



Building a new society for Karenni

KSDC NEWSLETTER

January 2016

"The vision of 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"



About SDC

by **Aung Sun Myint**

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

The ERSB Alumni had learnt about Democracy, Law and the Environment. They wanted young people in their community to be able to study these subjects as well so they founded SDC.

SDC has produced over 200 Human Rights and Environment activists since its formation. Our coordinator and co-founder Aung Sun Myint continues to work with our team to realize the vision he set out with his fellow ERSB alumni in 2002.

This month at SDC

by **Principal Myar Reh**



According to our schedule for January 2016 we have implemented some activities at our SDC training center in camp and at the SDC/ ERI joint program office in Nai Soi.

January saw SDC teacher providing knowledge of Refugee Rights, (ICCPR) International Covenant on civil and Political Rights, Basic Economics, Democracy for All and Gender Perspectives to the students on the Basic Course. These are important topics for the students to get basic knowledge in.

After the holidays, the students came back to our Nai Soi campus and we continued teaching our intensive, full immersion English language course. This was provided and led by our volunteer teachers. Computer skills class continues to be led and provided by SDC staff member Neh Reh.

This month saw the arrival of two new volunteers. Saara and Severi, are from Finland. You can see pictures and more information about them in our newsletter. We also have an article by Raffi, and two short articles written by Basic Course students La Pleh & Aung Hlaing Htwe.



SDC Welcomes new volunteers Saara & Severi



January saw the arrival of two new volunteers at our campus in Nai Soi. Saara & Severi are from Finland. They join us after having spent almost two years working in Turkey. Saara's background is in Education, specifically early childhood education, and Severi is a History major and worked in areas of Marketing, copy and grant writing.

Saara will be teaching English and Severi will be taking over Raffi's management and volunteer coordination duties when he leaves and they will be with us until May. Saara and Severi are already proving to be great members of the school community and are making fast friends with the students, as well as the chickens.



Reflections

By **Raffi Hantabli**

When i left the UK last year on a one way ticket to Thailand i had no plans to volunteer, in fact i had plans to cycle back to the UK. All i knew as i returned to Thailand for my second visit is that i didn't want to travel the way i had done before. I wanted to be slower, more considered, take my time and try to understand whatever place i am in and locals i meet.

The idea to volunteer came together quickly, and suddenly. I wanted to experience different cultures and countries but i wanted the experience it in a mutual and collaborative, contributory way. I wanted it to be bigger than me, and definitely bigger than my own individual pleasures. So i began to research volunteering in Thailand, especially in the fields of refugees and human rights as these are core interests of mine, informed by my own past.

Coming across SDC was a happy accident of late night absentminded research. I came across and SDC position ad and as soon as i read the SDC mission statement, i was intrigued. Everything about it piqued my interest and me think this could be something special. The requirement of a minimum commitment of three months chimed in really well with my own views on volunteering and decision to do something less short term, more considered and committed.

As i get ready to leave and look back i am faced with how lucky i am to have followed my instinct and came to SDC. It is undeniably one of the best decisions i have ever made. It's been a defining and formative experience for me. Sure i contributed to this organization and this community, but the number of ways being here as changed, and affected me for the better cannot be articulated adequately in this short article.

My experience at SDC first and foremost reminded of my own privilege and injected me with an early dose of humility and getting me to listen more, be more considered, slow down and learn. Then as my life settled and i began to work with the students, teachers and getting to know the community, everything turned on its head. Being confronted by and immersed in the students' stories and witnessing their positivity, hopefulness and enormous sense of fun despite all the difficulties and hardship was very instructive. This made me in turn confront



my own attitudes and thought processes. Suddenly my life was becoming fuller, more positive and more enriched.

As i prepare to leave, i personally feel that what i have gained from my time here at SDC exceeds what i have contributed.

The lessons and experiences i encountered here have been invaluable to me moving forward professionally. Later this year i will be joining an NGO in Israel and volunteering in the field of peacebuilding and nonviolent social change, with young people and so i will be using everything i learned here at SDC and hopefully building on it, i will strive to make everyone here proud: the students, my colleagues and my principal Myar Reh.

But more than anything else, i feel like a better person, that sounds a tad hyperbolic but i use those words deliberately. I feel as though the ethos of the SDC community, and the students' incredible attitudes have seeped into me. The whole community has happily occupied a part of my heart and it will forever remain there, reminding me to be kind to myself, to seek the good in the day, in myself and in others and to be curious and keep learning, being hopeful and above all else: *to be kind and generous*. Because that is what SDC, the students and the wider community in Nai Soi, Dohkita and Camp 1 were to me. Kind and generous, and for this i will forever be grateful.



My Life

By **Aung Hlaing Htwe**



My name is Aung Hlaing Htwe, I was born in 1992 in Shan State, Myanmar. My parents' names are Daw Aye and Oo Htwe. There were four people in my family: my mother, my father, my brother and me. My father died in 1992. After he died, my mother's life was very difficult. She did all the housework and took care of the family alone. So when I was 6 months old she took me to the temple because she wanted the monks to adopt me. During this time I lived in the temple with them and I attended school for four years. I arrived in Karenni State in 1995 with the monks and I continued to live in a temple.

After, the monks gave me to a family so that they could adopt me. I had a step-father and a step-mother; their names are Oo Shwe and Daw Kyi. There were 12 people in

their family, 13 with me.

I attended school and finished secondary school in 2010. Then I moved alone to Thailand in 2011. I wanted to get education but I didn't know how. So I worked in the building sector. Finally I arrived in the Refugee Camp 1 in 2014 and I attended high school. I missed 2 months but I finished high school in 2015. Now I am attending SDC School and I am very happy. It is very difficult for me to speak English but I try hard and keep practicing.

My story

By **La Pleh**

I would like to write about my life. My name is La Pleh. I was born on December 28th 1998 in Karenni State, Daw Ke Village in Demoso Township.

When I was 3 years old and started walking I broke my leg, my parents couldn't take me to hospital because my family is very poor and I have six siblings. My parents have a lot of debt. When I was 5 years old, my parents had to go to Thailand for work. I and my two brothers

stayed at home alone, we were very sad. Sometimes my grandmother came to stay with us. After sometime I went to live with my grandparents, I stayed with them for 2 years. It was during this time that my leg broke again.

I was happy living with my grandparents but I was sometimes sad because I missed my family. During this time started primary school, but it was difficult because I didn't have enough money for uniform, books and pens. I was sad about this but I went to school every day, it was during this time that my leg broke again so I had to stop going to school for more than one month



I was behind with lessons but when I went back and tried hard I was successful in examination and I was very happy about this.

The year after, I went to live with my uncle, but I had to cook for my uncle and my aunt every day. They were peasant farmer so very early every day they had to go work on a farm and they came back at 5pm. Staying with my uncle was very difficult for me because I had many house chores. I had to wake up at 5am every day when my aunt and uncle had to go to the farm.

After cooking breakfast, I had to bring water from the jungle, because we don't have water in the village. If I didn't carry water, my aunt scolded me. I had to do this three times a day. Because of this I was sometimes late for school. The teacher had to talk to me about this and it was very difficult for me.

I wasn't happy when I lived with my uncle and aunt, my aunt looked down on me and said to me that I was a redundant person. I missed my family very much during this time because my parents wouldn't say that to me if I lived with them and wouldn't make me do house work.

One day during a holiday I went to the forest and I climbed a tree, I fell and broke my shoulder and I couldn't go to school. My aunt scolded me for this. A teacher came from school to teach me at home. I finished primary school and this made me happy.

When I moved to Thailand to be with my grandparents, my aunt was very sad and now she loves me very much. In Thailand I stayed with my grandparents in the Kayan "long neck" village and I enrolled in middle school there. Just before an important examination, my hand got broken again and I had to go to Mae Hong Son hospital. I missed the exam but I was allowed to take the exam at another time.

I lived with my grandparents for four years through middle school. I was happy living with them, but it isn't the same as living with my parents and I sometimes wondered when I will be able to stay with my parents again.

After middle school I moved to refugee camp 1 nearby to live with my brother so I can go to high school there. When I graduated I joined SDC so I can continue to study and help my community in the future.

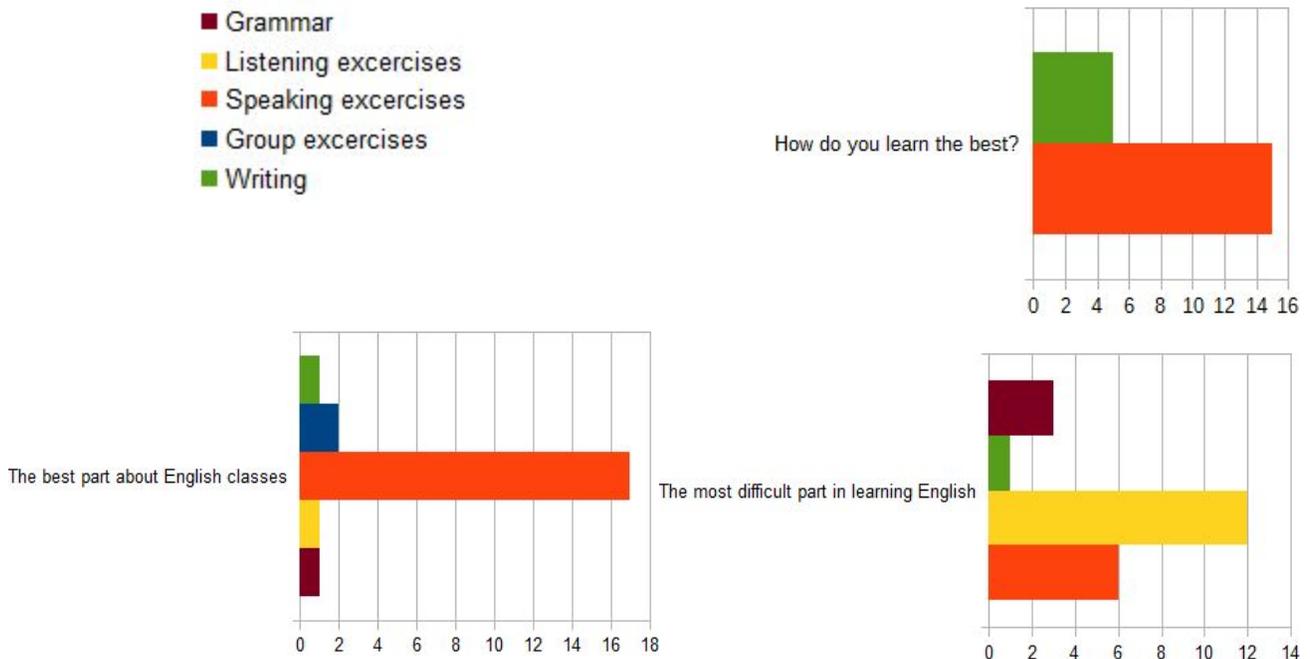
When I was a child I was very quiet and didn't speak very much, but when I was in SDC the teachers encouraged me to speak more, so I tried hard and I made friends and this helped me have more confidence and speak more.

English Learning Survey for SDC students

By **Saara Loukola & Severi Raja-aho**

We made a feedback survey for students to find out what do the students most like about the English lessons, what is most difficult for them, what kind of exercises do they find the most useful and what do they think about the level of classes. This way we could know what areas to emphasize and improve learning of the students. The survey was made for 22 students who were currently in Dhokita. They were asked 6 questions with multiple choice of answers.





Most of the students found that the best part about English classes are speaking exercises overshadowing even games and songs. Most difficult sections were listening exercises, speaking exercises and grammar. Even though listening exercises were seen as the most difficult the students saw speaking exercises the most useful for them. When asked about *what is the best way to learn for them* the majority answered that speaking is the best way for them to learn. 21 out of 22 students saw the level of classes suitable for them.

From the results it's obvious to see that students value speaking skills and wish to improve in this area. For a teacher it's crucial to emphasize improving speaking in classes as majority see it not only the area that they want to improve but also the best way for them to learn the language.





Help us achieve our goals

To achieve the goals and the promise we made in our mission statement we rely on many avenues of support. Core organizational and project funding comes from our main donors. We are also supported by our own community, local staff and volunteers from around the world.

But we still need support to continue doing the good work we do. So if you are able to support us financially or with advice or expertise please [contact](#) us:

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The Curriculum Project



Thank you for reading and your interest in SDC and the Karenni community. And please stay in touch with us.

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