

13. Abuse of Women

13.1. Background

Burma's military regime violates the human rights of both men and women indiscriminately. However, Burmese women are violated by the regime in a number of ways that are gender specific. In addition to the kinds of human rights abuses that both men and women in Burma face, the following will pay special attention to the particular abuses of women's rights.

Burma ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in Burma on August 21, 1997. However, discrimination against women has continued throughout 1997. Gender discrimination in Burma severely restricts women's rights to express their legitimate interest in social and political affairs. Ethnic women -- are particularly vulnerable under the SLORC/SPDC regime.

According to UNICEF's "1995 Children and Women in Myanmar" report, although "the comparatively high status of women is codified in Burmese Buddhist customary law . . . male predominance is widely accepted in most walks of life." There are many indicators of male dominance and female subordination throughout Burmese society. Women and girls are educated less frequently, leading to a higher literacy rate for men than women. Women also have less access to power and a decreased ability to make and implement policy, as evidenced by the fact that relatively few women serve in important government positions. Almost every high government official is a former or current military officer, and all of these are men. The military regime masculinist ideology prevents women's participation at the highest levels of power in Burma. Women are frequently exploited sexually and economically, demonstrated by a growing sex industry in Burma. Highly restrictive access to contraception and abortion means that women lack control over their reproductive health. Additionally, women are either excluded from the official workforce or relegated to low-paying, unskilled jobs in the national economy, as indicated by official statistics.

In the National Report to the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, SLORC/SPDC highlighted four specific laws ensuring women's well-being: 1) the 1954 Buddhist Women's Special Marriage and Inheritance Act; 2) the 1949

Suppression of Prostitution Act, which claims to “protect women from being ordered or coerced into prostitution;” 3) the Maternal and Child Welfare Association Law, which “provides protection and support in social and health care for mothers, children, and the family;” 4) and the Nursing and Midwifery Law, providing for licensing and training. Unfortunately, these laws are largely ineffective. The sex industry, rather than shrinking, has increased. The general health of children has declined drastically, infant mortality rates have skyrocketed, and adult life expectancy rates have decreased. If the laws were truly enforced, some of the basic conditions of women’s lives might be improved.

13.2. Women in Politics

Like men, Burmese women who become politically active are harassed and arbitrarily arrested especially those who belong to parties or movements in opposition to the regime. Moreover, those who directly confront SLORC/SPDC’s political system by demanding certain freedoms are arrested and brutally treated. The situation of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the most prominent leader of democracy in Burma, illustrates the discrimination that political women must endure. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is severely restricted in her ability to move freely. The military regime routinely slanders her. By harassing and restricting Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in these ways, the SLORC/SPDC clearly violates the “Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.”

Despite ratifying the Women’s Rights Convention, a number of well-known women political prisoners remain in detention and more women politicians have been arrested and sentenced to long term imprisonment this year. The treatment and health conditions of women political prisoners are of great concern because many abuses against women prisoners take place and health problems are common in Burma’s prisons. Female prisoners in Burma are usually mistreated and their health ignored. Testimony from former women prisoners states that a number of them were forced to give birth in their cells without medical assistance.

13.3. Women Political Prisoners Behind Bars

Dr. Ma Thida and ten other NLD members were arrested in July 1993 and held incommunicado before being brought to trial on October 15, 1993. They were charged with “endangering public tranquility” under Section 5(j) of the 1950 Emergency Provisions Act, “having contact with unlawful associations” under Section 17 (1) of the 1908 Unlawful Associations Act, and “distributing unlawful literature”

under Sections 17 and 20 of the 1962 Printers and Publishers Registration Act. Dr. Ma Thida and her colleagues were sentenced to 20 years in prison.

Dr. Ma Thida was a former campaign assistant for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. At the time of her arrest she was working at the Muslim Free Hospital in Rangoon. She is an accomplished writer. Her body of work includes a number of short stories and several novels, none of which have been published in Burma. Although she was recently given official permission to publish her latest novel, she has been prevented from doing so.

Dr. Ma Thida is currently being held in solitary confinement in Insein prison with no access to reading or writing materials. She has suffered from failing health since the beginning of her detention; her maladies include digestive problems, tuberculosis, and ovarian tumors that may require surgery. The medical treatment in Insein prison is negligible. Although she reportedly has recovered from tuberculosis, she is still not receiving appropriate medical care for her other ailments.

Daw San San Nwe, a 51-year-old NLD member and well-known journalist, was arrested in Rangoon on August 4 or 5, 1994. A widow with four children, she, her daughter, Myat Mo Mo Htun, and two other political leaders, were arrested. According to the military regime, the four were detained for passing information “critical of the government” to foreign journalists and diplomats in order to make foreign governments “misunderstand the SLORC government.” They were also accused of sending information to the UN Special Rapporteur on Burma.

On October 6, 1994, Daw San San Nwe was sentenced to seven years in prison under Section 59(E) of the 1950 Emergency Provisions Act for spreading false information, and three years in prison under Section 17(1) of the Unlawful Associations Act for membership or contact with illegal organizations. She had already been arrested in July 1989 during one of SLORC’s nationwide crackdowns on political opposition. Her writing has been banned in Burma since the beginning of the 1988 democracy movement.

13.4. 1997 Arrests of Female Activists

During 1997, many women political activists including women elected-MP were arrested, detained, and sentenced to long term imprisonment for their political activities and support of the NLD.

- On February 11, 1997, eleven men and six women left Prome, Burma, were

travelling by train, to attend the NLD Union Day in Rangoon. Soldiers and policemen boarded the train at Tharawaddy station and arrested fifteen of the NLD members (two of the women were not arrested). The prisoners were taken to the headquarters of the 35th Regiment. The arrested women were Daw Myint Myint Khin, Daw Tin Hlaing, Daw Than Than Nu, and Daw Aye Mya San. (*source: SAIN*)

- On June 13, 1997, five NLD activists including a cousin and assistant of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi were arrested. They were U Ohn Myint, an eighty-year-old NLD party advisor, Khin Maung Win (also known as Sonny), a photographer, U Cho Aung Than, a cousin and assistant of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, his sister Daw Nge Ma Ma Than, and her husband U Myint Swe. In a press conference on June 27, Lt. Gen. Khin Nyunt accused the group of collaborating with “overseas anti-government activists and advocates of destruction within the country” to bring in money for the NLD, and to smuggle Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s video message out of the country. On August 15, 1997, a court inside Insein prison sentenced U Cho Aung Than, Daw Nge Ma Ma Than, and U Myint Swe to ten years under the Unlawful Associations Act and the 1950 Emergency Provisions Act, section 5(e), which allows for seven years of imprisonment. (*Source: Inside*)
- On the night of October 28, 1997, Daw May Win Myint, NLD Divisional Organizer and Member of Parliament elect from Mayangone Township, was arrested by Military Intelligence officers after they had taken documents from her. She was sentenced to seven years on December 2, 1997.
- On the night of October 28, 1997, Win Win Htay, a member of the Rangoon NLD Youth Division, was arrested after security forces seized documents from her. She was also sentenced to seven years imprisonment on December 2, 1997.
- On October 28, 1997, Daw San San, the NLD Seikkan Township MP elect and Divisional Vice-chairperson and NLD women’s leader was arrested at midnight after documents were taken from her. Daw San San is an NLD member and is the elected MP from Seikkan Township, Rangoon Division. She was first arrested in November 1990 and was sentenced to 20 years imprisonment under Penal Code Section 122, for “high treason.” She was, however, released on May 1, 1992 due to an amnesty. During her first detention, the military regime dismissed her as a Member of Parliament and banned her from running in any future elections. The regime arrested and detained Daw San San under Section

10(a) of the 1975 State Protection Act in November 1997, but in April this year she was charged under the 1923 Official Secrets Act. Daw San San was sentenced to seven years imprisonment for being accused of distributing false information domestically and internationally, but the term was increased to 25 years when she refused to pledge that she would refrain from further political activities. No one has been allowed to see her since her sentencing.

13.5. Women and Forced Labor

Women, children and the elderly are used extensively for all forms of forced labor. Increasing numbers of women, including young girls and the elderly, have been forced to work on infrastructure projects and to act as porters in war zones. Such uncompensated forced labor continues despite Burma's ratification of ILO Convention No.29 Concerning Forced or Compulsory Labor. For the various development and infrastructure projects, women are recruited by force, even when they are pregnant or nursing their infants. Those who are too weak for the strenuous work have to hire another person or face fines. While away, the women cannot work their farms, which results in a food shortage for their families. On the work-site, women, like men, risk exhaustion, increased accidents, and lack medical treatment. They are also victims of many other serious human rights violations, such as beating, rape, and murder.

When SLORC/SPDC troops descend upon a village or market to obtain porters, they tend to prefer able-bodied men (SLORC/SPDC generally considers men ages 15 to 65 to be "able-bodied"), but if there are not enough, they will take whomever they can catch, ranging in age from 12 to 70. In many villages in or near conflict areas, the village men go into hiding to avoid random torture or arrest as porters by SLORC/SPDC troops. With the men gone, the women, children, and elderly stay in the village to protect their homes and belongings from the looting soldiers. When troops storm a village looking for porters and only find women, they become angry and generally arrest the women accusing them of being "wives of rebels." When this happens, they physically abuse them and/or take them as porters. Furthermore, some battalions deliberately take women as porters during military operations where they are forced to carry heavy loads, are beaten at will, and are kept separately from the men to be raped at gunpoint by any soldier who desires them.

- On February 16, 1997, SLORC soldiers from LIB. 431 and IB. 104 drafted 30 porters from Pyatha Chaung, Karen State, 25 of which were women, following a clash with KNU troops near the village. The porters were ordered to carry the soldiers' back-packs, and the women had to wash the soldiers' clothes and cook for them during the fighting and marching. SLORC troop also drafted another

batch of porters between Pyatha Chaung and Phaungdaw villages, comprising of 10 women and a 60-year-old Karen man. (*Source: ABSDF*)

- On July 24, 1997, troops, led by Tint Lwin Oo, from SLORC IB. 55 came to Ber-gor-doe village in Taungoo district, Karen State, and ate as well as destroyed the villagers' live-stock and food supply. They seized all of the women in Kee-pla-doe and Cor-say-ko villages, including young girls and nursing mothers, and forced them to carry supplies to Koe-mor-doe village on July 27, 1997. While in Koe-mor-doe, the troops held the women in the village church building and then forced them to relieve themselves, thereby desecrating the holy site. This was extremely distressing to all of the villagers. (*Source: KIC*)
- On March 27, 1997, approximately 150 SLORC soldiers from LIB. 548 and the DKBA arrived at Thwahta to round up villagers to use as porters. A pregnant woman was beaten for failing to bring her husband Saw Pulaw Pho, a former member of the KNU, to the soldiers. Naw Pulaw, the wife of village leader Saw Maung Kyaing, was forced to strip naked in front of the remaining female villagers while a soldier poked her genitals with the barrel of his gun. When they left the following day, the SLORC and DKBA troops took the pregnant women and several other young Karen women from the village to be used as porters. The women were forced to carry heavy loads of supplies, were beaten if they staggered or could not walk, and were abandoned in the jungle when the beatings they received or exhaustion rendered them unconscious. (*Source: ABSDF*)
- From July 7 to August 1, 1997, in Kyauk-kyi Township, SLORC troops from IB. 60 and LIB. 351 seized 20 women and held them ransom at the rate of 600 *kyats* per person. Ma-lad-daw villagers were forced to relocate to Tha-beay-neant and then were charged 10 *kyats* per person per day, to return and look after their plantations and orchards. (*Source: KIC*)
- At midnight on September 4, 1997, Daw Pain (45), wife of a KNLA soldier, her daughter Naw Par Mi (17), and her son Maung Tin Shwe (20), of Kway-toe-zeik village tract, Kyar-ein-seik-kyi Township, Karen State, were taken hostage by the soldiers from IB. 30 based at Than-byu-za-yart. Maung Tin Shwe was kicked in the face. (*Source: PDF*)
- On December 6, 1997, a military column from IB. 341 led by Major Aung Thein arrived at Naku Palaw village in Papun Township, Karen State, and burned it down. When the column first entered, all of the villagers fled, except Khe Htoo Pee, a 70-year-old blind woman who was left behind. The soldiers tied

her to her house and burned her alive. (*Source: ABSDF*)

- On December 7, 1997, a military column from IB. 341 led by Major Aung Thein arrived at Law Mu Hta village, Papun Township, Karen State. The soldiers forcibly took five Karen girls, one of whom was a woman, 33-year-old Naw Phawra, while they were working their farms outside of the village. The five were gang-raped and then killed by the soldiers. Their dead bodies were found on a hill. (*Source: ABSDF*)

For Army Camp labor, most units will take either men or women to help build bunkers and erect fences, but women are often specifically used for servant labor such as cooking, cleaning, and sewing. They are generally forced to stay at the camp during their multi-day shifts and many are raped or otherwise sexually abused and harassed. SLORC soldiers tend to prefer to use young unmarried women as porters and for camp labor. These women are afraid to tell anyone when they have been raped because they fear that it will destroy their chances for marriage. Those who become pregnant from rape during forced labor often die or permanently injure themselves trying to induce or give themselves abortions.

13.6. Rape and Sexual Violence by the Military

Inside Burma, and particularly along its borders, the military rapes women under a variety of circumstances. Women are raped both in their villages and during flight. They are subjected to rape and other sexual abuses as they engage in forced labor or serve as porters for the SLORC/SPDC army. They are lured into army camps under assorted pretexts, raped, and sometimes released. They are coerced into marrying military soldiers and forced to provide sexual services under the guise of a so-called legitimate marriage. Under various legal theories, the rape of women in Burma can be characterized as torture, violation of international labor law, enslavement, forced prostitution, forced impregnation, and forced marriage.

Ethnic women are frequently raped while being detained by the military for forced labor or portering. Females are required to stay overnight in a separate location from the males also held captive for purposes of providing forced labor. During detention, women are wholly under the control of the army and are sexually abused by soldiers and officers.

Police and intelligence officers use rape and sexual harassment to torture women when they detain and interrogate them. For example, on October 16, 1987, a female political prisoner who was recently released from Loikaw prison in Karenni State

gave an account of how military intelligence officers stationed there used various forms of torture, including raping and sexually abusing female prisoners, to extract information from them.

13.6.1. Incidents of Rape and Sexual Assault

- Nong Non, daughter of Loong Su and Pa Zing from Kho Lam village, Shan State, arrived at a border village in Fang district, Chiang Mai Province, Thailand on January 11, 1997. There were three men and ten women including Nong Non who had been moved to relocation sites near Kho Lam, which was near the motor road between Nam Zarng and Kun Hing. According to them, they fled because the SLORC forced them to work all the time without pay, leaving them virtually no time to work for themselves and their families. Clearing the sides of roads, digging ditches, cutting wood, making fences, fetching water and gathering firewood for the soldiers, was routine work. If men were not available, the soldiers took women instead. They would often order women they found attractive to work at remote locations and then rape them. Nong Non said she was raped twice. The first time occurred when she was forced to clear roadside bushes east of Kho Lam in late November 1996, by Sergeant Sein Win from IB. 66 based in Nam Zarng. The sergeant ordered Nang Non and three other women to go and work at a location where the other villagers could not see them. He then sent three of the women to work in yet another place, leaving Nang Non alone. Sergeant Sein Win ordered Nang Non to work near a thick bush and then dragged her into it, raping her at gunpoint. (*Source: S.H.A.N*)
- On December 20, 1996, at 6 a.m., Nang Zing Nu, 25, daughter of Loong Hurng, 40, from Panglong, Loilem Township, Shan State, drove a bullock-cart to get hay from their farm. A few hundred yards from town, a group of SLORC soldiers stopped Nang Zing and said that their captain wanted to use the cart for a while. Then they drove her and the cart into the forest and gang-raped her. When some people in the neighborhood heard her cries they rushed to intervene. The soldiers stopped them, held them at gunpoint, arrested three of them along with Nang Zing Nu, and took them to the military base. The soldiers released them only after the woman's father and village leaders paid a ransom for them. (*Source: S.H.A.N*)
- On December 21, 1996, 80 SLORC soldiers led by Major Kyaw Kaung, deputy commander of the IB. 64, inspected the abandoned village of Hai Seng, Murg Nai Township, Shan State, after residents had been relocated. The troops found four women villagers there who had returned to retrieve property and rice that

had been left behind. The four women were Narng Kya, 17, daughter of Loong Aw and Pa My, Narng Thun, 18, daughter of Loong Saw and Pa Ae, Narng Seng Awn, 20, daughter of Loong Ta and Pa Aung, and Narng Yun, 22, daughter of Loong Taw Ya and Pa Kham. Major Kyaw Kaung took Narng Kya for himself and raped her, leaving the other three to be raped by his sergeants and soldiers. (*Source: S.H.A.N*)

- On December 29, 1996, twenty-five soldiers from Larngkhur Base IB. 99, led by Captain Aung Zaw, came to Kun Khoi village, west of Ton Hoong in the Kentung area, Shan State. He deliberately entered the house of Nang Swe La, 22, daughter of Loong Tan and Pa Sai. When Captain Aung Zaw realized that she was alone, he ordered his soldiers to stand guard and then went upstairs and raped her. Though some of the neighbors heard her screams, no one dared to come and help. After that, the soldiers left the village. When her parents returned and she told them about it, they called the village leaders who went with them to the army base to complain. The commander told them that Captain Aung Zaw had gone to see Nang Swe La's parents to buy chickens and that the other soldiers would corroborate this story. Instead of receiving justice, Nang Swe La's parents and village leaders were accused of lying to defame the army. The commander slapped the head leader once and ordered them to bring one cow, one pig and 3,000 *kyats* as a fine. (*Source: S.H.A.N*)
- On December 31, 1996, SLORC IB. 64 commander Khun Than Aye from Murng Nai Township, Shan State, led 100 troops to ransack the abandoned village of Nawng Khem where they found and detained two women who had returned in search of their oxen cart. The two women were Narng Mya, 16, daughter of Loong Taw and Pa La, and Narng Khawng, 17, daughter of Zai Aw and Narng Ing. Before releasing the women, the commander raped both of them while his soldiers killed and ate their oxen. (*Source: S.H.A.N*)
- On January 18, 1997, Nam Zarng-based SLORC Division 99 deputy commander Captain Than Tun arrived in Wan Phui village in Nam Zarng township, Shan State, where he found a young woman, Narng Ae, 18, in her house. He ordered his soldiers to take Narng Ae's father, Loong Mu Ling, away and then proceeded to rape her in the house for an hour. (*Source: S.H.A.N*)
- On February 15, 1997, troops from SLORC Infantry Division 66 arrived at Pyar Thar Chaung village, Ban Chaung area, Thayet Chaung Township, Tenasserim Division. There they seized five girls whom they came across on their way and gang-raped them. Of these five girls, four were unmarried and all

were from Launglon Township's Minyat village where they were working for a local privately owned betel-nut farm in the Ban Chaung area. (*Source: MIS*)

- In February 1997, after the fighting between SLORC troops and the KNU in Ler Muh village, the KNU 4th Brigade area, SLORC captured twelve women from Kaneh Khon village and raped them. Naw Sei Phaw, 25, was raped in front of her husband and family by three soldiers and then executed her with a knife. (*Source: ABSDF*)
- In February 1997, SLORC troops entered Phaungdaw village in Ain Ka Set Do Township in Karen State and arrested male villagers to work as porters. One woman was gang-raped while her husband and father were forced to watch, hands tied behind their backs. The soldiers continued to rape the woman until she lost consciousness. She later died. After being forced to watch the gang-rape the soldiers then beat the two men to death. (*Source: ABSDF*)
- In February 1997, at least ten young women from Ka Nel Khaw village were arrested by SLORC troops and brought to a military outpost in Ta Mae Hta. Nine of the women were gang-raped at the outpost, while one woman managed to escape. (*Source: ABSDF*)
- In February 1997, SLORC troops from LIB. 431, based at Kawthaung in Tenasserim Division, raped a young Karen woman when they arrived at Pyatha Chaung in the Karen area. Army officers from LIB. 431 and IB. 104 also raped six young Karen women porters. (*Source: ABSDF*)
- On March 9, 1997, troops from IB. 26, in the process of seizing villagers to be used for porters at Nyaungbin Gon village, Nyaung Lay Bin district, Karen State, raped two women and there, Naw Ywa Mu and her younger sister. (*Source: KIC*)
- On March 20, 1997, Sergeant Htwe Nge and a private from the LIB. 208, under the command of Major Htay Aung, raped Naw Paw Lweh, 15, of Pu-yay village near Kyeik Don village in Kyar Ein Seik Kyi Township, Karen State. The crime took place at 8 a.m. on the upper floor of her house. The two men also threatened to kill Naw Paw Lweh's aunt if she tried to report the incident. (*Source: KIC*)
- On March 23, 1997, Company-1 commander from LIB. 205, Captain Thein Aung and his whole company of soldiers gang-raped Naw Aye Win, 35, and her

sister Ma Thein Za, 17, from Gar Lay Kee village of Kyar Ein Seik Kyi Township and then shot them to death. Their naked bodies were left at the edge of a forest. (*Source: KIC*)

- On March 28, 1997, about one hundred soldiers from IB. 246 led by Major Saw Win came to Wan Phui, Kho Lam village circle, Nam Zarng Township, Shan State. The area was declared a cease-fire zone and all the villagers had been moved to a relocation site there. When the soldiers found 200 people moving their belongings to Kho Lam village, Major Saw Win accused them of being SURA soldiers and opened fire killing 14 men and six women. The six women were Nang Pong, 18, Nang Aye, 19, Nang Pool, 24, Nang Kham Arm, 23, Nang Parn, 20 and Nang Soi, 30. Major Saw Win and his soldiers raped all of the women before accusing and killing them for allegedly being wives of SURA soldiers. (*Source: S.H.A.N*)
- On March 30, 1997, two women with a two-year-old child were driving an ox-cart carrying rice paddy to sell at Palawng village. When they reached Nawng Kaw village, Nawng Kaw tract, Laikha Township, Shan State, they were stopped by 15 SLORC troops from Kho Lam. The SLORC troops raped the two women and then shot them to death. The child and cart were left alone in the forest. (*Source: SHRF*)
- On March 30, 1997, a 12-year-old girl from Hon Pung village, Nawng Kaw tract, Laikha Township, Shan State, was shot to death by SLORC troops from Kho La. When the troops shot her, she was on a hay stack taking down hay to feed cattle in the field. Her relatives heard gunfire and they came to help her but were stopped by the soldiers. The army would not even permit them to bury her body, saying, "She must be kept like this as an example for you people of Shan State to see. If you bury her, you must die with her." Later it was discovered that she had also been raped. (*Source: SHRF*)
- On April 1, 1997, a column from LIB. 424 led by Major Maung Kyaw Tun arrived at Wan Beang Khan village, Wan Lao village circle, Kunhing Township in Shan State. Major Maung Kyaw Tun went to the house of Nang Than, a 16-year-old Shan girl. He gave her father 50 *kyats* to go buy a hen and told her mother to take some vegetables to another house. With her parents gone, the major told Nang Than that he thought there were some illegal things inside the house and that he wanted to look around. She showed him in and he proceeded to rape her there. Afterward, she ran and told the village leaders what had happened. Accompanied by many villagers, the leaders went to confront Major

Maung Kyaw Tun. He claimed that Nang Than was lying and then beat her unconscious. When the girl's parents returned, the major demanded that they pay 10,000 *kyats* to compensate him for being "falsely" accused by their daughter. (Source: S.H.A.N)

- On April 2, 1997, four women from Nong Khan village, Ho Yarn village tract, Kunhing Township, Shan State, left the relocation site and returned to their former village to collect some of their belongings. The four women were Nang Hla, 16, Nang Sai, 18, Nang Bok, 22, and Nang Tun, 25. The village had been abandoned since the relocation order the previous year. Unfortunately, they were discovered by a group of 26 soldiers from LIB. 424 led by Major Myint Lwin. At the site of the old village, Major Myint Lwin raped the women and ordered his 26 soldiers to rape them also. The troops then burned down 35 houses in the village. (Source: S.H.A.N)
- On April 6, 1997, SLORC troops from IB. 45, stationed at Murngsart, led by Major Aung Lwin, arrived at Waeng Nur village. Major Aung Lwin went to the house of Nang Zarm, an 18-year-old Shan girl. He ordered her parents to go and get him something to eat. While they were away, he had his men wait downstairs while he raped Nang Zarm. When her parents returned, Nang Zarm told them about being raped. However, Major Aung Lwin denied the charge and slapped her until her face was badly swollen, saying that she had falsely accused him. (Source: S.H.A.N)
- On April 14, 1997, two girls, 10 and 12 years old, from Kung Zarn village, Hai Lai tract, Namzarng township, Shan State, were raped and killed by twelve SLORC soldiers from Kho Lam at Nam Naeng stream, just one and a half miles east of Kho Lam. (Source: SHRF)
- On April 18, 1997, SLORC troops from LIB. 378, a captain, and three soldiers, raped two women named Nang Sa and Nang Sarm at Nawng Hai village, Kho Lam tract, Kunhing Township, Shan State. (Source: SHRF)
- On April 19, 1997, two women from Kung Kyawng village, Kho Lam tract, Namzarng Township, went to tend their farm south of Kho Lam. Before reaching their farm, seven SLORC soldiers raped and killed them near the road. (Source: SHRF)
- On April 19, 1997, two women from Kung Kyawng village, Namzarng Township, Shan State, were raped and killed by seven SLORC troops south of Kho Lam,

Shan State. The two women had gone to tend their farm. (*Source: SHRF*)

- On April 20, 1997, about 50 soldiers from SLORC IB. 64, based in Laikha, Shan State, led by major Khin Than Ay, came to Pa Lai village, Nar Kharn tract, Murngnai Township, and arrested the village leader Loong Awng La at his house. They beat him unconscious and then took him to another house where they tied him up. Then the major ordered Sergeant Hla Phyu and two or three of his soldiers to rape Pa Leng, Loong Awng La's wife, while he proceeded to rape their daughter Nang Nu Harn in the house. (*Source: SHRF*)
- In April 1997, the notorious SLORC officer nick-named "Bo Mae Lone" by local people in Kyar Ein Seik Kyi Township, Karen State, raped the wife of KNLA soldier, Kyaw Nge. The woman was so traumatized by being raped by this officer, just 20 days after she had given birth to a child, that she now suffers from a severe mental disorder. (*Source: PDF*)
- In April 1997, under the pretence of conscripting porters, the local SLORC military at random seized a total of 40 girls and women from the small Karen villages around Pyarhet Chaung in Yebyu Township, Tenasserim Division. The soldiers took the girls to their military encampment and gang-raped them. In an attempt to prevent information regarding the condition of the 40 girls they held captive, the military created a temporary blockade of the roads to the encampment. It is still not known whether these girls have been released or not. (*Source: MIS*)
- On May 10, 1997, SLORC Major Than Oo and 50 troops from Kunhing IB. 44 came to On Woe Long village, Kaeng Kham tract, Kunhing Township, Shan State. The major ordered that the village be moved to the town. On May 16, Loong In Ta and his daughter Nang Sep, age 16, returned to the village to retrieve some of their belongings and were discovered by Major Than Oo and his troops. Major Than Oo then ordered his troops to tie up Loong In Ta outside while he took Nang Sep inside a house and raped her. The troops left Loong In Ta tied up, where he remained for an entire day and night, until at dawn he was able to free himself. When he went into the house, he found the body of his daughter, who had been raped and killed. (*Source: SHRF*)
- May 10, 1997, two sisters, Nang Pu, 24, and Nang Seng, 26, of Wan Luk Loi Waeng, Nar Poi tract, Namzarnng Township, Shan State, went to sell some goods to Palawng villagers of Nam Kawk Suk Mer village. On the way they met SLORC troops who shouted and shot at them on sight. The younger sister was

hit and wounded, but somehow managed to escape. The older sister, Nang Seng, was captured alive and taken away with her hands tied. The troops later raped her and shot her to death at a place two miles north-west of Kho Lam. (Source: *SHRF*)

- On May 13, 1997, soldiers from IB. 277 met Nam Khan, a 13-year-old girl from Mai Khe village, Murngton Township, Shan State, while patrolling the area. The soldiers forcibly took her into the forest, gang-raped her, and then killed her. (Source: *WPLHRC*)
- On May 16, 1997, Nang Aw, age 22 from Huay Aw village, Murngpan township, Shan State, went to cut some wood at a site just outside of her village. SLORC Major Aye Thike and his troops captured, raped, and killed her. (Source: *LWPHRC*)
- On May 27, 1997, about 120 soldiers from LIB. 403 and IB 25, led by Major Zaw Tun, arrived at Taung Byauk village in Thayet Chaung Township and stayed there over-night. Sergeant Aung Mya forced Ma Aye Mya, a 41-year-old mother of five children from the village, to meet him and later raped her. (Source: *MIS*)
- On June 3, 1997, two women, Nang Zing, 28, and Nang Pang, 40, sneaked into Ter Leng village, Laikha tract, Shan State, to collect gold that they had buried at the head of their beds. They were discovered and held by troops from LIB. 424, led by Major Myint Than who were stationed there. The troops raped and killed the two women. (Source: *SHRF*)
- During the first two weeks of May 1997, the local police stationed at Winwa village in Thayet Chaung Township, Tenasserim Division, took Ma Mi Nge, a married woman, from her home in Mindat village. The policemen took her under the pretence that they wanted to interrogate her about her husband who was a member of an armed ethnic group. However, the policemen just gang-raped her at the police station. When she arrived back at her home, she committed suicide by swallowing poison. (Source: *MIS*)
- On June 6, 1997, Loong Su, 54, and his two daughters, Nang Thun and Nang Kham, 29, from Murng Kerng tract, Shan State, were arrested near the military base on LIB. 519 in Wan Nar village, Murngton Township. With his hands tied up behind him, Loong Su was beaten in the head until he died. His two daughters were raped and killed on June 8th. (Source: *SHRF*)

- On June 10, 1997, Captain Thein Lwin Moe from IB. 101 raped a 17-year-old girl and eight grade school-aged girls from Yegoychaung village of Sonsin village, Thayetchaung Township, Tenasserim Division. After raping them, the captain threatened to kill them if they reported the incident to anyone. (*Source: MIS*)
- On June 23, 1997, Mi Tin San, a 15-year old Mon girl who lives in Mi Chaung Hlaung Village, Yebyu Township, Tenasserim Division, was raped by three foreign TOTAL Employees. The incident took place when the three foreigners who worked for the French oil giant TOTAL kidnapped and raped her after buying vegetables and fruits from her farm. (*Source: PDF*)
- On July 19, 1997, 80 SLORC troops of LIB. 525 arrived at Hart Mai village, Larnghkur Township, Shan State. Some of the troops went to a nearby farm outside of the village to gather firewood and raped the women they found working there. The five victims were Nang Phyu, 15, Nang Ni, 14, Nang Sawng, 18, Nang Thu, 18, and Nang Nawng, 25. When the women returned to their village, they got the village deputy leader and went to report the incident to the commander of the troops. The commander said nothing to condemn his troops' behavior. Instead, he slapped the deputy leader, Loong Thawn, three times on the face and beat him five times with a stick, saying, "if you let this news spread out to other places, your village will surely go up in flames. Make sure all of your villagers understand that." (*Source: SHRF*)
- On July 25, 1997, a force of combined troops from SLORC LIB. 332 and LIB. 502 came and ordered the Lisaw village of Nawng Tao, 15 miles east of Murnganpan town in Shan State, to move, claiming that the village was a place frequented by rebel troops. The villagers were ordered to move within three days, and because of the rain, could not carry much of their property and animals. After three days had passed, some Lisaw villagers still tried to collect what they had left in the village. When the SLORC troops found out, they arrested them, and raped five girls in the village. The women raped were Ee Ser, 14, Ee Sa, 13, Ee Nawng Long, 13, Ee Lu, 16, and Ee Oi, 13. (*Source: SHRF*)
- On August 23, 1997, husband Saw Kalo, 58, and wife Naw Moo, 50, were arrested in Lo Po village of No. 2 District in Karenni State by SLORC troops of LB. 102 under the command of Sein Hlaing (position unknown). The troops killed the husband whose wife Naw Moo also died after being repeatedly raped by the troops. (*Source: KNPP*)
- In September, Capain Shwe Myo Aung arrived in Kyon Wai village, Kawkeyeik

Township, Karen State, and raped Naw Gay Wah, 26-year-old mother of two. She had given birth to her son only one month prior to being raped. Her rapist beat her with a torch-light when she refused to cooperate with him. (*Source: ABSDF*)

- On October 1, 1997, about 80 SLORC troops led by commander Maung Maung Htwe of LIB. 515 ordered the villages of Nam Tao, Nar Mark Zawk, Wan Tab, Wan Nar Huay and Wan Mark Man in the village tract of Murng Khun, Murngkerng Township, Shan State, to relocate within three days. On October 3, before all of the villagers had a chance to move, the soldiers started to burn down some of the houses. After a while, the same troops led by Maung Maung Htwe arrested some villagers who had returned looking for their belongings left behind at their former villages. The villagers arrested were four women and three men including Nang Kham Non, female, Nang Ae, female, Nang Kham Lu, female, Nang Awang Zang, female, Aw Zing Na, male, Sai Lu, male, and Sai Oo, male. The men were shot to death and the women were gang-raped for three days and two nights before being released. After that, the soldiers burned down the villages. The first village to be burned was Nar Mark Zawk, which had 57 houses. (*Source: SHRF*)
- On October 12, 1997, SLORC troops from LIB. 277 led by Major Aye Thant searched Mai Heo Lao village, Ho Phai Long tract, Murngpan Township, Shan State. The villagers had been forced to relocate August 20, 1997. While searching, the troops found five women villagers and arrested them. These women, originally from this village, had returned to search for food and green vegetables. The five women were Nang Seng Zing, 20, wife of Sai Awng Zang, Nang Nyunt, 18, Nang Mawn, 19, Nang Suay Kya, 17, and Nang Mawn, 25, wife of Wi Zing Ta. The women were accused of being SURA soldiers' wives and were shut up in a deserted house in Mai Heo Lao for three days and three nights during which Major Aye Thant took them to another place and raped them one by one. His closest aides also took turns raping the women. After three days, the women were taken to Murngpan. The major knew all along that the women were not wives of the SURA soldiers, but still forced their parents and husbands to pay 2,000 kyat each for their release. (*Source: SHRF*)
- On October 22, 1997, SLORC soldiers named Zaw Lin, Htay Maung, and Kub Kwa from LIB. 240, raped three women, who lived in Nwa Laboe village, Karenni State. The three women, Beh Meh, 50, father's name Ree Reh, Boe Meh, 29, father's name Lee Reh, and Toe Meh, 35, father's name Seh Reh, were raped when they returned to the village after cultivating their hill-side plots. (*Source: KNPP*)

- On November 23, 1997, SPDC troops from Pang Long base LIB. 513 gang-raped a Shan woman in Mai Hoong Sarm Ton, near Hai Narng village in Pang Long area, Loilem Township, Shan State. In order to prevent the news from spreading, Major Kooma and his troops killed the unidentified woman. The next day, the troops called the police and the people in the area to come and look at the corpse, saying that they had found the body of the dead woman, and took photographs. (*Source: SHRF*)
- On November 28, 1997, medic Thein Win, Hla Aung, Kyi Aye, and Htun Myint from LIB. 333 medical battalion, raped Ma Aye, a 12-year-old from Kanna village in Murngsert Township, Eastern Shan State. The villagers later hospitalized her. (*Source: WPLHRC*)

13.7. Refugee Women

Refugees from Burma have fled to neighboring countries in order to escape forced labor, being used as porters, and starvation. The situation of nursing mothers or women with young children is particularly harsh. Women refugees, particularly those on their own, are more susceptible than men to being exploited and deprived of rights at every stage of their flight. Women are particularly discriminated against and have their human rights violated both living in Burma and as refugees.

Refugees from Burma number around 161,000 in Thailand and 200,000 in Bangladesh. Large numbers of refugees can also be found along the Chinese and Indian borders. Internally, an estimated one million people are displaced. Of this numbers, more than eighty percent are women and children. Those who have escaped the human rights violations inside their country by fleeing to Thailand face further persecution and human rights violations there. In violation of the common international standards set out in the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, to which Thailand is not a party, no person entering Thailand illegally from Burma is permitted to apply for asylum. As a result, no permanent international presence exists within the refugee camps along the border, leaving refugees, especially women, vulnerable to physical abuses by the SLORC/SPDC and DKBA who cross the border and attack refugee camps. On January 3, 1997, over 40 heavily armed troops attacked refugees in Cher Le camp near Mae Hong Son province in northern Thailand. Shelling continued for over 20 minutes during which Ei Pyin, a 19 year old refugee and mother of two children, was killed. In January 1997, the DKBA, an SLORC/SPDC sponsored militia group, carried out a number of attacks on Huay Kaloke, Huay Bon, and Mae La camps in Thailand in which a number of women refugees were killed and hundreds more were injured.

Reports of rape and sexual assault of refugee women in refugee camps inside Thailand have been increasing as women of all ethnic, cultural and social backgrounds find the courage to speak out about their suffering.

13.8. Burmese Women Migrant Workers in Thailand

During 1995 and 1996, dramatic increases in human rights abuses forced many young men and women to leave Burma in search of a better life. Originally, Burmese people saw Thailand simply as a place of refuge, but the booming economy in Thailand also attracted them for potential employment.

Burmese women who migrate to Thailand, much like other people migrating all over the world, move from their homes and families in search of job opportunities in more prosperous areas. Human rights violations in Burma often cause economic hardship. However, determining whether people leave Burma due to the hardships they suffer as a result of human rights violations is not always easy to distinguish from purely economic difficulty. Some migrants have stated that they left Burma solely because of economic hardship. However, many others flee because of serious human rights violations. Many who have fled do not have enough to eat because unpaid forced labor under harsh conditions prevents them from earning a living. The distinction between economic hardship and violations of civil and political rights is not necessarily a clear one; many of these people have been unable to make a living due to continuing unpaid forced labor and forced relocation from their homes. For these reasons, cases are difficult to assess and must be dealt with individually instead of being lumped together and over generalized.

With little knowledge of the country to which they are moving, its language and its laws, women migrating from Burma are in a vulnerable position. The degree to which others can exploit this vulnerability depends to a large extent on the power and information that migrants have to protect themselves. The ability to protect oneself depends partly on understanding immigration laws, the labor laws, and if separate, as is the case in Thailand, the laws regarding prostitution.

13.9. Burmese Women Sex Workers in Thailand

Trafficking of foreign girls and women in Thailand's sex industry is not a recent phenomenon. However, many aspects of the trade have changed dramatically in recent years. Increasing numbers of migrants enter Thailand each year and the Thai government has acknowledged that at least 700,000 illegal migrants presently work

in the country. This figure does not include the girls and women working in the sex industry. Often their work is not officially recognized, so remains hidden with the numbers unknown. However, the unabated demand for foreign girls and women in Thailand's sex industry has continued.

In an effort to escape the dire economic and social situation in Burma, many young girls and women flee to Thailand for jobs. Many women have been forced or lured into working as prostitutes in Thailand. The numbers of young women who have been induced or coerced into working as prostitutes is unknown, but an estimated 50,000 Burmese girls and women work in Thailand as prostitutes at any given time.

Most of the girls trafficked in Thailand are from poor rural families and were lured from Burma with promises of jobs in factories or as domestic workers. The girls travel to the border, accompanied by a relative or companion, and meet a Thai agent who pays the relative/companion between \$400 and \$800. From there the girls are taken to brothels and are effectively indebted to the brothel owner, and must work until they pay off both the price paid for them as well as the agent's cut, plus interest.

These foreign girls and women working in the sex industry in Thailand are violated in a number of ways, regardless of how they were recruited. Traffickers, clients, and Thai government officials abuse them physically, verbally, and sexually. These women are subjected to debt bondage, illegal confinement, and risk HIV infection.

The girls are generally prevented from leaving the brothels. If they do manage to escape, they are often too ashamed to return home and are HIV positive. Before entering Thailand, many of the girls have not heard of AIDS and are not aware that the use of condoms prevents the spread of HIV. Language barriers exacerbate the problem. If they manage to return home, they have few real options, and as a result often re-enter the profession by opening or working in brothels in Burma.

Burmese sex workers who are "rescued" in police raids are often detained by Thai authorities on immigration charges and are held for months in detention centers where they face further abuses. From detention, they are deported to Burma, where again they face arrest under Burma's immigration laws for having left the country illegally and risk being held at Rangoon's infamous Insein prison.

Burmese and Thai authorities have attempted to coordinate their efforts to prevent the trafficking of women and children. One such measure has been to deny single women visas to neighboring countries. However, this is discriminatory and fairly ineffective anyway because most women are able to cross the border without interference. So far, Burma has signed but not ratified the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others.

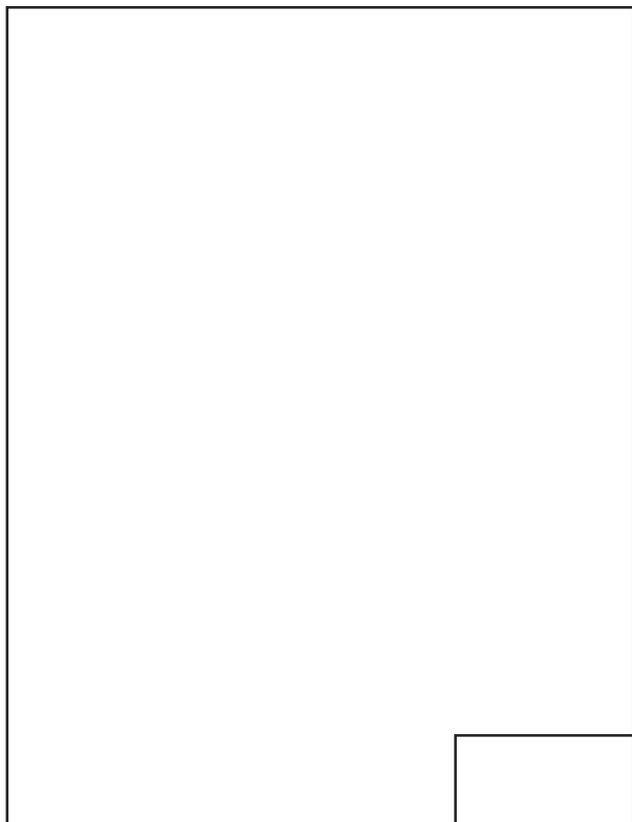
13.10. Burmese Women and HIV/AIDS

While the number of HIV-infected individuals continues to rise in Burma, the general public remains woefully uninformed about its risks, with women suffering greatly from the lack of public education. Prostitution and the risk of HIV are widespread, yet the SLORC/SPDC-controlled media does not supply adequate public health information to the populace in any systematic way. SLORC/SPDC has widely restricted the media, freedom of expression, and the right of the community to participate in public policy, causing major obstacles that Burmese must overcome to acquire information on even the most basic health care questions. The traditional mores in this conservative Buddhist country combined with SLORC/SPDC's repressive nature, prevent prostitution and the sex trade from being publicly acknowledged, which contributes to the spread of HIV and AIDS.

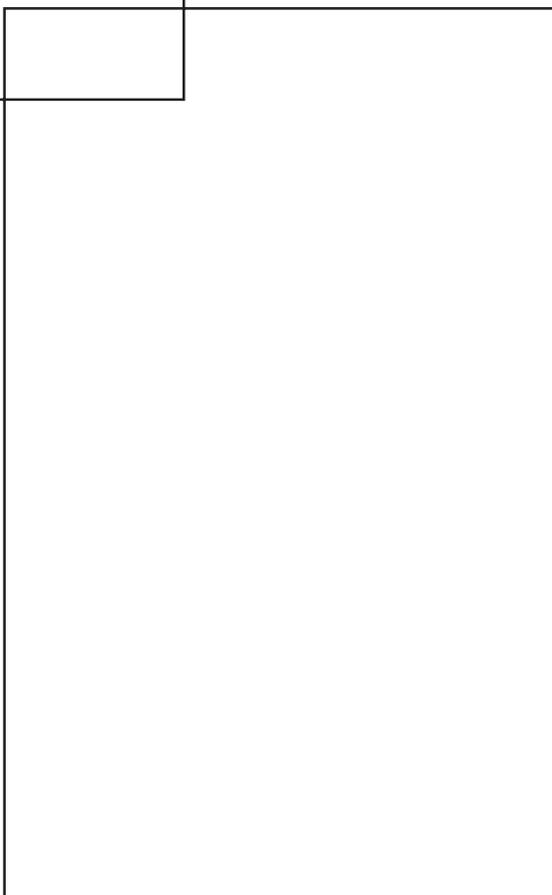
Obviously, stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS and other sexually-transmitted diseases is closely linked with curbing prostitution and the allure of the sex trade. However, even when women are well-informed of the effects and prevalence of HIV they are still not discouraged from entering the sex trade or having a career as a prostitute. Economic upheaval and ethnic warfare in Burma create a powerful incentive for women, even young girls, to enter prostitution to earn money to support their families.

The large number of Burmese women working as prostitutes in Thailand and Burma continues to rise. While the number of active commercial sex workers has increased dramatically in response to social and economic upheavals since 1988, it is nearly impossible to estimate accurately the number of young women involved. Some young women and girls are forced to enter prostitution to support their families, while others have taken it up trying to make a living on the streets. However, much of the sex trade is covert and therefore difficult to analyze; girls as young as 12, under the control of pimps, frequently move among different houses to work or are brought directly to a "client's" home at night. Health officials estimate that women constitute at least one-third of all cases of HIV-infection in Burma (over 175,000 individuals), according to the Southeast Asian Information Network's report that cites survey data collected since 1992. Other reasons for the high incidence of HIV among the Burmese women are the country's poor medical facilities, including unhygienic injections, and the frequent need for blood transfusions after childbirth due to anemia or poor prenatal care.

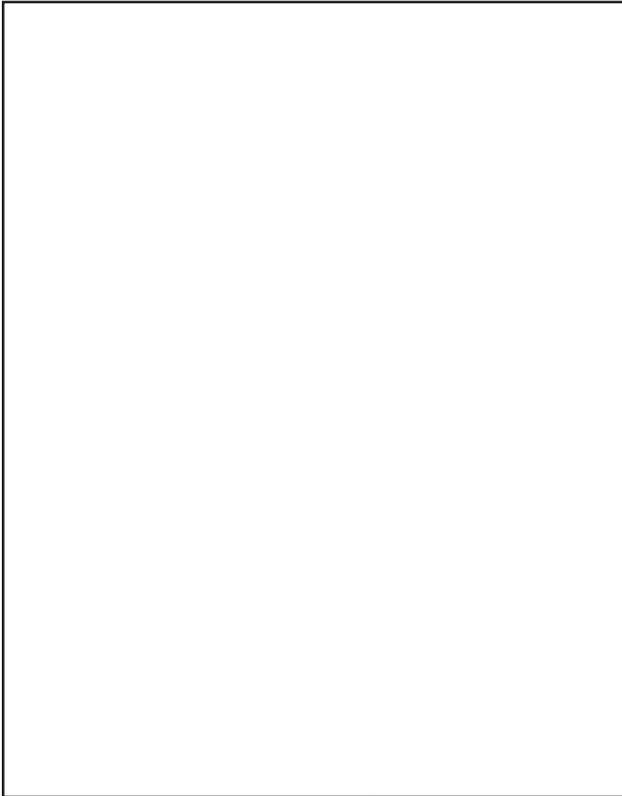
(Also see under "personal Accounts," interviews 1, 9, 12, 23,27, 30, 37, 38, 47, 50, 61, 62, 64, 66, 68, 74, 76, 80, 86, 87, 95 and 99)



60-year-old woman on her flight to the Thai-Burma border in February 1997. She had been walking alone all seven days to reach to refugee camp in Thailand.

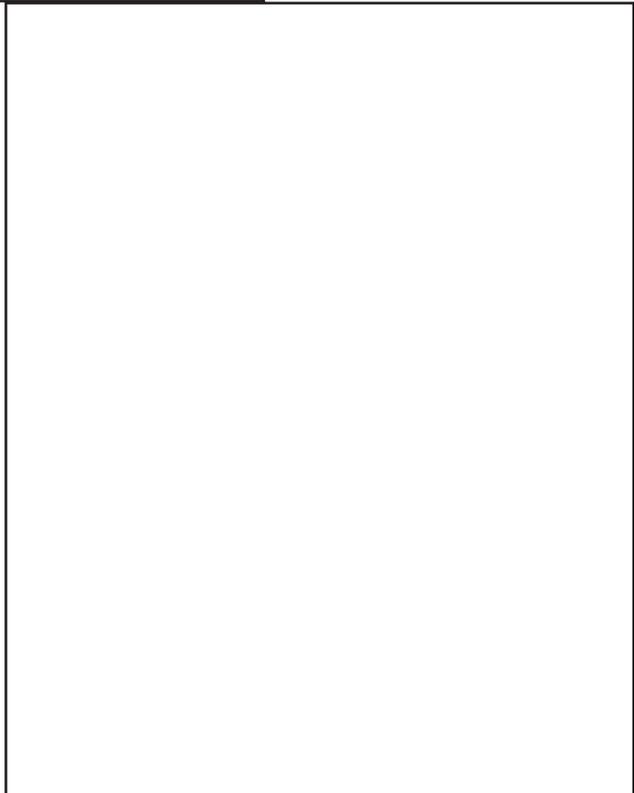


Old woman who has fled her village, destroyed by the military, standing at a temporary site on the Thai-Burma border in early 1997. (Photo by HRDU)



Woman who had just crossed the border into Thailand in early 1997 after crossing the mountains and hiding in the forest for several days after the SLORC offensive. She gave birth to this baby girl two days earlier while hiding in the forest. (Photo by KHRG)

Woman and her baby resting in the forest on their way to refugee camp, not knowing where to go next. (Photo by KHRG)



A Karen mother and her children in temporary site on the Thai-Burma border, after fleeing from the SLORC's major offensive against the KNU in February 1997. (Photo by HRDU)



Young girl seen on road construction project outside Pegu. (Photo by N. Dunlop)

