



Building a new society for Karenni

# KSDC NEWSLETTER

October 2015

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"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.

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## This month at SDC

by **Principal Myar Reh**



September in SDC School in Dohkita was somewhat eventful. The students on the advanced course have been completing Project Planning, Proposal Writing. This reached a conclusion when the students implemented the projects they had been planning for sometime.

Each of the two classes decided on a project, planned then implemented it. The first group devised an educational project where they collected, reviewed and revised all their subject notes since the beginning of the Advanced Course, then shared it with their classmates. The second group planned and completed an environmental clean up project. This was done by making big bamboo baskets to collect, and ultimately reduce the impact of plastic around the school. The project was also an opportunity to teach each other how to make the bamboo baskets.



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From the 17th to 19th SDC staff took part in a Land Rights and Land Law workshop by two trainers from KEAN (Kayah Environment Action Network) the workshop was on the current legal issues in Myanmar relating to Land usage policies and International Indigenous land right and land usage systems.

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## The history and symbolism of Deeku

by **SDC Students**

The students, along with the Karenni Community celebrated Deeku in September. One of the traditions associated with this festival is eating of Deeku sticky rice.

I would like to explain a little bit about Deeku. It is a festival that is celebrated by Karenni people. Its history originates from war and it involves an ancient Karenni victory over the



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invading Yoe ethnic group. Deeku is rice wrapped in Deeku leaf, and made into parcels and is cooked until it becomes sticky.

Because of the way it is cooked it can keep for longer than normal rice, and this helped in the eventual victory of Karenni people. The sharp edges of Deeku parcels represent their usefulness in fighting. When Deeku parcels are made they are tied together in threes. The three bound Deeku parcels represent the three ethnicities that made up the Karenni people -The Kayah, Kayan and Kayaw- who united to defeat the invaders. Because of this, Deeku and the three parcels tied together represent Unity, the unity of Karenni people.

I think this idea of unity is something we should remember. We should be united, human beings should be united, but specifically, all ethnic groups in Myanmar should be united. This is the only way we can defeat dictatorship, achieve peace, and eradicate human rights abuses. As well as have a bright, democratic future.

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## SDC Welcomes a new volunteer

This month saw the arrival of a new volunteer at our school in SDC. Nastassja 'Nas' White is a Law Graduate from the UK. She is a very experienced teacher, and she just finished a two year stint as an English teacher in China. She loves kittens and Yoga.



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## Student projects

Photographs by **Raffi Hantabli**

The students implemented two projects as part of their Project Planning course. One was a training and revision presentation, the second was a bamboo basket making project designed to reduce the impact of plastic in the school.



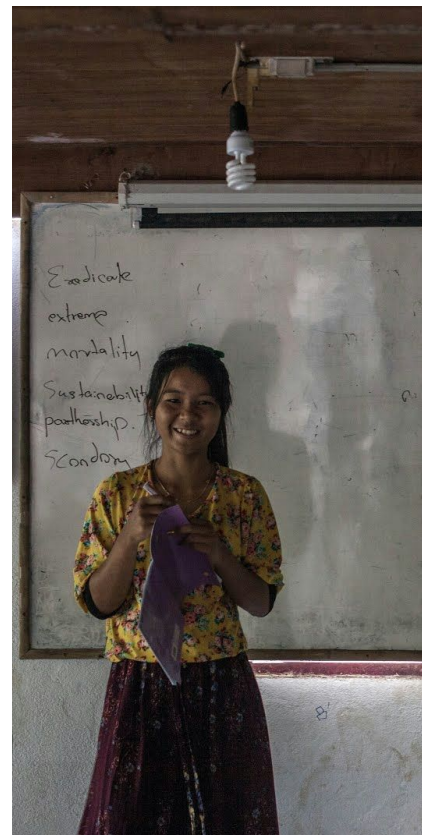
Students rehearse their presentation, **above**.

Nyar Reh Bo cutting bamboo, **Left**.





Pray Reh Say, **Left**. Meh Mo & Oo Meh, **Above**.  
Than Hein Win, **Bottom left**. Mi Meh Poe, **Bottom right**.







Students weaving the cut bamboo into baskets, **above**. Review & rehearsal, **below**.



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## Reflections of a former SDC volunteer

by **Maggi Nicole**

Myanmar. I was always curious about this part of South East Asia that I knew little about. I'd known about the years of military rule plaguing the country and was intrigued by the country's diversity. I wanted to learn more.

I made my move in May. I was set to volunteer with an organization called the 'Social Karenni Development Centre' located in Dohkita – a small community of a few staff and 20 students. I was immediately



welcomed, and from there began an amazing 3 month experience, making some of the best memories and getting to know some of the best young people.

My days consisted of waking up to some of the most beautiful views and settling into lessons with students super eager to learn, practice their English and sometimes dance. We quickly settled into working together and learning from each other. The students engaged with me and let me into their world of experiences backed by a passionate desire to become active, informed citizens and help their community.

I remember one day we were talking about culture and why we needed to protect our identities. Suddenly I felt like I could not continue the lesson unless I really knew what their identity meant to them. I sat down and asked them about their past, their community and culture. Lighting up, they all enthusiastically shared their stories and patiently answered my questions.

I loved taking part in one on one conversations with the students. Curious about the world around them, they understand more than anyone the value of human dignity and how



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important the fight is for equal treatment and access to education, legal services and health – regardless of their background.

As well as a hunger for knowledge they shared with me their love of romantic music and Kung-Fu movies. They love learning English slang, playing football and dancing. They're funny, smart and cheeky. They are the best group of young adults I have had the pleasure to work and live with. Some of the best nights were ones that involved sharing food and having conversations.

Working with SDC and having these powerful experiences with my students gave me the push to finally visit Myanmar. I now work with a Karenni CBO, Karenni National Women's Organization, who are part of a community working hard to support refugee rights and fight for greater equality in Myanmar for all minorities – regardless of religion or ethnicity.

Working in Nai Soi was humbling, enlightening and something I'll never forget. Myanmar is on the cusp of possible change, a present and possible future is being rewritten. While these voices might not be the loudest, they are strong and committed to a future of democracy, equality and peace. The world must listen and continue to support them.



## 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.

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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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- Refugees International Japan



We would also like to thank our partners:

- EarthRights International
- The Curriculum Project
- Mote Oo Education



Thank you for reading and your interest in SDC and the Karenni community. Stay in touch with  
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