



Women and children in the circle of Burma's forced labour

Forced labour: Use of women and children in workplaces

Since 1997, the Commission of Inquiry from International Labour Organization (ILO) expressed there had been massive use of forced labour occurred in Burma. Commission of Inquiry conducted testimonies with many victims who were forced to contribute their labour without payment by the government authorities and Burmese Army. ILO also reported about the massive use of forced labour including several women and children in various work-places in the regime (*which was State Law and Order Restoration Council and later as State Peace and Development Council*) sponsored infrastructure projects, especially in the construction of motor road, railway road and dam construction.

Nearly 200 victims expressed their story of 'slavery' under the rule of SLORC or SPDC military regime in various remote areas where non-Burman ethnic nationalities inhabited. Burman people, the majority ethnic people in Burma, were also suffered from the conscription of forced labour in the middle part of Burma, like in Sagaing, Magwe and Mandalay Divisions while the regime built various roads.

In the southern part of Burma, SLORC constructed a 110 mile-long 'Ye-Tavoy railway road' in late 1993 to early 1998. During 5 year long period, the local SLORC authorities and about 15 battalions of Burmese Army has used hundreds of thousands of civilians including women and children from Mon State and Tenasserim Division to contribute their labour.

According to a testimony record expressed by a woman who was suffered in this road construction in 1997, she said,

"LIB No. 406 forced us to work in the road (Ye-Tavoy railway road) for several days. Every month, we (the villagers) were forced to work at least 10 days and sometimes they forced us to work for 15 days until we could complete on part of embankment.

"The embankment was about 15 feet in width and about 10 feet or 15 feet in height (depending on the land level) and we had to fill earth along the route to get that size of embankment. We dug earth alongside of the road, carry them and fill in the embankment. It was too hard in carrying earth and climbing the embankment.

"While we were working there, the army or the authorities did not provide us any food and medicines. We had to carry our own foods and money. We needed to buy medicines from the villages nearby when we were sick and also had to buy extra food because we could carry only rice with us."

Appalling work conditions were serious in most road construction if the civilians were forced to work several days in



Message from

Woman and Child Rights Project
(Southern Burma)

Woman and Child Right Project (WCRP) is a cooperative activity with Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) and it has main activity in collecting the information related to the human rights violations of women and children in southern part of Burma (Myanmar). It also aims to get world community awareness for the protection of the rights of women and children.

The Burma's military regime, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), ratified the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1997 to guarantee the rights to women in Burma. Similarly the regime also ratified Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1991 to guarantee the rights to children in Burma. However, the regime has failed in their implementation of the conventional rights and the human rights violations against women and children are committed systematically.

WCRP is dedicated to inform the world community what happens to general women and children population in Burma and plans to educate them to know about their rights as the following objectives.

1. To monitor and protect the woman and child rights, by collecting information about their real situation by referencing the CEDAW and CRC, and distribute information to world community.
2. To strengthen women and children community, by providing on their rights accordingly to CEDAW and CRC ratified by regime and encourage them to participate in the struggle in the protection of their own rights.

foods and they also built temporary huts in forests alongside of the road. They normally built their huts close to streams or rivers where they could get available water. Due to improper sheltering and impure water, they also suffered from various diseases, diarrhea and others.

They also suffered from malaria in thick forests because of mosquito in the area. That Ye-Tavoy railway construction is the biggest infrastructure project in the southern part of Burma. Even though the SLORC authorities and troops of Burmese Army had conscripted forced labour in small scales since it came into power, no international community or ILO and other labour organizations have noticed on the use of forced labour by the regime.

Recently, the regime always claimed that their authorities just asked the civilians to involve in contributing voluntary labour in some development projects, which could make the profit direct to their welfare. Sometimes, they also claimed that contributing labour to the government is likely described as Buddhist traditions.

In traditions, contributing labour for village's construction, digging wells to get water for the whole village, building bridges over streams and other village activities is normal and most villagers come and work voluntarily because these must make profit for the whole village.

By adapting with these traditions, the regime tried to justify that their use of forced labour was according to tradition and existing cultures. Therefore, the regime tried to reject the accusations made by human rights groups and labour organizations around the world, the conscription of forced labour in various development projects is just traditions.

For the local civilians who are suffered from this constant use of forced labour do not agree with the regime's claims. Whenever there is conscription, the local authorities or army commanders concerned ordered the villagers by the issuing orders or by the instructions to the village headmen or town ward leaders. The civilians who have hardly struggled for survival in daily works are forced to contribute their labour involuntarily or unwillingly. While the civilians are contributing their labour in community works, they are also fed with foods. But when they go and work for the government's development projects, they were not fed with any food and have to take their own foods from their homes.

Why women and children involved in compulsory labour

In the order by the authorities or village headmen, they never mentioned that they did not want women and children in work sites. They just informed to the village headmen that how many labourers they required in which days.

Whenever the authorities or army commanders implemented for a project, they requested at least hundreds number of labourers to work in that project and therefore, they forced the civilians not only from one village but from many villages. On the other hand, the regime's Ministry concerned also set the deadline for these development projects and therefore, they also needed to complete the works in time. Because of that deadline, the authorities or army commanders recruited many available civilians and they do not select any men or women or children in workplace. They accepted everyone who come and work in workplaces.

Many reasons that women and children have to come and work in the

construction are as below:

1. In the constant conscription of forced labour for several days in one month, the men who have to work mainly for daily income could not have enough time to work for the regime's development projects. In most cases, the men are away from homes as they are at farms or in other workplaces and therefore, women and children have to go instead.
2. Sometimes, the order came without notice, the wives and children have no enough time to call their fathers back to go and work in the regime set workplaces. Most orders are urgent and the villages needed to leave to their workplace as quick as possible. Therefore women and children then have to go to workplaces.
3. Sometimes, when the order came to work in development works to villagers, some men in villages are taken by soldiers to work in porter service to carry ammunitions and food supplies. When the men are absent at homes for doing different works for Burmese Army, women and children who are at homes have to go and work in workplaces.

Article 3 of International Covenant on women rights

States Parties shall take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men.

In most circumstances, the men have very limited time to stay at homes and they are always busy. When the authorities or commanders of Burmese Army offer pieces of works to the village headmen concerned, the headmen have to arrange for the urgent request of labour in their village. They could not manage women or children to be excluded in workplaces and therefore, all villagers have to go and work to complete their villages. Due to this conditions, men, women and children in villages had to go and work in the authorities' set workplaces to complete their villages' duties. If they could not finish the set pieces of works, they must face punishment.

In the circle of conscription of forced labour, the authorities or commanders ordered the village headmen to complete their work duties as quick as possible and then the headmen again forced the villagers to complete their duties.

Recent evidences of forced labour includes women and children

In the southern part of Burma, where the majority of Mon, Karen and Tavoyan ethnic people are inhabiting, although most parts of Mon State are under firm control of SPDC and Burmese Army, however, they still have loose control in various parts in Karen State and Tenasserim Division.

Strategically, to have full control in these areas, the SPDC authorities and Burmese Army commanders in the area concerned constructed more new roads or rebuild old roads to have better access into these areas. Therefore, the use of forced labour is generally in road construction.

In southern part of Burma, there are two main gas pipelines existing and some conscription of forced labour also directly related to the security of these pipelines. The first pipeline is connecting offshore, to a onshore gas station in Kanbawk area and then to Thailand. It is known as 'Yadana' pipeline and two large gas companies, United States' UNOCAL and France's TOTAL, involves in taping and exporting gas to Thailand in cooperation with the regime. The second gas pipeline in the area is connecting the onshore gas station, Kanbawk and a cement factory in Myaingkalay village, Pa-an Township, Karen State. This is also well known as Kanbawk-Myaingkalay gas pipeline.



Children are guarding Kanbawk-Myaingkalay Gas Pipeline

SPDC local authorities in Mon State has used hundreds of civilians along the Kanbawk-Myaingkalay pipeline in safeguarding the pipeline. The authorities normally forced the civilians to clear bushes and grasses along the route to uproot all possible places that could use by rebels for hiding. Additionally, they also forced the villagers to guard the pipeline in every set place.

Some incidences of using women and children as forced labourers by the authorities and Burmese Army are as below:

Incidence 1:

At the end of rainy season in lower part of Burma in October 2002, some of gas pipeline embankments are destroyed by water. The pipeline appeared above the earth and the army and SPDC authorities in the area believed that it could be vulnerable to be attacked and demolished by rebel soldiers. Therefore, in the third week of October, the army forced the villagers from northern part of Ye Township to contribute their labour in covering the pipeline. Two military battalions of Burmese Army, LIB No. 586 and IB No. 61 took responsibility to force the villagers from Kyone-paw and Singyi village to contribute their labour in evening and night times. As the army tried to close the cases of using forced labour, they forced them to work in evening and night time. In that use of forced labour, nearly 60% of total 80 villagers are women and children said by a 46 years old Mon woman from Sin-gyi village.

She expressed her experience in workplace as: 'the whole villagers were forced to start working from 2:00 p.m. in the evening time until 2:00 a.m. It was 4 hours in daytime and 8 hours at nighttime to complete their work-duty. On the next day, they forced villagers from Kyone-paw village and let them work in the same evening and nighttime. As most villagers thought the work would be stopped working at 6:00 p.m. and they could have dinner, but the soldiers ordered to work continuously. All villagers did not have chance to take dinner in the first day. But on the next day, the villagers from other villages heard about this news and they brought their own food from homes. The works in the gas pipeline route were: to cover the pipeline route with earth and to clear small grasses and trees along the route. In a designated part of pipeline route, they had to find which parts of pipeline's embankment were tided by flood and then they had to fill them with earth. Again, outside of pipeline route, they had to clear grasses and bushes, because the soldiers believed that the rebels could easily hide in those places and make attack to gas pipeline.'

Similarly, for the security of this gas pipeline, the villagers from both Thanbyuzayat and Mudon Townships are also forced to guard the pipeline from May 2002 until now. In Thanbyuzayat and southern part of Mudon Township area, the commander from IB No. 31 had taken responsibility in forcing the villagers to guard gas pipeline.

During the conscription of the civilians in guarding the gas pipeline, the commander forced each house must guard the pipeline for 24 hours and they needed 3 villagers in one hut, which are built along the pipeline route by villagers' labour. One hut and another was far about 500 meters and there are many huts along the road. The villagers had responsibility to inform the nearest military bases, if they met suspicious things or strangers along the route. As the guarding gas pipeline was as wasting working time and so, many families sent boys to work to set guard huts.

Evidence 2:

In second and third weeks of October 2002, a local military battalion, LIB No. 282 forced the villagers from many villages in Yebyu in the Ye-Tavoy motor road repairs. This road connects Mon State and Tenasserim Division and it is over 100 miles. While many hundreds of villagers including women and children were forced to work in this

Article 8 of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

1. No one shall be held in slavery; slavery and the slave-trade in all their forms shall be prohibited.
2. No one shall be held in servitude.
3. (a) No one shall be required to perform forced or compulsory labour;
 - (b) Paragraph 3(a) shall not be held to preclude, in countries where imprisonment with hard labour may be imposed as a punishment for a crime, the performance of hard labour in pursuance of a sentence to such punishment by a competent court;
 - (c) For the purpose of this paragraph the term "forced or compulsory labour" shall not include:
 - (i) Any work or service, not referred to in subparagraph (b), normally required of a person who is under detention in consequence of a lawful order of a court, or a person during conditional release from such detention;
 - (ii) - Any service of a military character and, in countries where conscientious objection is recognized, any national service required by law of conscientious objector
 - (iii) Any service exacted in cases of emergency or calamity threatening the life or well-being of the community;
 - (iv) Any work or service which forms part of normal civil obligations.



Women involvement in Forced Labours

The villagers from over 15 villages under four village tracts along the road were forced to contribute their labour without for many days.

Many parts of the motor road were destroyed by rain water during the rainy season (from June to Sep-

tember) and the local authorities and army commander in the area always planned to repair the ruin parts of the roads. In this long days conscription forced labour, the men could not go and work everyday for the soldiers. Because most of them were busy at the farms, women and children had to go and work instead.

According to a woman from Pauk-pin-gwin village, 'most men were working in paddy farms or betel-nut plantations because the time is close to harvest season and they needed to complete many works. Therefore, women and children who remained in the villages had to go and work in that road repairs. I think among 200 villagers who were forced to work from our village, over half of them are women and children. Some women with two-months or three-months pregnancy also had to go and work in that road repairs.'

At least a villager was forced to work for three days, but depending on the work-duties some have to work for 5 days to 7 days. Most works in the road repairs were: digging water canals, clearing bushes and grasses, repairing the bridges, and filling holes along with stones (to be ready for tarring) and others.

Villagers were forced to carry their own foods from homes if the workplaces were close to their villages. Sometimes, work places were far from their villages and so they have to carry rice and other supplementary food stuff along with them. When they arrived in workplace, they had to build a temporary shelters and stayed there for some days until they completed their work-duties.

If one household or family could not provide one of their family members, they had to hire a substitute by payment. The hire cost for one person was about 500-600 Kyat per day. Many families which were not afford to pay for this labour cost send their children (boys or girls) to construction sites.

These are some evidences that happened previously. In the southern part of Burma, the conscription of forced labour for various reasons happened every day and in most cases, women and children under 18 years old are forced to work in these places.

Child Porters in Military Offensives

When the Burmese Army launched military offensives along the border,

On December 8, a 16 years old Mon student, Mehm Krat Gakao, was arrested by the soldiers of Burmese Army from LIB No. 506 and was taken for one and half day as a porter. The student attended the school in a Mon National School in NMSP ceasefire area, where there is no fighting with Burmese Army. He was a middle level standard student. When the school closed for two days, Saturday and Sunday, that student went to his father plantation and he helped his father. When he was on a half way, they arrested him.

LIB No. 506 came from Three Pagoda Pass, a border town with Thailand and then they moved into Mon State. LIB No. 506 took bases in Three Pagoda Pass for three months and launched the military offensives against KNLA in the area nearby.

After three months military operation, the troops moved down to Mon State and arrested many porters on the way that they moved. They also arrested the student, Mehm Krat Gakao and brought him along with them. When they arrested him as porters, although he said he was a student but they did not release him.

Then the soldiers forced him to carry 5 shells of 50 MM motor. It weighted about 40 kilograms and it was too heavy for the boy.

During the soldiers was taking as a porter, he also found many young men (under 18 years old) and he said about another ten boys among 30 porters. The soldiers did not feed them with enough food and they fed them only one time for the whole day. When he asked the soldiers to take for a short rest, they did not care and not allow.

On the next day, when the troops passed close to NMSP ceasefire zone, the village headmen from his village found him in the group of porters and asked the commander to release him. The headmen also said he was a student and needed to attend the school. Therefore, the commander released him after one and half day porter service along with them.

Other use of forced labour to women and children

Besides the use of women and children in many development projects: road construction and safeguarding of the regime's business, at the same time, women and children as also used frontline civilians porters for Burmese Army in its old-style logistic system in launching the offensives against many other rebel armed groups.

Frontline porter service is one type of the most serious abuses used by the members of Burmese Army. Villagers are always arrested as porters in their village and they are brought for many days. They are also beaten by soldiers and are not fed with sufficient foods.

Depending on the decisions of the commanders, some of them did not make arrests of women and children to use them as porters, but many commanders arrested women as porters when they could not get men in village. Many boys are arrested by soldiers because the soldiers think they are able to carry ammunitions or food supplies for them.

As always, many women are also forced to do daily works in army base as the women could make better food than men and they also could grow vegetables well for foods to soldiers.

There are many types of works in army bases and depending on the work, sometimes, the soldiers used the men, but sometimes, they used women only. When the army needs the labour to build the military barracks, dig bunkers, make fences, they always asked the men to come and



Map of Lower Part of Burma

What happens to women and children in the battlefield

In the southern part of Mon State especially in Ye Township, the fighting between the Burmese Army and a Mon splinter group, have regularly happened and the local civilians are always accused as rebel-supporters. Due to this suspicion, the shooting into villages, arrest of women to use them as 'human-shields' and as porters, other abuses regularly committed by soldiers of Burmese Army. The following are: the accounts of human rights violations against women and children in the southern part of Ye Township.

News

Burmese Army's motor shell hit an elderly woman

On November 16, 2002, when a joint military operation of Burmese Army dropped motor shells into a Mon village in Ye Township, Mon State, it also hit an elder woman and two men in the village.

The soldiers shot into villages with accusation that that Mon village, Khawza, which is in southern part of Ye Township, was the bases of a group of armed Mon rebels. The soldiers from Burmese Army suspected the Mon rebels were in the village and when they arrived outside of the village, they just hit into a village.

An elderly Mon woman, Mi Kun Parae (55 years old) was seriously injured and another two men were also seriously injured. Some motor shells also hit to some houses in village. Three se-

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When the army needs to cook for their soldiers for the daily basis, seek fire-wood, carry water, grow vegetables, the soldiers forced the women to come and work in the army bases.

SPDC authorities and Burmese Army also used the women and children among in their self-reliance program to contribute their labour. With an objective, to support the soldiers' dependents, all Burmese Army battalions have their own rice farms, rubber or fruit plantations, brick making mills and belonged other small business.

In most agriculture activities, commanders of the military battalion concerned also asked some number of villagers from villages. As usual, they do not ask only men, but all villagers including women and children to come and work in their farms or plantations.

While the men are busy in their farms with agriculture activities, the soldiers are hurry up the villagers to complete their works also. In most cases, as the men are in farms, the women and children who remain in the village go and work instead of men.

Labour demand has increased when the Burmese Army deployed more and more troops in the southern part of Burma. Later in 2002, the regime, SPDC and Burmese Army increased their troop number up to 400, 000 soldiers and therefore, they confiscated lands belonged by the civilians. The more military activities and self-reliance program conducted by Burmese Army's battalions, there are the more conscription of forced labour.



A boy and women returned from contributing unpaid in a road clearance

Related physical and mental suffering

uring the regime authorities and the army used forced labour in the road construction or in their daily work in the army bases, they are forced to work for many days and they are not offered enough time for resting. In most situation, they have to work back-breaking works for several hours without stopping. In most cases, they have suffered from physically. When the women and children are forced to work, sometimes, even the pregnant women are forced to work.

In many cases due to insufficient and less vitamin foods in local areas, the women and children also suffered from malnutrition and additionally when they are forced to work in development projects and other works, they have additionally suffered. In most work places, the authorities or army did not provide them foods and so they have to buy their own supplementary foods in work places. As most families do not have enough money, they also could not buy enough foods.

For a boy or a woman who was forced to carry ammunitions and food supplies during Burmese Army's military operations, they are suffered both physically and mentally. In most offensives launched by Burmese Army against the rebel

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Burmese Army used women as human-shields

On November 9, 2002, a battalion of Burmese Army, IB No. 31 bases in Ye Town, Mon State, arrested about 30 women and used them as human-shields when they moved from that village to another village, Ying-ye.

The two villages is about 10 miles long and they have to walk for 2 hours. As the soldiers of Burmese Army are regularly attacked by a Mon rebel group in the area,

they are too afraid of traveling in the area. The Burmese soldiers are always suffered by ambush attack by the rebel soldiers, therefore they need protection.

Therefore, they took 30 women to walk in advance along with them and actually used them as human-shields. If the rebel soldiers shot to them, the bullets must hit to the group of women first.

A boy hurt in a fighting

On 2nd January, 2003, when the fighting happened between the Mon armed splinter groups and Burmese Army's IB No. 61, a 10 years old boy was hit by pieces of shells and get serious injuries.

Fighting happened again in Khawza village, southern part of Ye Township in Mon State.

He got serious injuries in his left leg, right hand and tight. After the fighting, the village's monks

armed groups, the porters who are taken along by the soldiers are not fed with sufficient food and they are forced to carry heavy loads along the battle-fields for over 8 hours each day. This makes a huge effect physical weakness to both women and children.

In most porter service, the porters including women and children porters have to walk in dangerous conditions. The fighting could occur anytime and they could be caught in the middle of fighting and they faced the most frighten conditions. In this case, the women and children are mentally suffered.

However, for SPDC, who signed CEDAW and CRC have not really cared about the health conditions related to the conscription of forced labour. In CEDAW, although it describes in Article 3 'State Parties shall take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men'. However, most women in Burma have suffered in various fields.

Report III

Why women migrated into Thailand

Labour Demand in Thailand and Migrant Women to Thailand

In Thailand, hundreds of thousands of migrant workers have worked in various types of industries, such as fishing industries, housing and infrastructure construction projects, plastic products industries and in agriculture. Among these migrant workers, nearly 40-50% are the women who left from Burma and work in these industries.

Most works are hard and also dangerous such as the work in construction of skyscrapers. Therefore, Thai employers liked to hire workers from Burma at low rate of wages and no requirement for bargaining of minimum allowance. Similarly in production of sea foods in the area along seacoast, the employers liked to hire women who came from Burma.

Due to great labour demand from Thailand, many thousands of migrant workers including many women went into Thailand to seek works in those various industries.

Entering into Thailand without passport and visa, via the border points was illegal and if they are arrested by Thai police, they must pay fine or will be put in jail for a few months. Therefore, many migrant workers have to rely on the traffickers who could bring them from the border into these industries.

"The pay rate to get into the areas that close to Bangkok or Bangkok is now too expensive. We have to pay 6000-7000 Baht per head and it is still not easy to get into these areas. They put migrant workers in vegetables trucks or other good trucks until we arrived to the designated places." explained by a women migrant workers.

There was regular news came out in the newspaper that the Burmese migrant workers also died on the half way while they could not get enough air for breathing. Although many workers faced difficulties but the Burmese migrant workers tried to go into Thailand to seek works.

Last two years ago, once they arrived into these industries, they could put their names with Thai authorities in migrant worker registration, accordingly to Thai laws. How-



A serious injured boy in the armed clash between rebels and Burmese Army

and village leaders brought him to the nearer hospital to Ye Town. Ye Town's hospital could not treat him properly and then the monks against brought him to Moulmein hospital.

The boy is an orphan and he has no parents. He stays with his grandmother. After he got serious injuries, the Burmese Army's commander borrowed 5000 Kyat (5 US Dollar) from a village headman and then gave to grandmother of the boy for treatment cost.

Grandmother of the boy could not afford to pay for the treatment cost. But the monks and community people planned to help in paying expensive hospital cost.

ever the Thai government does not want Burmese migrant workers to work in most industries for long term and tried to solve the problems. Then, Thai Labour Ministry tried to replace Thai workers in most industries.

However, Thai employers still demand labour from the Burmese migrant workers as they have to

pay low rate wages and do not have to guarantee labour rights accordingly to the international labour standard.



IDPs along the Thailand-Burma border

Developing Thailand and Civil War In Burma

Burma has the longest bordering with Thailand than other countries and the communications and trades between these countries have taken along the history. There are many border entry points along the border and recently many rebel armed forces had control those areas, but later the Burmese Army overran and control the border points which are important for trading.

There are various ethnic groups including main ethnic groups, Mon, Karen, Karenni and Shan people stay along the border and those areas are their homes. Since Burma retained its Independence from British, the civil war broke out in the country and almost the main ethnic nationalities involved in this armed fighting against the central governments. They have demanded for equal racial rights and establishment of genuine civil war.

The civil war in Burma have protracted for over five-decades and there are the increase numbers of IDPs in the ethnic border areas and hundreds of thousands of refugees fled into Thailand.

As the successive military governments in Burma have prioritized to win war

on the ethnic armed oppositions, they have spent a lot of money in war such as purchasing weapons and ammunitions, providing supplies and foods for the soldiers, and spending in military deployments and others.

Due to the huge amount of expenditures in war, the economy conditions in Burma have deteriorated. Burma also became a least developing country in 1987 and the then government, BSPP, demonetization of country currency without repaying process. The civilians angered to the government's economy mismanagement and therefore, they rose up for democratic reform in 1988 pro-democracy uprising.

While Burma has serious and worth economy conditions, Thai has democracy political climate and the country economy gradually developed and more and more industries occurred in Thailand and more foreign investments came into the country.

Thailand's mushrooming industries demanded labourers from the neighbouring countries. Most Thailand neighbouring countries had civil war and the people like in Lao, Cambodia and Vietnam similarly suffered like Burmese people.

In late 1988, after the Burmese Army seized bloody power from the pro-democracy demonstrators, the economy conditions became worst than ever. Therefore, thousands of migrant workers from Burma crossed the border and went into Thailand to seek works, be-

INTERVIEW: Serious Human Rights Violations in Southern Part of Ye Township

December 1, 2002

Our reporter met a displaced woman (Mi Tin Tin, not her real name, about 40 years old) from Mi-htaw-hlar Kalay village, southern part of Ye Township and conducted an interview with here about human rights situation in her native area. Most incidents happened in November 2002.

Q: Is there any people who were forced to go for porter service in southern Ye township ?

TT: There are abbot, head of Buddhist monk in the village (Mi-htaw-hla-gyi), women including pregnant women and children are forced for porter service to Burmese soldiers quite often.

Q: How they were used during porter service?

TT: They were used as human shield and to carry ammunitions. The abbot was shouting along the road to let the Mon splinter armed group to know that he himself carrying ammunitions for Burmese soldiers. One time (after fighting) Burmese Army forced three hundreds villagers including young children age 8-9 from the whole village and used them as human-shield. They started walking from evening to early morning to get to another village, Khaw-za.

Q: What are the SPDC Battalions which take people as porter?

cause they had no employment in their own country.

When Thailand's industries remanded for cheap labour from the neighbouring countries, deteriorated economy conditions in Burma have pushed thousands of migrant workers to Thailand. Among migrant workers, thousands of them were married and unmarried women.

The Reasons why Migrant Workers Moved into Thailand

here is not only one reason, because of worth economy, but many other reasons also forced the civilians from Burma to leave from their homes and seek works in Thailand. Generally, the first reason is the worth economic conditions and hardship in their life.

In Burma, the women can earn only 400-500 Kyat (about 0.5 Dollar) per day and that is too little amount to buy the sufficient foods, clothing and other necessities for their families. To earn this amount of money, women had to work in hard work and more than 8 hours a day. Although most works in rice fields or other work places are similar to men, however, the women get fewer wages than the men. Most men receive about 600-800 Kyat per day. Traditionally, most women tried to help their families and so when their families have difficulties for income, women would like to go and work in Thailand.

In Thailand even the cheapest labourers, women still receive about 100 Baht per day which is about 2500 Kyat in Burmese currency and so they could collect a lot of money for their families in poor villages in Burma.

First only some women from the southern part of Burma went into Thailand to seek works in the border area in groceries shops, in agriculture industries, work at homes or others. Later more and more women went into Thailand to seek works to send money back to their families. However, when most women could not find any work in the border area, most of them migrate deeper into Thailand to seek works again. When some women could send money back to their homes, and more women to migrate into Thailand.

In Burma, the authorities or members of Burmese Army always collected various types of tax from the civilians. Every household even they are poor, they have to pay taxes, which are not described in laws. Especially, they have to pay development tax, porter fee, security tax, etc. Devel-

opment tax involves fund for road construction and repairs, beautification of town, clearance of bushes and grasses along main roads. Porter fee is the regular payment to Burmese Army to avoid to be porters or to provide food costs and other basic requirement for the Burmese Army when they launched offensives or even when they have military patrol in the area. Security tax includes, when the authorities or army required guarding main roads, infrastructure projects: dam and gas-pipeline, visit of their leaders, they also collect money from the civilians to pay for foods and other expenses for those who take security.

As tax-collecting amount is not exactly mentioned in State Taxation Law, the authorities or members of Burmese Army collected money as they like. The amount of tax collection different from one Township (an area of a town administration) to another. When the authorities or army commanders collected tax from the civilians they ordered from Township to Village Tract and then to villages.

One household even in town or in village in the southern of Burma, they have to pay 2000-5000 Kyat every month. The amount of payment varied is depending on the activities of the authorities or Burmese Army. As every family have to pay these illegal tax, many families faced difficulties for survival to buy necessity for their homes. This situation has forced many women in villages and towns to migrate into Thailand to seek works.

Besides the economic reasons, thousands

INTERVIEW

TT: The Battalion No. 106 (infantry battalion) and No. 31. Only about eight soldiers had left after four time fighting took place around village and about 30 SPDC soldiers were killed. The first fighting took place at about 10AM.

Q: Is there any killing and how the villagers were killed?

TT: Yes, Nai Tun Shein about age 48 was shot to death while he was working in his farm. After the fighting took place, SPDC soldiers were very angry and then they rampaged to villagers. Nai Tun Shein died on spot and Nai Ong 35, Nai Shwe Hman, 60, and his wife had wounded.

Q: How is about torture and rape?

TT: There is no rape as we know, but many torture. Ms

Mi Hla, age 30, Ms Mi Sein, age 46 and a young man were beaten by gun, kicked by jungle-boots and the soldiers put the bamboo-stick on their knee and row over. One novice had lost one leg and another man had lost one leg.

Q: Why did they torture the civilians like that?

TT: Because they cannot speak Burmese. They did not understand all what the Burmese soldiers said to them.

Q: Are there the SPDC soldier loot properties owned by villagers and how ?

TT: They ordered the villagers to gathering at the sport ground and then they went to every house. They looted everything they needed.

Q: How many properties were looted?

TT: I cannot guess but they took 60 porters to carry the things they looted.



A group of migrant workers in a border town

of women also went into Thailand because of daily violations of human rights committed by authorities or army. Forced labour is the regular violation against labour rights in Burma and most civilians including the majority women in villages, village tract (a group of village) and towns are considered as 'slave'. Women who could not tolerate as forced labourers for longer time leave from their native homes and migrated into Thailand.

In many parts of Burma's border area, the fighting between Burmese Army and ethnic armed force has been on-going situation and serious human rights violations related to suspicion of rebel-supporters, including arbitrary killing, rape, arrest, torture and many other degrading treatments still has committed by members of Burmese Army.

In every battlefield, the most suffering people are women and children. They are the groups of people displace and then have to leave their native homes in any time. They also face the most worst security condition and suffered from food-shortage problems. As they are similarly suspected as rebel-supporters, the soldiers also killed them. Sexual violation, rape, also happened in the rural areas.

The displaced women and their families gradually move to the border and then migrated into Thailand. Most Thailand's refugee camps do not welcome the new displaced people in its camp because of its policy to not accept the people who are not fleeing from serious fighting, but the policy is not based on 'found of systematic persecution'.

By studying many cases of women migration to Thailand, normally women have no choice except to go into Thailand for their survival or to escape from dangerous situation in their native homes.

The regime's oppression against migration

In 2002, when many women told their stories in Shan State about the rapes in their native places which appeared in a report 'License to Rape' produced by Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF) and Shan Women' Action Network (SWAN), the regime, SPDC, has attempted in various ways to top women migration into Thailand. The military leaders have a big concern of more and more reports came out with the evidences of human rights violations committed by State authorities, law enforcement authorities and soldiers.

To implement this new policy to stop women migration into Thailand, Burma's military regime uses their hand-picked 'Myanmar Women Affairs Committee'. This Committee started their activities by ordering all Township, Village Tract and Village authorities to stop all migrant workers to Thailand in their own Township areas. The Committee also ordered law enforcement authorities, police officers, to arrest all people who are working as traffickers.

The Committee also put up many posters in various towns and villages and ordered to punish those who tried to go into Thailand. Most activities are done only by using force to migrant workers and traffickers. The Committee have not really talked with women leaders in the community why many women leave to Thailand and why.

Additionally, this Committee also went to Shan State and declared there was no evidence of rape in Shan State against the report 'License to Rape'. Then the members of this Committee also went to Mon State and Karen State and instructed to the women to not release misinformation to the international community.

Acronyms	
BSP	Burmese Socialist Programme Party
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the child
ILO	International Labour Organization
IB	Infantry Battalion (of Burmese Army),
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
LIB	Light Infantry Battalion (of Burmese Army),
SLORC	State Law and Order Restoration Council
SPDC	State Peace and Development Council
SHRF	Shan Human Rights Foundation
SWAN	Shan Women' Action Network



Deported migrant workers in a border point

As the regime and women Committee instructed the local authorities to stop the migration of women into Thailand, those authorities also involve abusing power and mistreated women. They arrested some women who they suspected as human traffickers are also arrested and they took a lot of bribe for release.

Some the law enforcement officers arrested many women on the half way before they arrived to border and detained them. During detention, some women are also raped by the authorities or police officers.

As an instance,

"On June 14 of 2002 and an high rank official from Ye Township's SPDC immigration department raped a 22 years old young Mon woman after they arrested her with suspicion of illegal migrating to Thailand.

The Deputy Chief of Township immigration department, U Than Win (age about 40 years old) and his group checked the passenger from all trucks in Ye river bridge, and arrested 23 Mon villagers who were suspected migrating to Thailand, including 22 years old unmarried woman from Lamine village, Ye Township, Mon State.

After the arrest, many arrested villagers paid bribes to officials for their release. But the young woman from Lamine village could not pay in advance and said that she would pay later.

However, U Than Win did not accept her suggestion and brought

her to a house and raped her the whole night.

In the morning, he released the woman to return home and the women's parents informed the officers from military intelligence to handle the case. But until now, they could not know about the punishment of that official."

Although the SPDC and the Committee issued the order to stop migrant workers to Thailand, however, the corrupted officials still take money from the migrants and let them go. In the initial operation, although there was less number of migrated workers but later on more and more migrants still has migrated to Thailand.

Because of new restriction, the migrants have to pay more to authorities and police. If they pay less, they could be arrested and so they have to pay more.

In December 2002, more and more migrant workers went into Thailand by bribing to the authorities and police officers. When migrant workers traveled to the border area, they have always passed the checkpoints. When they arrived there, they just negotiate with the authorities and pay them.

In every border point, at least 100 migrant workers have arrived and passed into Thailand every day. There are about 5 border points along the border areas and many of them tried to arrive to border points, where they can easily enter into Thailand. Migrant workers also used many other jungle routes to reach to the border points. Among those migrant workers, about 50% are women as Thai seafood, plastic products and agriculture industries demanded just women labourers.

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