestic violence. Many people make violence in their family. Women can be helped by the WCC office.

This is supported by an SDC report 2013-2014. Poe Meh said, WCC office opened on November 24<sup>th</sup> 2004 in Karenni Refugee Camp 1 for woman who had problems. Many women experienced domestic violence in their family. Some woman and children had big injuries. Some families didn't have injuries but felt sad. In section 8, Doe Meh said, "My husband took something and beat my head. I had a wound" The next day she separated from her husband. She went to tell the WCC manager so the manager shared information about domestic violence. They need to use peace in their family.

In Karenni Refugee Camp 1, many men drink a lot of alcohol so they make domestic violence in their family. Some men just drink alcohol. How to improve their family and how to find money, they don't



Karenni Refugee Camp 1

know. And then, their family has a big problem. In some families, the wife is beaten by the husband two or three times so she cannot stay with her husband. She went to tell someone and WCC office. WCC manager said, "If they are afraid of their husbands, they don't go back home because if they come back home, their husband will beat or kill them. They will stay in WCC office. The next day, their husband can understand and don't make any problem. They can go home"

WCC office can help all women because many women's husbands in Karenni Refugee Camp 1 make a lot of domestic violence. So WCC organisation needs to help women. Karenni Refugee Camp 1 has a domestic violence problem every

year. Poe Meh said, Karenni Refugee Camp 1 has a lot of domestic violence. In families that always make domestic violence, wife and children can lose their right and be unhappy for a long time. Some men know how to make happy family, how to find more money for future. They can do. So some family make violence and are unhappy.

In conclusion, I have shown domestic violence. I have shown this because many women have violence problem with husband. If they make domestic violence, they can lose rights and happiness. So, in refugee camp 1, they can reduce cooking alcohol. WCC should share a lot of information about domestic violence.



## Student's bio: Shar Myar Kay



Q: What is your background and history?

A: I was born in Daw Liah Lee, Demawso Township, Karenni State on August 6<sup>th</sup> 1995. When I was young, I stayed with my family. When I was seven years old, the police arrested my father. He was accused of being a thief. He said he did not do anything. At this time, my mother looked after me and my seven siblings. She could not find enough money to support us so I moved away to stay with my uncle in another village. During those two years, my younger sister passed away. After two years my father called me to the refugee camp with him. My mother and other siblings did not come here. My mother moved to camp in 2010.

Q: Can you describe your experience in Karenni Refugee Camp 1?

A: When I started living in the camp, I missed my village and I was not happy. Before, I came to the refugee camp I could not go to school

because my uncle could not pay the school fees. I wanted my mother to come stay with me but my mother didn't want to come. I often called my mother's phone. She came in 2010. When I started studying in camp, there were only 5 students in my class and I was unhappy because I could not read and write Karenni also I didn't have any friends. After a year, I learned to read and write Karenni language and I had many friends so I was happy.

### *I want citizens to know about human rights*

Q: Why did you apply to SDC?

A: I applied for SDC because I wanted to study social subjects. In my life, I could not study about social subjects. I wanted to learn about human rights, democracy and law. For me, the most important subject is human rights. It is the most important because while I have stayed in the refugee camp, I have seen violence. I need to share this information with our community. I want citizens to know about human rights.

Q: What are you doing now?

A: Now, I am studying on the advanced community management

training course. At the moment I have been studying English. I want to speak English very well. I am also interested in the environment. In the refugee camp it is very dirty because people do not know about this issue. I think report writing can help with this issue. We need to write reports to the Environmental Health workers then they can know about the problems.

Q: What do you want to do in the future?

A: After SDC school, I want to go back to the refugee camp and share about human rights and give trainings. I want to do this because I want to help in the refugee camp. I also want to help in Karenni State so people can know about human rights and won't be violent to each other.

Q: Do you have anything else you would like to say about SDC?

A: SDC School is very good. The subjects they provide are very beneficial to our community. They are good for jobs and very good for our community to help people. All students can benefit from learning these subjects.



*'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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If you are interested in volunteering with us, please email us at the same address: [officesdc@yahoo.com](mailto:officesdc@yahoo.com). We accept volunteers for a minimum of three months.

Furthermore, if there is any other way you would like to provide us with support or assistance, please email us at the same address: [officesdc@yahoo.com](mailto:officesdc@yahoo.com).

Visit us at: <http://sdcthailand.wordpress.com>

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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!**



**The Curriculum Project**

