

Monthly Publication Of KSDC

SDC runs a free and fair election campaign inside Karenni State

In late December and January, We successfully ran a free and fair election campaign inside Karenni State.

During the campaign, our trainers traveled to five different villages to share information and distribute leaflets to the wider public about free and fair elections and democratic processes.



SDC trainers with villagers from the training

The purpose of this campaign was to raise awareness within Karenni State of what a free and fair election is and how to participate.

This is in anticipation of the election scheduled for the end of 2015 in Burma.

CONTINUED ON P4

Issue 7

01/02/2015

SDC updates from January 2015:

- SDC Reopens after our Christmas break
- SDC basic course students return to classes
- SDC welcomes our new volunteers, Morgan and Eleanor
- SDC runs a Moot Court
- SDC completes our free and fair election campaign

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.

Inside this issue:

Principal's report	2
SDC future plans	3
SDC school news	4
Karenni Refugee News	5 - 6
Student's work	7 - 8
Former volunteer's testimonial	9
Acknowledgements	10

Principal's Message



We have been busy, this December and January. We have provided the issues of Fair Trial, Gender , Dam Issues, Democracy and English to the students. We have also held our 5th Advanced course graduation ceremony and a moot court.

On 10th December, 2014, we celebrated our 5th Advanced Community Management Training

Course graduation ceremony for the 16 students who have completed this course together with the Human Rights Day.

Before this ceremony, we held some competitions of poems, essays and songs related to Human Rights. The young people from high schools, middle schools and our partner organizations of Women's Study Program and Karenni Community College played Volleyball and caneball.

The ceremony was prepared by SDC staff. Around 200 people attended this ceremony. SDC coordinator, Aung Sun Myint and some leaders from CBOs gave encouragement. After, the 16 students who completed the 5th advanced course were given certificates, by SDC.

During the ceremony, we awarded prizes to the students who got the 1st to 5th best scores based on the subjects taught during the course. We also awarded prizes to the people who won 1st, 2nd and 3rd in the competitions of poems, essays, songs , volleyball and caneball.

We have also implemented our free and fair election campaign in 5 areas by 3 staff members of SDC in December 2014 and January 2015. During this campaign, 3 of our SDC staff shared about free and fair elections with the local people and issued some leaflets, about free and fair elections, produced by SDC to the local people elsewhere.

We will continue to work hard to progress our school and our students throughout this year.



The 5th Advanced Course ceremony



Students play volleyball at the sport's games

SDC plan for February

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
						1
2 Basic students start constitution	3	4	5 Basic students start active citizenship	6	7	8
9 Basic students start non-violent social change	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21 Staff workshop	22 Staff training
23	24	25	26	27	28	

Future event: SDC staff training from our donors

On the 21st and 22nd of February, SDC staff will be provided with a training and world café event by a team from Tokyo who we were put in contact with by one of our donor organisations, RIJ. We are always grateful for their support.

The training will be about leadership and future plans. Our staff will be asked to think about how comfortable we are taking leadership. We will also consider what we can do in the future and how we can reach our goals. Additionally, we will look at different facilitation tools that can be used.

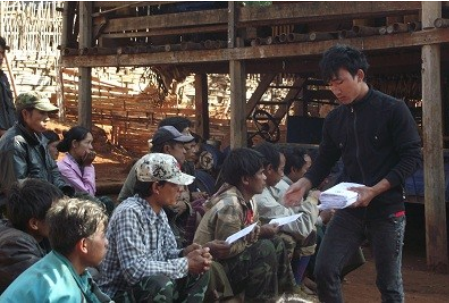


SDC staff with some of their students

We are excited to think pro-actively about the future and to work on improving the skills that we have within our organisation.

Exercises like these are essential to ensure that our organisation can develop and improve, quickly and effectively.

SDC runs a free and fair election campaign inside Karenni State



Our staff member distributes leaflets

Our trainers traveled to 5 villages in 5 different districts. In each village, they organised a plan in advance with the village head. They then ran a training to explain about free and fair elections. The trainings were very important because many people in Karenni State are illiterate so they are unable to read our brochures.

The trainings were held between 9 and 12 on five different mornings. Each one of the trainings had between 50 and 80 participants. During the trainings our team spoke about many different topics. They introduced democracy and spoke about; electing representatives and leaders; knowledge of the political situation; knowledge of political parties; knowledge of political processes; explanation of the importance of a free and fair election; and details about the scheduled 2015 election in Burma.

After the trainings, there was a lunch and an open discussion. In some villages, villagers expressed surprise that our organisation only wanted to provide information about how to participate in elections and their importance. They said political parties had come to their village and promised to build roads or give them electricity if they voted for them.

In addition to the trainings, our team also distributed leaflets throughout Karenni State with the help of our alumni network. Our team gave out 900 leaflets. These leaflets included details about why we have free elections, the responsibility of the government and the citizens.

Overall the campaign went smoothly although our team did have to cancel one training. Our team were scheduled to go to train in one further village. This training had to be cancelled because the Burmese military was running artillery exercises close to the village.

We are very pleased with the completion of our free and fair election campaign. It is very satisfying to know that the community inside Karenni State now has access to more information on free and fair elections and an increased ability to participate in political life.



One of our trainers provides information about free and fair elections to his audience

Foreign firms seek to exploit Karenni State's resources



An Australian company, Eumeralla Resources, is investing in a company run by a Burmese Border Guard Force military leader with the intention of mining in Karenni State. Their subsidiary company in Burma recently received an exploration permit allowing them to explore for minerals within a 400km² area in Karenni State.

The Mawsaki Mining Company received state government approval for a 400km² exploration permit on the 29th October 2014. Eumeralla resources control 70% of the Mawsaki Mining Company. The Mawsaki Mining Company is owned by U Tun Kyaw. U Tun Kyaw is a leader of the armed group, the Karenni National People's Liberation Front. This armed group is now part of the, Burmese-government controlled, Border Guard Forces.

According to the report, lost paradise, by local CBO, Molo Women's Mining Watch Network, local people in Mawchi, Karenni State are fearful that an extension of the mines will lead to them losing more of their ancestral lands, water and mineral resources. Additionally, local journalists have stated that, since the report by Molo Women's Mining Watch Network it is becoming more difficult to enter the area surrounding Mawchi mine to collect information and take pictures. These on the ground challenges are found amongst larger legal and political challenges associated with investment in ethnic areas within Burma.

Currently, the 2008 Burmese constitution does not recognise the rights of indigenous people to their

land. It states that the state owns "all lands, and all natural resources above and below the ground, above and beneath the water and in the atmosphere." This constitution has been described by the 88 generation students as a 'sham constitution'. It was passed through fraud, corruption and intimidation.

Additionally, Burma's resource governance remains clouded in doubt. In the Revenue Watch Institute's (RWI's) 2013 resource governance index, Burma was last out of 58 countries for natural resource governance. Economic analysts have called on international extractive companies to exercise "additional due diligence" before entering business deals in Burma.

Local CBOs, Karenni Civil Society Network, KCSN, and Molo Women's Mining Watch Network, have said in a previous statement that new mining projects must be stopped until there is constitutional reform granting ethnic states the right to control and manage their own natural resources under a federal system of government, and ensuring local communities the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent to any projects.

KCSN reports on Karenni State's situation



A child collecting water in Karenni State's Shadaw township (photo: KCSN)

Recently, the Karenni Civil Society Network (KCSN) published an important report providing a number of updates on the current issues within Karenni State.

The report titled "Where is genuine peace" focused on the issues of military expansion, natural resource extraction and land confiscation within Karenni State. These were in addition to the main focus of the report, the model village project in Shadaw Township, Karenni State.

This 'model village' project has the aim of providing support for 10 villages in Shadaw Township near the Salween River. A spokesperson, Juha Peltonen, for Finland's Development Minister Sirpa Paatero stated "[T]he project has not encouraged IDPs to return. The

project was initiated in support of the needs of IDPs who had already spontaneously returned." KCSN asserts this project is being used to encourage refugees and IDPs to return prematurely.

Organisations including K.N.P.P have criticized the project. One K.N.P.P leader has been quoted as saying "I would like to tell INGOs that helping the villagers is good. But they should do first what is suitable and badly needed, such as ensuring protection of human rights and farmers' rights, and then give aid. Now it is back to front." It is important INGOs ensure the protection of human rights before giving development aid.

The report also references a 3,000 acre land confiscation in Pruso Township and military checkpoints along the roads as examples of a continued military presence in Karenni State. Military soldiers continue to force drivers to carry them and their luggage. This is an obvious violation of villager's basic rights.

The model village project is run by the Myanmar Peace Support Initiative (MPSI). It is supported by aid from Finland's ministry of foreign affairs. The on the ground practical initiative is done by the Loikaw-based, Kainayah Rural Social Development Organisation.

Experienced organisations such as the Karenni Social Welfare and Development Center, KSWDC, were not involved in the project. This was because the MPSI would only partner with organisations that are registered inside Burma.

If you would like to find out more and read this report in full, it can be found on our website at SDCthailand.wordpress.com.

The Advanced Community Management Training Course and Human Right's day ceremony by Than Hein Win



Three of our graduates with Than Hein Win.

The Advanced Community Management Training Course and International Human Right's day ceremonies were celebrated on Wednesday 10th December in the Social Development Center (S.D.C). They were started at 9.00 am and ended at 11:00 am.

All students of the Advanced Community Management Training Course and the SDC basic course, the teachers who are teaching us and other leaders of office and teachers attended at the ceremony.

"I felt very happy on that day"

Coordinator, Aung Sun Myint spoke an opening speech and Papa Moe spoke about gratitude for the ceremony. After that, students of SDC arranged to have lunch for all of the people who attended at the ceremony.

The Advanced Community Management Training Course and International Human Right's day ceremony were finished successfully. As a result I felt very happy on that day.



Our 5th Advanced Community Management Training Course graduates with their teachers

My community by Oo Reh April

My community at home

In our community, houses are built out of bamboo. The roofs are made from leaves but some roofs are built from teak, zinc or tin.

In our community, many roads are bumpy and we have many mountains. So, everywhere you go you need to hike up tall mountains and they are very dusty.

In our community, people's jobs are teachers, clinic staff, environmental health, security, Karenni Education Department and Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees (COERR) but they don't have enough staff.

Music can have a big impact on our society. One day, I can be a singer, I think. If I can really, I would like to help my community with music because everybody likes music.

“people need to know and understand their rights and responsibilities”



Oo Reh helping clean the local environment with his classmates

My community at SDC

In my democracy class, we learn the basic skills and rules of a democratic system and instructions of democracy. This is important because in my country many people don't know about democracy. It is interesting to know. A new thing I learnt is about the last Burmese constitution. This is something new for me because we live in Western Karenni, we are not allowed to know about the Burmese constitution.

In my environment class, we learn the basic skills to protect our environment and about dams. This

is important because in my country and state, there is a lot of deforestation and building of dams by the Burmese government, Thai, China and India. So, we need to protect our environment. This subject provides knowledge for me. Also, it is very interesting for me. This is something new for me because I had not learnt about dams in my community.

In my human right's class, we learn the basic skills of international human rights, child rights and women's rights. This is important because people need to know and understand their rights and responsibilities. It is very interesting.

Alumni bio: Deni



Q: Can you tell me a little bit about your history?

A: My parents come from Burma but I was born in Thailand. I was born in HuayPhuKhet village, Thailand in 1995. I am Kayan Padaung. I studied in my village until grade 6. When I reached grade six, I moved to study in Karenni Refugee Camp 1. I have been there until now. After I finished grade 10, I studied at SDC School. Even though, I was born in Thailand I do not have a Thai passport. I can only travel within Mae Hong Son province.

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

A: In the future, I want to help my people. I will tell them about what I have learnt at SDC School and share my knowledge in my community as

much as I know. I want my community to know about the subjects I have studied. I want them to know about the environment and rule of law. I recently went inside Karenni State to share about free and fair elections.

Q: What did you do inside Karenni State?

A: Inside Karenni State, I went with two of my fellow SDC alumni to share about free and fair elections. We explained to villagers how to vote and how to select a good leader for them. We tried to guide them. We helped them to think about how to get the information in order to know which party is good and which party is not.

Q: What do you think the issues are inside Karenni State?

A: In my view, inside Karenni State, there are a lot of problems. For example, when they hold an election, no party comes to explain about the election. There are no manifestos or campaigns. They don't know

who the best party for them to vote for is. They can only guess when they vote. I want parties to come and share with the villagers again and again so that the villagers can know more about politics and elections.

Q: What was the response of the local villagers?

A: They were very happy and they know more about free and fair elections now. They are also a little bit more aware about democracy. They also said they will be able to share to other neighbors that live near them. They requested for us to come back again and invited us to help them anytime.

Q: Why is SDC's program important?

A: SDC's program is very important because it is useful for us. By studying at this school, we can help our community more than other programs. I hope all of the subjects at SDC will be very useful for our people in the future.



'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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To achieve our mission statement we rely on various avenues of support including core organizational and project funding from our major donors. We are also supported by our own community, local staff and the generous help of volunteers from across the globe.

If you are interested in making a donation, please email officesdc@yahoo.com. Please title your message SDC Donation.

If you are interested in volunteering with us, please email us at the same address: 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.

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

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- Refugees International Japan

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- The Curriculum project
- Mote Oo Education

We would also like to thank anyone who has volunteered with our organization now or in the past.

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

