

Discrimination and Violation against Women in Burma

The population of Burma is 58 million people. More than fifty percent of the population is women. In order to promote the women's affairs, MNCWA (Myanmar National Committee of Women Affairs) was founded July 6, 1996 by the current military government, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). The formation is also to response its ratification the 24-resolution Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1997.

There are eight sections to MNCWA's working plans. They are: women and education, women and health care, women and domestic violence, women and the economy, women and culture, women and children, women and media and women and environment. There are also other organizations working for women in Burma, such as the Maternal and Child Welfare Association and Women and Sport. However, most of those organizations are not independent bodies to independently monitor the rights of women and violations against women.

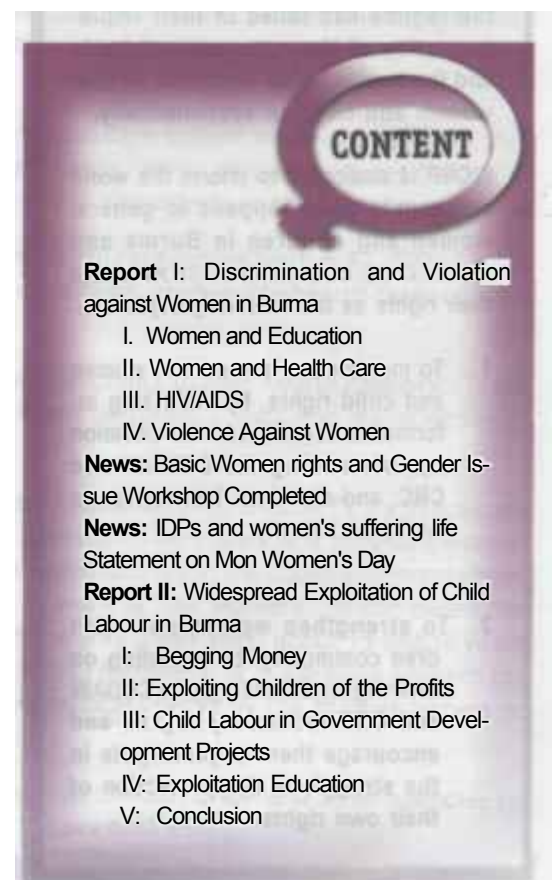
However most of these women's organization are the total control of the regime and they are not independent to protect women's rights. However, some information from those groups are somehow reliable. MNCWA play a main role of protecting and guaranteeing the rights of women in Burma.

But many discrimination against women in various fields: such as education, health care, economic activities, employment, etc. MNCWA itself could not enable to fight against many discriminations that happen become of traditions and cultures of the Burmese people.

I. Women and Education

According to a MNCWA report in 1988, 82 percent of men and 71.3 percent of women are literate. The 26.49 percent of women who were illiterate were mostly from rural areas. In accordance to CEDAW, men and women should have equal opportunities to study because Burma is a member of the convention.

The system of education in Burma is unbalanced because it has different minimum scores for men and women in attending higher university. For instance, to study at medical school men must score 450, but women must score 470 marks. This discrimination by score is not only in medical school. Other schools and universities such as the engineering university, follow the same system. Thus, many women are only educated as college teachers. There are women who have the ability to study in higher levels, but



Message from

Woman and Child Rights Project
(Southern Part of Burma)

Woman and Child Right Project (WCRP) is an 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's 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 systematically.

WCRP is dedicated to inform the world community what happens to general women and children 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.

they can't learn what they are interested in because of the limitation of marks. Therefore, there are fewer female university students every year.

The MNCWA has planned to eliminate women's illiteracy. However, there is no free education in Burma. CEDAW states that women must have the right to gain an education and to gain experience working in their field of employment. But until today, MNCWA hasn't implemented any kind of plan to help women's education. A few percentage of women in capitals, cities, and towns could get opportunity.



A woman teacher in Mon national school

MNCWA says there is no racism, religion or gender discrimination. However, mostly men are selected when people are going to study abroad by the regimes higher education institutions. For instance in the Philippines, the overseas educational program is based on religion. Ten people have a chance to study abroad each year. Eight people are men and two are women. There are other countries like the Philippines, such as Thailand, that favor men for study even those countries have democratic rights and guarantee the equal rights between men and women.

In the country like Burma, where the men-dominated regime controls the State power and no guarantee of democratic rights, the women have been constantly for higher education and scholarship in abroad.

Additionally, there is no assessment conducted by the MNCWA about the drop-out rate of girls in various schools, although it is found a very high drop-out rate in the state primary schools. Both boys and girls are required by the parents for help in their works or due to school systems, they have to leave from the schools in early ages. On the other hand, many poor families have to withdraw girls, after they could not afford to pay for tuition cost for their children. 'Tuition' is a private class in Burma and most of these classes are run by the school teachers to find the extra income besides their low salaries from State schools.

Estimation of the number women in the literacy rate is not really accurate. Many ethnic women living along the border under-development areas, could not find schools, the children including girls are fleeing from armed conflicts for years. Those women can not read and write at all because they never have opportunity to stay in a stable school to know basic writing and reading.

MNCWA also fails to conduct informal education or adult education, to increase the number of literate women in the communities. It never conducts assessment among the women in the communities to know the accurate literacy rate among women. While many women could not get education through formal education program, those women could not easily find employments in their own communities and in cities and towns. Then,



Chairman of MNCWA. Dr. Khin Win Shwe, wife of the current regime PM Gen. Khin Nyunt

the women have been constantly remained as 'day or hard labours' in farms, in orchid plantations, in factories, in fishing industries, etc.

II. Women and Health Care

MNCWA (*Myanmar National Committee of Women Affairs*) has undertaken the aspect of *health care*, sharing information and taking statistics in the health sector. It has also educated people about HIV/AIDS and sexual relationships, as stated in its recent report to CEDAW.

The Maternal and Child Welfare Association provides clinics in rural areas. But the health care programs or clinics located in some rural areas do not have adequate medicine. Health care prices are high and most poor or have-not families cannot afford to pay the treatment costs. As implied above, health programs have not yet been implemented at

all in some areas. As world health organization (WHO) reported, Burma has a worst health care standard in the world.

The Maternal and Child Welfare Association's hospital charges 40,000 kyat (about 45 US Dollar) for each child-birth in there. Furthermore, patients have to purchase their own medicines private medical shops. They have to pay bribes to receive care in a corrupt system of Burma. In Burma, the labour cost for a woman is about 500-800 Kyat (- 6 - 9 US Dollars) per day. So that the child delivery cost is so high if compared with Thailand.

In Burma, since the military government. SPDC could not provide the adequate and necessary medicines in the hospitals or clinics, the patients have to buy everything from private medicine shop. There are many evidence that the women are suffered in hospitalization, and as an instance,

One story is that of Ma Own Mar, She was pregnant and was going to have an operation in a hospital in Mon state. She was not provided good treatment because she could not afford to bribe the doctor. Her infant died in the hospital during the operation. Since the child died, it seems the MNCWA could not protect women and children with its health care program. (Editor's note: if the patients or their family wanted for the urgent medical treatment, they have to bribe the doctors and hospital officers.)

Although there are many cases like Ma Own Mar, and dissatisfied against the health care system in the hospital, but they have no rights to complain any cases to the local MNCWA office in towns or villages, although they have set thousands offices countrywide. Corruption in Burma has taken roots for several years and it also affects to the health system.

The infant mortality rate in Burma is 1.3 million of the total population. The death rate during birth is 92, 500, 13,800 die before age five years. Death rates are increasing because of poor living conditions, inadequate health care services, lack of access to health care services and lack of basic health education.

Eighty percent of women were born in rural areas where no available hospitals and clinics so that health care price is too high. Searing in villages in where no sufficient treatments due to insufficient hospitals/clinics and medicines is so dangerous and vulnerable for women and babies, claimed UNICEF.

Abortion rates have been increasing, according to government TV. Health care education programs on TV try to educate people about abortion. The program makes people aware of the dangers of abortion. There are many pregnant women under 18 years old in Burma, and abortion rates have jumped because of the economic crisis in the country. Poverty have forced thousands of young women to join in brothel businesses and agreed to work as 'sex workers'. If compared the previous 2-3 years, the brothels in Mon State has been grown suddenly. Even the girls under ages: about 15 and 16 years old became 'child sex workers', to support the survival of their parents and family members. It is a greatly concern for those 'sex workers' because they are not regular provided health cares and medical checks by the brothel owners or health care service.

MNCWA never makes such reporting to the CEDAW or international bodies such as UNICEF. UNDP and other agencies to prevent harm health conditions affected to young women, who are lured in the sex businesses.



III. HIV/AIDS

The HIV epidemic in Burma is spreading daily. According to UNAIDS, the number of people has risen to between 170,000 and 420,000. Women and children are particularly affected by the disease. Women in some Asia region are getting HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, at a faster rate than men. according to one UN agency. Furthermore in Thailand, one of the countries worst affected by AIDS, 6.9 times as many men as women were infected with HIV in 1990, UNAIDS official Adriana Some-Sagcer told the Associated Press.

"Globally, women account for half of the 40 million people living with HIV/AIDS", said a spokesperson from ESCAP (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific), There are many women in Burma who are infected with HIV as well. Women who suffer from HIV live in secret conditions and they don't talk openly about it to other people. Even among the family, people don't discuss about how to protect themselves from HIV in sexual relations", added by the spokesperson.

People are almost completely ignorant about the disease, "HIV virus being transmitted from injection is less than before. Many HIV virus transmissions are transmitted through sexual relationships", said a doctor from Mudon, in Mon State.

One former Mon medical worker accused the clinics and hospitals in Burma that those institutions do not a system of screening blood or testing blood to know whether the donated or bought blood are infected with HIV. He found that some patients also suffered from HIV/AIDS because of blood transmission.

"I found a woman who attended hospital for difficult baby delivery and she had to receive blood transmission provided by the hospital. I can confirm that she has no HIV-virus before attending hospital. After taking blood transmission for six, she was found with HIV Virus. How is surprise!"

Generally, Myanmar (Burma) Red Cross Society and all public hospitals takes blood donations from all walks of people in the country and provide to patients who need blood. As the health system has been deteriorated in the country, no system is fixed to test bloods including HIV test for the persons who donated blood.

The population of women infected by HIV is increasing accordingly to the information collection from the communities. They are particularly vulnerable to HIV infection because of unprotected sexual relationships with infected male partners who transmit diseases from other countries. Many people in Burma including Mon State are working in neighboring countries such as Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore, so that they received HIV virus from those countries.

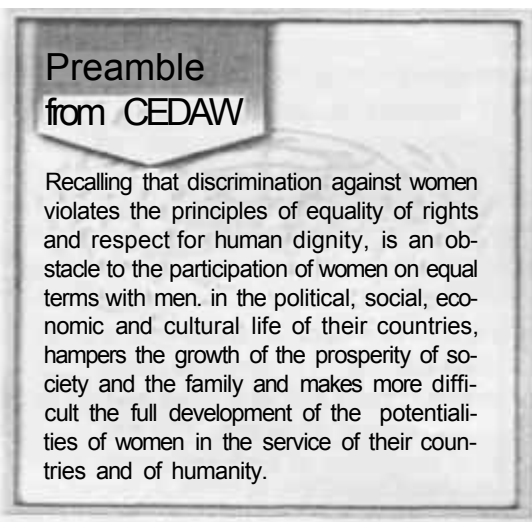
IV. Violence Against Women

Violence against women is not a major issue in Burma, says MNCWA without any deep research and proper evidence. There has been still violations against women in the communities, in workplaces, in conflict zones. Abuses against women are called physical abuse, mental abuse, sexual abuse, sexual discrimination, and dominating rights. There are two main kinds of violence against women are categorized as below and they are:

- (1) Domestic violence and
- (2) Violence in community and society

There are many difficulties in discussing violence against women, because many women are not aware of women's rights, even if their rights are violated by other people in forms such as torture, forced labor at home, rape, etc. Exposing the these types of violations made them 'shames' in the community and so that many women who were suffered from sexual violations: such as harassment and rape try to Keep silence. Even the women who are tortured by their husbands at homes try to stay away from other women and keep silence. This information closure is also related the traditions and cultures of the Burmese and Mon people. .

'There is less violence against women in Surma. There is only mental



abuse. We *are* very proud to be women in Burma. The government protects the rule of women ". insists the MNCWA report. Actually, MNCWA has not actually dared enough to do deep and systematic assessment about the violence against women in general.

However, the WCRP have found some cases of domestic violence and violence against women In the communities and society. Some of the problems have not be practical solved by the regime or the MNCWA.

a. Domestic Violence:

Eighty percent of families in the society of Burma have faced domestic violence because of the economic crisis. The average monthly income of a professional worker - teacher, university professor or government official - is less than 10,000 kyat or \$13. Inflation has more effects on normal people's living standards. Prices of meat, vegetables and palm-oil have been constantly rocketed up. The real problem is that wages and salaries are not rising as prices of commodities increased. One *pye* (2 kilograms) of rice 400 kyat, one *viss* (1.5 kflograms)of chicken meat is 2,000 kyat, a *viss* of pork (1.5 kilograms) meat is 1,800 kyat, an onion is 800 kyat and the oil price is 1,600 kyat.

Because of unemployment, lack of income and additional rocketed price of commodity in the economy, the people in Burma easily get stress and the fighting between men and women often occur in almost families. Women in general suffer more from the beating and torture by their husbands. If compared with the people in the rural villages, the families in town have faced more difficulties in term of raising money and more domestic violences happened. Although MNCWA admits that domestic violations in Burma, but complained it is not a serious problems. However, the MNCWA does not take any responsibility to deal in this problems.

Domestic violations has also taken in various place, not only the villages or areas under the control of the regime, but also in the border areas, where the armed ethnic oppositions have control.

Another domestic violence story involves a Mon woman who was a teacher with three children who lived in Japanyatwin village, near the Three Pagoda Pass border town in southern part of Burma. Her husband did not have an employment. Sometimes he got angry at his wife and beat her. Later he married a second wife. His first wife attempted to divorce him. She had to pay him 700 Bant for compensation because she called for the divorce, in fact, the woman should get compensation from her husband to help take care of her three children.

Another story comes from Tagoni village, Mudon Township. A husband worked in a government department of Myanmar Agriculture Products Trade and his salary was 6,400 Kyat per month. He had two children. His salary didn't allow him to pay even for his children's school costs. Thus, his wife worked in the industry of swing. She came home late sometimes. Her husband stirred the conflict and beat her because she was late coming home. The husband went gambling after these conflicts, and had sexual relationships with other women while he was out of the family. He didn't support the children with his salary, instead of supporting them, he demanded money from his wife. If the woman didn't give it to him, she was beaten. The woman went to the Township Peace and Development Council's court. The court decided all properties have to be given to the husband because the woman asked first for the divorce. Furthermore, the court decided that both husband and wife have to support the children equally.

By learning from the above evidences, there is no justice for the women in all communities where are both under the control of the regime or in the border area. The court never favours to the women and never ask the background information and situation why the women attempt to divorce the men. Even in the legal system of Burma, there were very less women lawyers who completed Degree of Laws from the University.

These evidence show that MNCWA has no any influence to change legal system that is monopolized by men which officially describes discrimination against women. MNCWA never found any forum for all women to speak out what *are* the discrimination or violence happened at their homes in order to protect women. May be, the leaders of MNCWA is quite afraid of the military men to set up these programs for the protection of general women. Besides women are suffered from domestic violence, women are also suffered in the communities or society.

b. Violations in the Community and Society:

The regime always claimed that as Burma (Myanmar) is a Buddhist country, the people are loving peace and tolerance accordingly to the teaching of Buddha. However, although most troops of Burmese Army *are* Buddhists, they always cruel treatments against civilians including women. But many women are systematically discriminated against, raped in armed conflict, forced to marry, forced to contribute labor, and killed for having sex. The majority women in the communities could not totally rely on the government's protection of the government, because it has never protect any women

who are violated by their soldiers.

Accordingly to the reports from Shan women and Karen women organizations, women are constantly raped in the conflict zones and the violators are always getting free, and the regime or MNCWA never take any action or investigation for the rape cases. Similarly to other ethnic women. Mon women are similarly suffered from rape. Sometimes, when the information about the rape disclosed up, the MNWCA leaders came and tried to silence the cases.

Take the story of Mi Bin Zan She was 18 years old. One early morning in July 2002, when she was cooking food to donate the monks, she was raped by a soldier from LIB No. 62 which bases in Thanpyuzayaut town, Mon State. After being raped, her parents were shot by the soldiers in order to close the evidence of the rape case. MNCWA president Dr. Khin Win Shwe arrived Thanbyuzayat township after the news of rape came out from the media in order to appease the killed family's relatives. She just provides the relatives with 200, 000 kyat (- 210 US Dollar) and some assistance because she worried that the international community would know more about rape in Burma.

These are the violations against women in the rural communities. Although the members of MNWCA could reach to the areas like the above-mentioned village near Thanbyuzayat Town, however, it does not make any investigation and itself try to protect the Burmese Army soldiers' mis-behaviour against the ethnic women. Such sexual violations against women in the communities is only happening in Mon State, but also happened in the cities, towns, and villages which are under total control of SPDC. The leaders of MNWCA have tried to keep women victims silence and protect the violators. For those women who live in areas where the MNWCA reaches, the women are suffered many times than those in SPDC control areas.

The recent military operations against a Mon splinter group in southern part of Ye Township have created a great suffering to Mon women in the rural villages. The commanders of Burmese Army, who involved in this offensives use Mon women as 'comfort women' like the Japanese soldiers used the Korean women during WWII. They forced the villages' young women to stay with them at night to entertain, to give messages, to make food and provide liquor, to have sex, etc. (Read in *The Plight Issue No. 4/2003 - the Article: License to Rape in Mon State*)

As a result, many women from war conflict zone had to flee from their homes. Hundreds of Mon women from southern part of Ye Township have fled to the border areas to avoid be used as 'comfort women' for Burmese commanders. These are not the practices taught by the Buddha and are opposite to the Buddha teaching - to sympathize and kind to the persons weaker than us.

VI. Women In Economy and Culture

'There is no sexual discrimination against women in Burma; we are trying to promote women to have economic power", says the MNCWA in its report. Women receive incomes from weaving, sewing, government services, and selling things in

News

IDPs and Women's suffering/life

In Burma, about one million out of 50 million people are IDPs, and among them, mostly included are women and children. The areas mostly contain IDPs are Mon, Karen, Karenni and Shan State.

Since 1962, when military's ruling began, the conflagration of civil war was intensified by the successive military of rules, In 1970, "4 cuts campaign " military operation of Ne Win regime made rural people flee to the border areas. + cuts campaign means, the military- regime's Burmese army planned to cut a types of supports: such as food, information, recruitment of guidance; term the civilians to the rebel soldiers.



A displaced woman receives clothing from an aid agency

the market. More men actually manage in major businesses in various sectors and are also managers in several government departments.

Men and women should be equal and have the same salary, according to CEDAW. However, the regime in Burma even does not adopt 'equal employment opportunity' policy for all labour country. The discrimination against women in workplace still remain the same even in the government belonged factories or workplaces, in agriculture sector of Burma, men and women receive different salaries, even though women are working as men and work at the same hours. For instance, in reaping the grains of paddy crops, while men earn 800 kyat per day, women only earn 650 kyat. Not only the agriculture sector, women always receive less salaries than men even for the same works even in other sectors.

Since the regime does not set employment policy to prevent the discrimination against women, the employers in both government departments and private sectors have always set the first priority for men in the selection criteria or in their minds.

"Women need to maintain their own culture", says the MNCWA. If the Burmese women marry foreigners, they do not become citizens. It doesn't allow women to marry citizens of other countries, but men have the right to marry women from other countries* accordingly to the regime's policy and MNCWA's implementation. This stance for cultural maintenance of the Burmese women set by the regime. If a woman married a foreigner, she may be accused as 'supporters to imperialists' by the regime and therefore, they washes the brains of MNCWA's women members to not marry to foreigners. This always relates to a blame against the pro-democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. who married to a British professor.

Culturally, there has been still many discrimination against women occurred in workplace, employment opportunity, free choice of marriage, the MNCWA never takes as a serious consideration to fight these discrimination in term of laws and enforcement.

VII. Women's Urge

There has been no accurate and analyzed women rights report presented to the international community - especially the Committee of CEDAW, because all women organizations in Burma, like MNCWA and Maternal and Child Welfare Association are working under the control of the military regime. The associations only give trainings, such as *an* trafficking women to the people in Rangoon and the military personnels.

Without changing the ruling system of the current military government in Burma, women's rights will not be respected and general violations against women must continue in both urban and rural areas. When there is a democratic government occurs in Burma, people might be aware of women's issues and more women will understand their own rights, involve in protection of their own rights, fight for justice in legal system, involve in many activities. Currently the regime still does not allow any independent women's organizations to be formed.

The Burmese Army's demanding sansome, burning up and forcedly relocation villages., raping women, executing summarily the civilians etc, have been increasing the number of IDPs more and more. Due to Burma Army's forced relocation, burning up paddy farms and houses, and confiscating land and, the victimized people left with no means for their livelihoods many -- them became IDPs.

From the end of 2003 up to now, in 2004, the miserable situations of IDPs are going from bad to worse than before, In southern Ye Township, the villages such as Khawzar and those near by were fenced as like as cattle pens and the people were not allowed go out of their villages.

Due to restriction on movement their farms and gardens, the people in villages become lack of food. So much the worse is that the village girls were compelled to act as model girls in fash-

ion shows, to do chores in the military column encampments. and to make the beds for the army officers. Moreover, the women going out to collect firewood, vegetable, making cook in the battalion bases are prone to be raped by the soldiers,

Therefore young women fled their villagers to Thai -Burma border area, and then sought for jobs, through labor-broker, as illegal workers in Thailand. Also, those poor women frequently suffer sexual harassment of their employer and harsh treatment of Thai police.

These women and children are having difficulties in their education, health and livelihoods, Along Thailand- Burma border from southern part of Shan state to Tenasserim Division, there are about (1) million displaced persons of ethnic Mon, Karen, Karenni, Tavoyan, Shan, Palaung, Pa-Oh ethnic people who suffered from war. Some ethnic people also set up their own relief organization and tried to help those IDPs.

News

Basic Women rights and Gender Issue Workshop Completed

Basic Women rights and Gender issue training course was delivered for five days from 3rd to 7th March. The training attended by 10 person each from different organizations was conducted in a place of Thai-Burma area, a local Mon women's organization organized this training and also Mon Women and Child Rights Project (WCRP) and a volunteer trainer from England took part in this training program.

The aim of training is to have women in Burma be able to develop the program for the protect of the gender discrimination in their communities, after realizing their own rights and how they are being oppressed through gender discrimination.

This training course includes topic such as Human Rights, Women rights, Gender issue and collecting information on violence against women etc. Mostly women the interested topic are those of Women Rights and Gender issue.

"Before now, I had merely heard women rights. I don't know that those rights are existing in the world. When I become aware of equal rights to education, it reminded me of my childhood. I had been education up to 4th grade. My family has 4 siblings altogether. I am sixth of them. My parents let only my elder brothers continue their schooling. I was withdrawn from school for looking after my younger sisters and brothers. At that time, I did not understand anything like now. My mother said that it was enough for

girl, if she could ensure household chores were done well, and if she got married, she would be fed by her husband, so only boys had to be let continue schooling. Moreover at 18. I wanted to seek earning through machine-sewing, and learnt machine sewing at a tailor's house in the opposite ward of ours. But my elder brother forbade me to go there. He gave a reason that if I returned home late, at dark. I would be at risk and did not let me attend machine-sewing training. That was why I have been lack of education right now," said a trainee who is a resident of Halockhoney (Mon Refugee resettlement Camp).

Generally speaking, Women in Burma do not know about their right. They are trying to live as good as women in accordance with the criteria determined by their social environment. They are being subjected to any other people. Therefore, they have a mind set lacking self-confidence and security. What is more is the issue of marriage on the part of women regarding this,

"In our Mon state, people returned from working in Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore are desperately admired. They put up 3/or/4 million kyat about 3000-4000 US dollar to the prospective brides' parents for marriage. So, parents in our village marry their daughters off. without asking them whether or not they love or like the bride grooms to be. Some men who returned from Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore are likely to be infected with HIV/AIDS. As forcedly made the marriages naturally, are not convenient and there come out domestic violence. There still is not any case in which such problem is help solve by the surrounding people or both side relatives, with or without laws. Regarding this, the attitude of our community is like that we will nor interfere in matters of other families. Traditionally, are we created with an admonishment that women must always respect men and regard her son as a lord and her husband as a god?" said a trainee from Thanbyuzayat township, explaining the situation. It is expected that, through these trainees, the forums on Women Rights and education program must have increased in source areas of Burma and Through the education the problem of sexual harassment of women and domestic violence could be solved.



Basic Women rights and Gender issue Training

On behalf of women in Burma, WCRP believes that CEDAW and international women's organizations are needed to know what is really going on with women in Surma who are living under the control of the military regime and women in the conflict zone, in order to get this information, CEDAW and the international women's organizations are better in finding real facts about women's rights violation inside Burma and along Burma's borders. Because MNCW's reports to CEDAW committee is not reliable and incomplete.



Widespread Exploitation of Child Labour in Burma

Burma has signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 16th of July 1991. It recognizes that every child has the right to survival, development, protection and care, and to achieve active participation within the community. In accordance with the convention, the promotion and protection of the rights of the child and of human rights *are* not only the responsibilities of the government, but also of the society. However, the Burmese government does not comply with the convention and neglects child rights, instead of promoting them as essential developmental skills.

Accordingly to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the rights of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any kind of hazardous work, interfering the child's education, or harming the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. In the tradition definition of Burma, the one who is under 18 years old is recognized as 'child'.

It is hardly possible for people in Burma to take all responsibilities for the child rights in the society. Parents have to find jobs instead of taking care of their children due to economic crisis in the country. For the survival of the whole family members, all the people in the family have to work. The income per one person is only between 500 and 700 kyat (0.5 - 0.7 US \$), it is only a price for rice per day. The living standard in urban areas is more developed than in rural areas. People in the rural areas, search fruits and vegetables in the forest and sell them in order to get their income for the family to survive. Some people, both from urban and rural areas, are seeking job opportunities in the neighboring countries such as Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. More children in the urban areas work outside of the houses than those who are from the rural area. Some children become beggars beside the road and some of them work at restaurants and gardens. Some young women were lured by brokers and trafficked to work at the brothels while they were looking for jobs in the illegal sectors in Thailand.'

The plight of the children in Burma although has been serious like India, Pakistan, China, where a lot of children bond labour are used, there has been less attention to Burma.

In Burma, the child labour are exploited in the following cases.

I. Begging Money

As the economic situation gets worse, more and more children in Burma become beggars on the road, at the teashop, at bus stations, at harbors, and at railway stations. Some children join a group of gang, and also beg money at the festival. "It is very difficult to force them out from the market when they beg money," said a stu-



Child labourers in a brick-making factory

dent in Mawlamyine, Mon State,

Some of the children are grown up in orphanage and some of them are abandoned on the roads. There is a gang, organizing those children and force them to beg money, to sell flowers and sing songs. Many Burmese people in the urban areas have not cared this type of exploitation and the regime's sponsored CONGO also never take a serious action to fight this exploitation. If children can not beg money as much as the gang wants for each day, they are suffered by torture and starvation. Moreover, the gang forces children to steal clothes around the neighborhood. Mis-behaviour put to minds of the children are also quite dangerous for their future life.

When children beg money at the teashops and restaurants, some shop owners treat them badly and threaten them not to come into the shop. Children beggars are criticized by the community people for their behaviour without finding the root cause. The rights of the child are not fully recognized by the society. So that they have difficulties on their physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. Some people have no sympathies towards those children, and blame them as dirty beggars.

A regime's formed organization, Maternal and Child Care Association have failed to do assessment and research why so many children are forced to be beggars and provides them assistance for schooling and better shelters.

II, Exploiting Children for the Profits

The country's economy is collapsing, children have to work at the teashop, restaurants, the construction site, and to work as domestic workers. According to ILO reports in 2000, there were 1, 228, 000 child labor in Burma. Among this huge number girls are 53,4000 and boys are 69.4000. Those children were as young as between 10 and 14,

The number of child labor is increasing. Shop owners hire children because they pay less price than the adult labourer. For example working at teashop salary is 3,000 Kyat (~ 4 US \$) per month, and children work from 5 a.m to 10 p.m. For an adult worker, the salary working at teashop is 6, 000 Kyat (- 7 US \$ per month. Shop owners who use from child labor not only give enough salary, but also they do not give accommodation for child workers. Some children have to sleep on the road, at the bus station, or railway station or under the bridges in urban areas. Children sell water on railway station, and work at cigarette selling have income is only for 400 and 600 kyat per day.



Child labour in a workplace

Many people were looking for jobs in Thailand after the unemployment rate is gradually increasing in Burma. In the workplace of Thailand, the children are not accepted in factories, so that they have to shift work at farms and gardens. Some workers, who work in wood factory in Mae Sot, Thailand, let their children worked in farm and garden in order to get jobs while they are in Thailand. Children who work at the Thai farms or gardens also had to spray insecticide and it harmly affects to their health.

III. Child Labor in Government Development Projects

Children are also forced to work for road construction, building bridges, railway construction as unpaid workers. Road construction used force labor including children with age under 1. In 2001 Mon State, when the authorities of Moulmein city authorities built a self-help road in city quarters, many children have to work in the early morning from 6:00 a.m. to 12 a.m., and in the afternoon from 1 ;00 p. m to 5 p.m. Average working hours per day is 8 hours.

Children received the payment as low as 100 Kyat (0.1 US \$ per day even though they worked for 8 hours. During the construction, Maung Khin Win and Maung Naing Win who were under 11 years old, were hired to construct. Children have to work even is in the bad condition under sun heat and rain. Similarly, the people were forced to work for cleaning in the quarter of the town in Three Pagoda Pass, Thai-Burma border accordingly to the program of city beautification

program. When the military orders villagers to give their free labor on a project, the men and women are often have no chance to go, as they are busy with their own works for survival. Then, the children are sent in these workplaces.

Additionally, in the guarding the railway, motor road, gas-pipeline, factories and others to prevent from the attacks" by the Burmese Army, children are also forced to be guards. They are instructed that if they found the activities of rebel soldiers, they might have to report to the Burmese Army nearby.

According to Human Rights Watch in Asia's report - "Burma: child rights and the rule of the law" in 1992, it also supports the use of forced labour from children in the government developmental program such as road construction, building bridge, railway construction, etc. There were at least 2 million people were used forced labor by the Burmese regime. According to the report, Burma is a country that remains in the world which uses massive force labour including exploitation of child labour by the State authorities.

Statement on Mon Women's Day

12th waxing day of 12th lunar month,
Mon /Burmese Era 1365
(March 7, 2004)

Today, we celebrate the Mon Women's Day. We celebrate this special day on the birthday of Mon queen Mi Sao Bu, who is the most respected woman in our Mon history. Queen Sao Bu is the only sovereign queen in the history of all Burma. She ruled the Mon kingdom of Hongsawaddy in the 15th century AD. During her rule, the nation was peaceful and prosperous. The glory of the Mon nation during her reign is unforgettable. In honor of the queen, we celebrate her birthday as the Mon Women's Day.

The objectives for our first celebration of the Mon Women's Day are;

- to raise awareness on the importance of the roles of women in society,
- to encourage women's participation in decision-making,
- to join the international women's community to fight for women's rights and for ending discrimination and violence against women, and
- to encourage Mon women's active participation in the struggle for peace, freedom, and justice in our homeland, Burma.

On the Mon Women's Day special occasion, we demand the ruling military junta in Burma to;

- stop all human rights violations in the country
- stop all abuses and violence against women, especially in the ethnic non-Burma territories, and bring all perpetrators to justice
- fully comply with the Convention on the Elimination of ALL Forms of Discrimination against Women
- solve the prevailing political problems in the country by peaceful political means undersigned;



Members of Mon Women's Organization of America

Mon Women and Child Rights Project (Liberated Area)
Mon Women's Organization of America
Mon Women's Organization (Canada)

