

# Monthly Publication Of KSDC

## Our supporters promote SDC students through donations

Our school continues to look for new and innovative ways to improve our students' experience. One of the ways we do this is through accepting donations from individuals. These donations offer our students access to materials we would not ordinarily be able to provide.

Over the past year, we have received a



Students read donated books during the basic course

number of donations. Some examples of items donated are kindles, books, sports equipment, arts materials and musical equipment. We have

also received computers.

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## 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 14

01/09/2015

### SDC updates from August 2015:

- SDC school experiences minor flooding
- Basic Course students have guest lecture
- SDC students attend Queen's birthday celebration
- SDC says goodbye to volunteer, Andy

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## Principal's Message



During August, we have been providing classes on Human Rights, The Environment, Rule of Law, Democracy for All and Introduction to Social Studies for the students on the basic course. This is taught by SDC staff.

Every Friday evening the students have an opportunity to learn a life skill such as sport, music and dance. This is provided by their class mates. During this program some students volunteer to share their skills with their class mates. In this program, students were made into three groups depending on their interest for participating in this program.

his program aims to provide the students extra helpful skills which would be valuable for their future, their studies and for developing their community in any way.

Starting on 24th to 28th August we held our evaluations. The First Term Examination for the Basic Course related to the subjects of Human Rights, Environment, Legal Issues and Democracy.

At the same time, on the Advanced Course, we have been teaching the students and providing knowledge of Project Planning, proposal Writing and Persuasive English skills by two volunteers; and computer skills by an SDCs staff members.

On 29th August we held a farewell party for Andy Smith. Andy had been with us for over two years. He was a volunteer teacher, helped our teachers and volunteers and he was always ready to help us in any way possible. Andy was a good friend, teacher and often leader in our community. Always willing to learn and to give a helping hand to our community.

For this we would like to say thank you to Andy. We will not forget you

12th August was the Thai Queen's birthday. This was an opportunity for our students to participate in community activities. Our SDC students and staff attended on the ceremony organized by the KnRC and Thai authorities in camp at the Kncc compound.

During August there was heavy rain which caused big flood in our refugee camp and flash flooding outside of camp.

This made the refugees in camp nervous. And made it dangerous for us to go about our daily work in camp.

This also it interrupted our educational program. And made us and the students nervous and afraid. As flash flooding, last year caused damage to refugee people in the past.

Last year's flood also damaged SDC school buildings. A lot of school materials and books were lost or destroyed in that flood.

Luckily this year there was only minor flooding and there was no serious damage or destruction.



SDC staff meet with a representative from our donor, OS



Students participating in the community organizing class

## SDC plan for September

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
	1	2	3	4 Advanced Course students run projects	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14 Chicken bone is read	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

## Future event: Our community celebrates Deeku Festival

Next month, our school will take a short break for the traditional Deeku festival. During the festival, our community will come together to celebrate and enjoy in a special time for our community.

Deeku festival begins as the rice paddy becomes ready. The festival is for celebrating a good harvest in advance. It also recognizes the courage and strength of the Karenni warriors from days gone by.

The festival unites the community as families come together to share experiences. Karenni wine and Deeku, sticky rice wrapped in



Deeku ready to enjoy for a Karenni household

leaves, are shared amongst families and visitors.

Like other Karenni festivals, elders use chicken bones to predict a

suitable date to begin the festival. Therefore, our community is not yet certain of the festival date and over the coming days, excitement will build in anticipation of the beginning of the festival.



## Our supporters promote SDC students through donations

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These varieties of different items have proved valuable to providing the students with an enjoyable educational experience, here at SDC.

Book donations have helped our organisation to build a useful library for our students. We have also received kindles which provide access to an even wider variety of books. Students can now find information on a wide variety of topics as well as improve their English. Over the past year a number of different individuals and groups have shared used books with

us. They include former volunteers, Nick Sieveking and a group of Canadian schoolchildren.

The four computers we have received through donations this year have enabled students to have more opportunity to practice using computers. Before studying at SDC, most of our students have never used a computer. Currently for advanced course students, we have six computers available for them to practice on. Three of the computers were donated courtesy of a fundraiser by Renee Mulligan, Christine Murray and Michelle Kinney. The fourth computer was donated from funds from an internet fundraiser by former volunteer, Morgan Watson of the life lessons foundation.

Morgan Watson's life lessons foundation were also kind enough to provide the students materials for their recreational time and to make their classes fun. Their donation included; sports equipment such as badminton rackets and a volleyball; musical equipment like bongo drums; and last but not least there was also a collection of arts materials for use inside and outside the classroom. All of these donations contribute to our



Students write a thank you message for their donation

students having the best possible experience at our school.

This year, courtesy of the different materials and support we have received from individual supporters alongside our core donors, we are confident to say that this year our students are better prepared than ever to serve their communities.

Donations are always useful to our school and our students. If you are interested in making a donation, please E-Mail the SDC school principal, Khu Myar Reh at [officesdc@yahoo.com](mailto:officesdc@yahoo.com).



An SDC student practices his com-

## The role of chickens in traditional animist Karenni Culture



Chicken Femurs used for traditional divinations

Karenni people are very superstitious. They rely on their cultural practices for a safe and secure future. The body of a chicken is seen as knowledgeable by Karenni people and it is an essential part of preparing for the future. Traditional animist Karenni people use chickens and more specifically, chicken bones to plan festivals, cure illness and predict many different aspects of the future.

The part of the chicken used for divination is the femurs (or thigh bones). An elderly person skilled in divination will remove the femurs and all of the flesh until there is only two small holes. After this, they will insert bamboo splints through the

holes and line up the femurs. The femurs must swap positions. Therefore the left femur is on the right and the right femur is on the left. They can then compare the angles of the bamboo splint.

Most commonly today, Karenni people use chicken bones to predict the start dates of their festivals. For their festivals, they choose a day and if the angle of the chicken bones aligns, they may start on that day. If not, they must kill another chicken. This will continue until a suitable day is found. If there is not a suitable day then for that year they must cancel their festival. The chicken bones direction will also determine where to find the tree which will be used for the Kay Htoe Boe festival.

The chicken also many important uses throughout the year in medicine and curing illness. The angle of the chicken bones can locate evil spirits causing general illnesses. For children, cockerel's blood can be put on a child's forehead for determining a suitable name. Chicken's blood can also be used during childbirth. Pouring it on the mother's back and shoulders can keep her warm and protect against the loss of blood.

As well as for festivals and keeping healthy, chicken bones also predict the year ahead. They can be used to predict business, choosing places, marriage dates; and dates for battles and hunting. For marriage, chicken bones can determine if couples are suitable for marriage. For couples, if the chicken bones align well, they may stay together in the same house as husband and wife and have a small wedding party. Usually around a year later, they organise a second big wedding party.

In Karenni tradition chicken bones should rarely be ignored but for more modern Karenni People, they are seen more as guidance or as a warning. Also, for the Christians and Buddhists amongst the Karenni population, these practices are becoming less and less common. Despite the changes in Karenni Society, the chicken bone remains an important part of Karenni Society and it still used to decide the dates of festivals and for some families it still has a role in their day to day life.

## The Karenni community joins in celebrations for the queen's birthday



The queen of Thailand

Every year, our school and refugee community enjoy many festivals. Most of these festivals relate to our own Karenni culture and traditions. Yet due to our current situation residing in Thailand, we also participate in Thai cultural festivals. During August, Thailand celebrates their Queen's birthday. On this day our community joins with the Thai people to celebrate.

On 12<sup>th</sup> August, our school closed to respect the Thai queen's birthday. In Thailand, the Thai queen's birthday is also the National Mother's Day. Although Karenni people are not Thai, every year the Thai Queen's birthday is also celebrated within the camp.

This year the ceremony took place at the school of our partners, KNCC. The ceremony included a number of speeches, readings, a dramatic performance, songs and dances by leaders and students attending the ceremony.

The Thai authorities read speeches explaining about the meaning and importance of the ceremony to the audience in attendance. Karenni leaders and residents of the camp also gave speeches.

The Karenni Refugee Committee (KnRC) Chairperson gave a further speech explaining about the monarchy's role and relationship with the Karenni community in Karenni Refugee Camp 1.

This was followed by a speech from the Karenni Community College, (KnCC) Coordinator. Their speech included explanations of the important role of mothers in the community and the family.

After this the speakers and audience joined together in reading a letter to pay their respects to the queen of Thailand.

After the various speeches, young people from the camp produced some cultural displays. KnCC and SDC students presented songs and dances to the audience.

A group of young people also presented a drama performance about the importance of family.

After the ceremony, the audience was given some young valuable trees and they went to plant them in a special area within the KnCC compound.

Attending and respecting ceremonies like these is an important part of camp life. Similarly to the Queen's birthday, on the King's birthday, camp schools and organisations will also close to pay their respects to the Thai monarchy. These ceremonies represent an example of connections and relationships between the refugee community and their country of residence, Thailand.

## Flood clean up by students

On the evening of the 13th the nearby river flooded suddenly. The flash flood devastated nearby farms and flooded the school.

The morning after the flood, the students came together and began the big task of cleaning debris



Flood waters deposited a lot of tree and bamboo trunks, as well as smaller debris. Everything had to be slowly removed and mud swept away.





The clean up took two days, Friday and Saturday, power was restored after a couple of days.

There is still some debris near the school. But this is only the larger trees and boulders which cannot be moved.





## Volunteer Testimonial: A brighter future by Andy



SDC staff and students celebrate the 2014 –2015 graduation

Being a volunteer at SDC is an opportunity to glimpse into the future for one of the most marginalized groups in the world. Through the courage and ambitions exhibited by the Karenni youth at SDC, a brighter future is surely ahead of them.

From my first day at the school to my last, I have seen the endearing dedication of the SDC community. This passion and dedication flows between students, staff and alumni. Each section of the school represents a moving cog in a machine that is driving positive changes.

During their time at the school, the students are ever focused on their studies and the subjects cater to developing an ability to contribute to their people. On the basic course, subjects such as human rights and

law build their basic knowledge of opportunities to help their people. Campaigning and project planning, on the advanced course, provide them with the skills to lead the change they so desire.

The students' hard work continues after graduation. I have seen first-hand the alumni applying their knowledge to their communities. It only takes a brief look at the community in Karenni Refugee Camp 1 to understand the effect of the school. Offices are filled with the alumni and ever increasing numbers of organisations are SDC alumni led. Without doubt, these alumni hold the keys to the future of the Karenni community.

Today the community's strength and resilience may be in the hands of the alumni. However, this achievement could not have been made without the outstanding work of the SDC staff. Come sun or rain, they give their time and energy, every day. Many have made huge personal sacrifices to ensure a brighter future lies ahead for their young people and from what I have seen their work is paying off dearly.

The school, year on year, develops and improves as a result of the teacher's hard work. Each year, student numbers increase and enthusiasm remains high. Also, as the waves of political change reach Karenni State, SDC's inside activities and influence increase.

I am proud to have been able to offer a small contribution towards their work. Though, my own pride should not compare to that of the staff and students who continue to strive to better their communities. As long as SDC runs the flame of a peaceful future in a free and democratic society will continue burn brightly for the new generation of Karenni people.



*'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](mailto: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](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: [sdcthailand.wordpress.com](http://sdcthailand.wordpress.com)

### Acknowledgements

On behalf of SDC and all our students, we would like to thank our core funders:

- The American Jewish World Service
- The Open Society Institute
- Refugees International Japan

Our partners:

- Earthrights International
- 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**

