

Monthly Publication Of KSDC

The traditional and cultural festival of Deeku takes place in Camp 1

Every year, Karenni people celebrate the traditional Deeku festival. The animist leaders predict which days are suitable for celebrating Deeku festival.



Karenni wine and Deeku ready for the festival

These leaders read a chicken bone on Monday 1st September. Due to the prediction based on the chicken bone, this year, the Deeku festival started on the 3rd September

and ended on the 5th September.

After knowing the date, people made preparations for

hosting their friends and relatives. The festival must take place within the days predicted.

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Issue 4

01/10/2014

SDC updates from September 2014:

- SDC students and staff celebrate Deeku festival
- SDC's partners from Earthrights International visit our school
- SDC basic Course restarts after campus is rebuilt
- Advanced Course students begin sustainable development

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).

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.

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

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Principal's Message



This September, we are happy to have run our program as usual.

We reconstructed the buildings and replaced the essential equipment for teaching, learning materials, office supplies and other materials used for this course. we were provided some emergency funds from our donor AJWS . We have reconstructed our two classroom

buildings. The students began using the classrooms to attend their class regularly again on 15th September. The other 2 dormitories for the students have also been repaired.

In the aftermath of the flash flooding, the processes of teaching, learning and management were quite delayed.

Later, on 27th September, we held the 2nd Teachers and Parents meeting. Students' parents or guardians, SDC students and SDC staff attended this meeting. At the meeting our SDC coordinator, Aung Sun Myint, gave a speech and we reorganised the SDC Teacher and Parents Committee. We also awarded some prizes to the students who got the 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade depending of their 1st term monthly test scores.

On 24th September, our SDC staff and students participated in the world peace day ceremony organized by the Karenni Women Organization (KNWO). On that day, SDC students and staff marched and attended the ceremony and participated in songs and drama related to the issue.

On the 26th September, we met with Staff from ERI and discussed about each others programs and how to work together.

According to our schedule for our future plan for the next month of October, we will start our field work and internship program for students on our Basic Course.



The teacher and parents meeting



Materials for rebuilding arrive

SDC plan for October

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
		1 SDC basic course students begin interning	2 SDC basic course students begin research	3	4 Meeting with our donors, RIJ	5 World Teacher's day
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24 Research ends on SDC basic course	25	26
27 Office Management begins on ACMTC	28 SDC basic course students write reports	29	30	31 Internships end on basic course		

Future event: SDC students do research and internships

Next month is an important time for students on our basic course. Every year, our students spend October researching and writing reports on the important issues within our community.

This year, we have made a slight change to our program and we will also be offering the students an internship opportunity. This strategy will better prepare our students to work for their communities after the course.



SDC students interview administrative staff in Karenni Refugee Camp 2

Some students will take on the internship opportunity meanwhile others will work in groups to produce reports.

We will then publish these reports throughout the year on our website to allow all people to have a better understanding of our community.

Rebuilding and Repairing SDC school



The foundations of our new classroom

Over the past month, SDC staff and students have been hard at work rebuilding one of our school campuses. They have now completed two classroom buildings, which have since also been refurbished. In addition, our dormitories have also been repaired and our materials have been replaced. It is truly a relief to be able to run our school as normal again and we must offer the most genuine thank you to all those who helped and supported us to return to running as normal.

Immediately after the flood, our first step after the devastation was to clean the area, quickly and effectively. We achieved this with the help of our students. We were also supported by a car from UNHCR, which helped remove some of the debris. This was important so as to make the area clean to live in and protect our students from

serious health problems. After this the rebuilding process began.

The rebuilding process was led by our staff and we were helped by many different people. Our staff member, Khu Klaw Reh, led students, staff and parents in the rebuilding process. Khu Klaw Reh is experienced in vocational work, every year he organises the repairing and reroofing of the school campus during the hot season. Over 50 parents came to the school to help alongside our students and staff. The support and help of our community allowed us to repair our school quickly and we were able to restart classes on Monday the 15th September. We also repaired our dormitories. They were completed on 30th September. Now, it is safe for the students to stay in again.

With the students able to stay in their dormitories and the school back to running as usual, we also had to focus on buying new equipment to replace all of the damaged materials. This equipment was brought as soon as we could and taken back to the camp. The equipment arrived in the camp in time for our students to begin their classes again. This meant there was in total just two and a half weeks of serious disruption to our program.

These materials were brought with the support of funds donated by our core funder, AJWS. We would like to provide our most sincere thanks to them for supporting us with the funds to replace our core materials.



Students shape bamboo

In addition to AJWS, we would also like to thank some other groups for their support. We would like to thank the students, our staff and their parents for putting in the time and energy to repair our school building; our other core funders, RIJ and OSI, for their continued support; Mote Oo education for their kind offer to supply replacement textbooks; UNHCR and IRC for allowing us to use their vehicles during the repairing of our school; and finally anyone who shared information about this issue and the challenges we have faced.

We are hopeful that the rest of the school year can go as planned and that we will not face any serious disruptions like this in the future.

Nationwide ceasefire negotiations continue

Karenni people are currently waiting on a nationwide ceasefire and a peace process to end the conflict that has now spanned over six decades. The political organisation, The Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) and the Burmese Government continue to discuss a nationwide ceasefire as a step towards bringing peace to Karenni State.

The KNPP and Burmese government have had a ceasefire since 6th March 2012. They were the 10th resistance group to sign a ceasefire with the new Burmese government. The KNPP is a member of the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC), a coalition of ethnic organisations. The UNFC was founded on 16th February 2011. Their objective is to form a federal union in Burma.

There are a number of issues at the forefront of negotiations between the KNPP and the Burmese government. These issues are also very important to the general community. They include the continued presence of military on the ground, land confiscation and land mines. All of these issues affect local people.



Ethnic groups negotiate with the government at a previous talk

In addition to these issues, a further issue is major development projects. Dams are of a particular concern. Local people would like to be able to have a say on any major development projects that are ongoing or upcoming in Karenni State.

Other concerns regard the wider situation in Burma. Conflict continues in Kachin and Shan States. This conflict has been running alongside, over one and a half years of negotiations about a nationwide ceasefire agreement.

Another key detail is the 2008 constitution. This constitution entrenches the power of the military in parliament and, while it is in place, remains a huge obstacle to a federal union

The UNFC have been negotiating with the government on a nationwide ceasefire since their creation. They recently completed their first congress on September 2nd 2014. These negotiations will continue and the Karenni people will continue to hope for an end to the long running conflict.

The traditional and cultural festival of Deeku takes place in Camp 1

The history of Deeku comes from our Karenni traditions. This festival is to recognise the conquerors of the people of Ayuddhya who occupied the Karenni land and enslaved the Karenni people. Our people could not live in slavery. At last, our people tried to fight. One of our people who had a mighty power, Yeh Reh, created a statute of a basket. He made the basket to become full of power. After doing this, he informed the Ayuddhya's people king that the Karenni people no longer wanted to live in slavery. He invited the Ayuddhya to meet the Karenni leader.

The Ayuddhya king came to the village with his soldiers and when they arrived at Yeh Reh's house. They arrived at the village and saw the basket. They asked "Where is your king?" Yeh Reh pointed to the basket. This made the Ayuddhya king very angry. He told Yeh Reh he had no king and he ordered the soldiers to destroy the basket. The basket was smashed into many pieces. Yeh Reh knew the king would suffer for this action. The king returned to his home, in the northern part of Karenni, with his troops but they suffered from serious diarrhea. Seeing this, the Karenni people fought them.



Camp citizens watch rockets being fired into the sky

For the battlefield, the Karenni people needed food for a long time. They made the sticky rice and leaves. This war was eventually won. To remember and celebrate this day, the Karenni people make this food, Deeku, every year. The Deeku is wrapped in bunches of three to show unity and solidarity.

Every year during the festival the elder leader must try to recreate a statute of the basket of mighty power. Usually it is returned to the northern part of Karenni state to remember this way. This statue can be used to predict your future life. The festival is normally started from the south and moves to the north.

Deeku is celebrated by Karenni people inviting all of their relatives and guests to their homes. At their homes, they will provide food especially Deeku, traditional wine and meat. Karenni people will visit many homes where they eat, drink and enjoy each other's company.

During the festival, we closed our school for two days to allow our students to celebrate. In camp, there were prayers by the traditional leaders for all human beings, animals and the environment. Additionally, there was an explanation about the history of the Karenni people, our forefathers and the Deeku Festival. Leaders of the NGOs in the camp gave speeches of encouragement to our community. Traditional dances and songs were presented to the audiences. After the ceremony, traditional fireworks were released into the air.

This celebration is very important for our Karenni to show solidarity and pride in our traditional ways. It is an opportunity for all Karenni people, young and old to dance together, wear their traditional clothes, play their traditional music and visit house to house.

What can we do about dams? by Mi Reh

I would like to write about campaigning to stop building dams on the Salween river. Campaigning is useful to us because we can organise villagers to join with us to march to stop building dams. We need to target the government, villagers and environmental organisations. Then, we need to take legal action, letter writing, campaigning and reclaim the streets. We must march to stop building the dam. If we don't protest to stop building the dam, villagers who need relief on the Salween river, could lose everything (E.g. land, home, livelihood etc..). So, campaigning is important to organise people to protest to stop building the dam.

We must march to the government to reject their project. If they build the dam on the Salween River, villagers will lose land, homes and their livelihoods. So, next they will collect information about building the dam. Furthermore, we need legal action campaigning and also we need messengers to send information to the government. If we use a legal action campaign, our project will be completed.

We need a letter writing campaign. It is important to distribute



Lawpita Hydroelectric plant is in Karenni State

information to villagers to join with us. Villagers who need relief on the Salween River must solve these problems because they should protect the environment near their villages and they also need to distribute news around the world. If we complete our project, villagers will get benefits from natural resources and then they can be interdependent with biodiversity. It is important for them to receive relief.

Environmental organisations must be included to solve these problems because they care for the environment around the world. They need to protest and to stop building dams. If they don't protest, villagers who need relief on the Salween River will not get a positive

benefit. Villagers will see problems from water floods, so we need to protest so that we don't see these problems. Moreover, campaigning is good to organise people to be in unity. "Unity is force" and then, we need to take a long time so we will take 1 year to protest to stop building the dam.

Finally, Campaigning is necessary and it is important to be united. We need media campaigning to complete a project because when we protest to stop building the dam, we need many people to march and also we need funders to support us for us to complete our project. If our project is completed, villagers will get positive benefits from natural resources. So, campaigning is important for us.

International law should abandon sovereignty by Shar Myar Kay

The purpose of this essay is to show the concept of sovereignty causes more problems than benefits so international law should no longer use it. Sovereignty gives supreme power in a country so they have a lot of power. A lot of countries have military coups and are still fighting. International law can't interfere with these countries and can't stop fighting.

Sovereignty is supreme power in a country so governments have a lot of power from it. If a country doesn't have population, language, government and territory it cannot be a state. The government is very important for a country. Governments can do everything because governments have a lot of power from sovereignty. A violent nation can use sovereignty and force citizens to follow their rule. If they want to create a new law they can write and citizens can't argue with it. They also control land to develop countries and use the people's resources.

"Burmese citizens felt sad about the military coup"



Former military leader of Burma,
Ne Win

However, a lot of countries are military coups and still fighting because sovereignty is very bad for countries. If military want to control in their country, they can do this and take resources. They don't respect citizens and don't look after citizen's rights. Now, in many countries, there are dictatorships so they have a big problem. Nobody can solve this problem. Also in Burma, there was a military coup by Ne Win and he used sovereignty so other countries couldn't occupy Burma. At that time, a lot of ethnic people were killed. There was a lot of violence by the Burmese army. Burmese citizens felt sad about the military coup.

Nevertheless, international law can't interfere between countries and can't stop fighting in the world. International law can't make peace between countries so a country can't respect international law. So, Israel and Palestine have been fighting because of sovereignty. International law can just pressure. Mostly, many people worry for the future because there is still fighting in the world.

In this essay, I have shown International Law should no longer use sovereignty because sovereignty causes bad things in countries. Sovereignty can create more violence and fighting in countries. This affects the people who are poor and haven't got power. They will lose their rights and then they will suffer because of it.

Ready for Freedom: A volunteer testimonial from Elliot Billingsley



Students discuss during one of Elliot's lessons

This year, I had the privilege of teaching at the SDC for a short, 3-month term. The SDC is one of the best run community-based organizations on the Thailand-Burma border. It gives an opportunity for Karenni and other Myanmar refugees to gain the building blocks for a greater civil society. I am lucky to have been a part of it.

At the moment, I'm traveling between Karen and Shan states to enjoy some of the best the country has to offer: gilded pagodas rising to the sky, lively tea shops on quiet streets, endless friendly encounters with the locals. Today I gazed upon the wondrous surface of Inle Lake. I'm visiting a country where members of the SDC students call their own, but where few of them have had the chance to live freely. Myanmar, in isolating itself from the

world, has alienated its people from their land. Now, as foreign tourists spur the construction of five star hotels and the restoration of national treasures, thousands of young Karenni still miss their homeland.

This oppression won't last forever. An economic boom is giving opportunities to more people. Next year holds hope for a fair and free election. Most importantly, young men and women like those at the SDC are preparing for membership in one of the world's newest democracies. With SDC alumni on the ground, we can hope that Karenni in particular gets a piece of the pie.

In the ethnic states lining the perimeter of this country called The Union of Myanmar, the question of reconciliation versus autonomy is a burning and important question. As a teacher of English, I did not have a role in instructing the students on this matter. But thanks to the improved position of the students who have better access to knowledge, I believe that they can make more educated decisions about the right way forward for Karenni State. For example, students in the Advanced Community Management course are currently learning about sustainable development. Who knows how they will use this knowledge to build a clean and green economy in the coming decades?

The struggle of refugees, who have their basic needs taken care of, but who crave freedom, is in this way a particularly modern struggle. Yet it resonates with an ancient need that all people share, that is, to move and live as they choose. The SDC has inspired me to believe in the capacity of humans to overcome systematic oppression, and to continue the fight for freedom. For this I thank them.

Elliot Billingsley



'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.

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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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- 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

