

The Pledge

LET WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN BURMA

Human and Child Rights Program Document Series

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REPORT :

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. However, the Burmese government does not comply with the Convention and neglects child rights.

In addition, Convention states that children have right to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any kind of hazardous work, interfering the child education, or harming child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral, and social development.

Because of the economic crisis in the country, parents do not have sufficient time to take care of the children. For the survival of the whole family unit, everybody in the family has to work. The income per person is 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. More children in addition to working to support their families and children like adults, are often pressed into service to carry out forced labor for the military - Burmese Army.



Child Labour in a Road Construction

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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.

I.Children and Beggars

Children in Burma go to places of public gathering such as bus and railway stations, plazas and marketing centers and have been begging for survival due to economic crisis in the country. Another reason is the lack of family planning in the communities that creates children to become beggars. As the population in Burma is growing and the price of goods has been rocketing, the parents have to struggle hard just to survive and they cannot look after their children. That is why the children have been gradually started to beg. Some parents who are too poor to survive carry their small children and beg anywhere.

According to a situation in Moulmein:

Ma Amar a young child-mother, from Moulmein the capital of Mon State, she became a beggar as her husband did not support her financially after he totally became an alcoholic. She had no choice and finally decided to become a beggar and put her shame aside. She has also supported her husband for treatment.

She said that many families in Moulmein especially in Myay-ni-gone city quarter have become beggars due to the fact there are no jobs to work to earn money. Numbers of poor families have been gradually becoming beggars in Mon State's capital.



A female begger and her child

Some of children are grown up in the orphanage and some of them are abandoned on the roads. There is a gang organization those force them to beg money, to sell flower and sing songs. Many Burmese people in the rural areas have type of exploitation and the regime's sponsored GONGOs like **Myanmar Woman and Child Care Association and Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation** never take a serious action to fight this exploitation.

II.Exploiting children for the profits

Even the children who are in school ages must to do any work to survive such as waiter in small restaurants, tea and coffee shops, clearing bushes, furniture shop and other shops, etc. Tea and coffee shops and restaurants are more accepting of children as they can have to pay less money even though the children work the same hours as adults. Some children who worked in stores

have to carry heavy loads. Some children in the harbor of Moulmein, the capital of Mon State, have to carry loads, packs and bags to get them to stores and shops, which has long distar

Some tea and coffee shops in Rangoon, the capital of Burma, in th between 7-10 years as waiters. They must work from 6:00 a. m Dollar) per month. Not only children in Mon State but in the whole tea and coffee shops, farms and many other places.

According to a situation in Ye Town,

Ma Yxx Mxx Mxxx, age 16, from Kabyar restaurant in Ye after finishing 8 Standard (Grade) and now she is earning money to her parents. She involved in sex work to earn m not like her job.

Many big stores in Mudon Township of Mon State hired children a such as packs of cooking oil, onion, garlic and chili. A mother of a child who works in the store said that she wants her children to attend school, however she cannot survive without her children's support after her husband died. She was too weak in health and sick many times to work hard. She has to rely on her children's income for her family to survive and her medical treatment. "I have to ask my children to work although I do not want them to work," said the woman with tearful eyes. She also said that she only spends 1000 Kyat (~ 1 US Dollar) per day while the prices in the market are rocketing day after day.

According to a Mon relief workers on the border who have their programs inside Burma, the situation in Mon and Karen States is gradually deteriorated since over three years ago.

III.Children in Furniture Industries

Children have been working not only in tea and coffee shops but also in furniture industries, which are established inner Mon State and along Thailand-Burma border. Some children work in the industries as part time workers after school.

On the other hand, many students left from their schools after they could not afford to pay money to schools. After children were forced by school teachers to do duties after school time, they could not work to support their families. Then their parents cannot pay the tuition fee, which is the situation that pushed them to leave schools.

There are many children that have been working in furniture industries in Mudon Township, at the central Mon State, which produce a lots of funiture materials which are exporting to other parts of Burma. There are also many children in other Townships in Mon State that have been similarly working in furniture industries.

In border town, Three Pagodas Pass, the children have been working in many furniture industries, which export the wooden products to neighboring Thailand. But the border's trading situation is always unstable and sometimes, because of the conflict between the authorities of two countries, the children who worked in many of these industries faced unemployment and loss of livelihood.

According to a situation in this border town:

Maung Min Oo age 12 who is working in a furniture industry in Three Pagoda Pass town, left from his native homes with his family and came to the border town to find jobs after they unemployed in Burma. He has earned about 30-40 Baht (1 US Dollar) per day. But he and his family have faced problems after the Thai government stopped exporting furniture goods since over 7 months ago. The family had to find some day labour activities in town in order to survival.

The situation in furniture industries is dangerous for workers because dust of wood swirling around all the time. They breathe it in and can easily get pneumonia. The situation is more worst for children who have to work in there over 8 hours a day in unhealthy and polluted surroundings.

Article 32 of Con- vention on the Rights of Child

1.States Parties recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.

IV. Another Kind of Jobs

Some children have been working on other employments. Some of them collect abandoned plastic packs, including garbages, which are thrown by the people or city municipal authorities. They wash the abandoned packs and juice cans then sell them to other people, who try to recycle them. Some of them become as vendors selling toys in the public places and some of them cut grass in gardens. Even though they are young children they have no opportunities attending the primary schools as they need to help their parents to earn money.

However, the military government said in its statement that it provides free primary education and children are happy in schools. But in reality for the children, they are too young to work in order to survive and help their pover children.

According to an instance:

Maung Tet Naing Myo age 11, who sells toys is the youngest boy in his six-member family and his parents could not support him to attend school after finished Standard (Grade) I at a Primary School. He can sell more toys during festivals and special events in winter and summer times; however he cannot sell during the rainy season. He has to do another kind of work such as collecting bamboo shoots in the jungle with his parents. He looked thin and has sun burnt skin.

According to a young child, age 12, who live in a village near Thai border said his father was sick of TB and his mother has a small baby to take and so that they cannot work to earn money for survival. He has to work instead; collecting abandoned plastic packs, drinking water bottles, beer bottles and some short and long iron bars and various garbages. Sometimes he

earned around 20 Baht (0.5 US Dollar) per day sometimes 50 Baht, which must all be used for the family's daily expense. (Note: the people of Burma who live along the border with Thailand always use Thai currency, Baht, as it is hard currency if compared with Burmese currency, Kyat.)

He added that the rainy season is a very hard situation for their family to survive. Sometimes his family can eat only boiled rice with a small amount of rice and a lot of water, and sometimes they go without eating any food. There are six family members and he is the eldest one. Some children go and work on rubber plantations while some of them work in gardens as hard laborers.

According to Maung Mon, age 13, who has been working clearing bushes with his grandfather, who lives with his grandfather after his mother died and his father went to work in



Children are working with the parents

neighboring Thailand. He left school in age 8 due to the fact his family could not support him. "I felt sad when I saw students go to school", he said. Maung Mon lives in Annawa city quarter in Ye township, Mon State. He said that he can read a little Mon and Burmese language.

There are many children who have the similar lives like Maung Mon and the regime have failed to assess why the drop-out rate in primary schools are high.

V. Helping in Families Works

Children have not only been working in their domestic works, but some of them have to work in other families' works. They work in fields and farms, or taking water from the streams to their houses, cooking in the house, looking after cattles and harvesting paddy. Most works are so hard in the least developed country like Burma.

They have to support their families as part time labor after schooling. As Burmese people are relying on water from wells, the children have to carry water; some of them have to carry very heavy loads of water. They have to take the water from deep wells and then carry it to get to their house and small plantations near the house. They have to give water to cows near the house. They have to water vegetables and fruit trees.

Even though their families own farming or other domestice works, in order to save money or because of poverty they have to use children. However, it still means that the children are using forced child labor. The children in rural area have to work more often to help their family business. Some children who have contracts with cow owners in the village must look after the cows the whole year and they become illiterate.

Some parents who are believing in old traditions do not want their children to go to school. They believe that government education cannot support their children's future and forced their children to leave school in early ages even though they can support it financially. They complained that nobody in the village survives by their education and knowledge from schools. Most of young educated people in rural areas do not work as government servants because of low wages.

Scarcity of labour in Burma because of the labour migration to Thailand also force many children to replace for adults in work places. Because of unemployment in Burma, hundreds of thousands of young men and women migrated to Thailand to seek works. As young adults go to work in neighboring Thailand and other countries, the children, instead, have to work in domestic works at their homes or in many work places.

VI. Conclusion

Even though the children are the future golden people, they have been the victims of the country's economic, social, and political crises. The government does not take responsibility for children's education and health. The situation makes boys and girls to leave the country to work in neighbouring countries in the brothel businesses, fishing industries and construction works which are so hard for them.

Children are vulnerable group of people both in the government administrated areas, in the conflict areas specially they are displaced because of war and more vulnerable in Thailand where they are recognized as 'illegal'.

'Hard labour' also ceased the physical growth and have negative impacts to their health as many children start to work at their homes or farms about 10 years old. Parents do not have time or consideration that they should not use children because they never receive any information about child rights from the government or from GONGOs.

As long as the military government is not taking care children seriously, the exploitation on the child labour will have continued and many of them will lose their opportunities for the education.



REPORT:11

Rights of naming and national recognition for Children

According to the SPDC, there are 135 nationalities and races in Burma and they each have their own culture, literature or language and traditions. They have rights to name their children in their own languages, study their own language or mother tongue and they to be recognized as a nation or race.

As Burma ratified the Child Rights Convention, all of its citizens regardless of different of nationalities and races have the same rights of naming and recognition as nation or race according to Article 7.

The article mentions that every child has the rights of naming and registering after birth. Birth Certificate means registering the date of birth, name of parents of the baby. Providing birth certificates is important proof for children when they start to enter to school.

As every child has the right to become a citizen of the nation where they were born, the authorities concerned with this matter need to recognize them as a citizen according to the country law and international law. The children born in Burma have the rights of naming and recognition as a national race or nationality by their own language.

In rural areas where the ethnic nationalities live, the children have no legal process of registering to become a citizen because there are no doctors and nurses appointed by government to make birth certificates or process citizenship applications. They just rely on traditional nurses who have skill in delivery and then the children are documented by writing the date of birth on a palm leaf and bamboo-stick-plate. Their parents have not documented some at all; due to the fact they cannot read or write in any language. Even though the children born in Burma are from different nationalities or race and process of delivery, they are all Burmese citizens and have the rights because their parents are Burmese citizens.

SPDC writes in its statement, "The society... color." However the ethnic children in Burma still face many kinds of difficulties and discrimination.

For example a Mon national named by his parents Mehm On Jana, which identified him as Mon. Later his name was changed to Min Win Aung by the schoolteacher, which identified him as Burman when he started to attend primary school. The schoolteacher claimed that they had difficulties calling him by his Mon name that was why they wanted to change his native language name. Mehm represents young age Mon and Min is represents young age Burman. Jana faced problems for he did not understand the Burmese language.

Additionally, he faced problems with the registering process to have a citizenship card when he got to eight grades standard or 13 years old. He had no birth certificate to prove that he was born in Burma; all he had was a bamboo-stick-plate birth certificate that was written by hand. He, at the same time, had the problem of having two different names in Mon and Burman. He finally was named in Min Win Aung and his citizenship card showed Burman identification. He had known that he was discriminated racially when he grew up.

All nationalities in Burma faced those kinds of discrimination. Changing names from ethnic nationalities to identity Burman identity is common in Burma, for the SPDC has been implementing assimilation and Burmanization policies in fields of nationalism. The SPDC adopted the policy of 'one nation, one language and one country for decades'.

For Mon traditional identity, they put 'Mehm' before young men names, 'Nai' before adult name and 'Mi' before women names. So, it becomes Mehm Ong Jana, Nai Ong Jana and Mi Kmompakao. We establish if they are Mon and men and women by seeing Mehm, Nai and Mi before their names. For ethnic Burman, they use Maun, U and Ma; ethnic Shan use Sai for men and Nan for women while ethnic Karen use Saw for men and Naw for women etc.

Ethnic nationality university and college students still have no rights to use their national identity name. According to a university student, his name was Min (Mon use Min instead of Mehm when using and writing in Burmese) Win Aung Mon when he attended primary school and his name was changed to Moun Min Win Aung Mon, when he got his certificate after finishing high school. When he filled out his university entrance form he used Min Win Aung Mon but when he received the certificate there was 'Maung' before his name automatically.

Another female university student said that her name was Mi Sajan and her family called her Sajan with Mon pronunciation, but her name was changed to Ma Thazin, which represented ethnic Burman identity. She repeatedly claimed to her schoolteachers that her real name was Mi Sajan, not Ma Thazin, which had the same meaning to both Mon and Burmese languages. Her parents said that the Sajan and Thazin was the same meaning but just different language and pronunciation. But her parents mentioned that Mi and Ma are different in ethnic Mon and Burman. Not only Sajan faced the Burmanization but her Mon and ethnic nationalities friends shared the same experiences.

When the SPDC go to rural areas where ethnic nationalities live to take a census, many ethnic people lose their national identity due to immigration officials registered them as Burman by putting Burman identity of Maung, U and Ma before their name. Their citizenship cards described that they are Burman even though most of them did not understand the Burmese language.

In the Mon State, the majority of the population is Mon and the minority are Karen, Tavoyan and Burman even though their citizenship cards described Burman. This is a weakness of SPDC national census statistic. We can also say this is

discrimination and Burmanization. However, SPDC said in its statement that there was not any discrimination in the country.

Another problem is Internally Displaced People and Refugee children who fled from civil war along with their families and are actually stateless children. As their parents fled from the country for many reasons: their lands confiscated by the SPDC, being forced to do unpaid labor, extortion of money, beatings, forced to be porters, rapes, and political movements, the children have faced a lot of difficulties for the future of their life. They finally became stateless children and had no hope for their future. Some of them were lured by human traffickers from Thailand and left the refugee camps.

Most of young Mon children in the IDP and refugee camps do not attend school. They have not enough land to grow food, not enough schooling to be educated, and a small guarantee of life to survive in the future. What will happen to them if they have not enough food, education and guarantee of life? Is life very hard for them?

Conclusion

The civil war in Burma began and protracted for over 5 decades was based on the lack of racial rights of non-Burman ethnic nationalities. The basic political ideology behind the restriction to the rights of naming and national recognition is based on 'Burmanization' policy, which has been secretly adopted by the successive Rangoon governments since 1962 after the Burmese Army seized 'political power' from the democratic government.

Ethnic nationalities have known the policy of Burman dominated governments with a plan to assimilate all non-Burman people to be Burman, the conflict dealt with this policy has remained an unsolved problem in Burma.

Burma's military regime, SPDC, is currently holding a National Convention (NC) and drafting a Constitution. But in most articles relating to ethnic nationalities, the regime does not put any point or articles that describing and guaranteeing for the rights of naming and national recognition, cultural rights, linguistic rights and education rights to the people belonged to ethnic nationalities.

The policy of 'Burmanization' is still influencing in the new Constitution. It the

News

Forced Recruitment of A Child Soldier

(September 2005, Yebyu Township, Tenasserim Division)

On September 25, 2005, Lt. Col. Thet Aung from LIB No. 561 lie an old Mon man from Kywetalin village of Yebyu Township to adopt his grandson but instead sending the 15 old boy to military training.

After his parents left to Thailand to seek works, a 15 years old ethnic Mon boy, Mehm Chai, was living with his grand-father in the village. On September 25, when the troops led by Lt. Col. Thet Aung arrived into village and he took a rest near the old man house and met the boy. Then he inquired about the boy and knew that his parents are in Thailand.

Then the commander asked to meet with village Chairman and Secretary and asked about the boy. Then he informed them that he wish to adopt as his son and provide sufficient education for him. He also added as he and his wife do not have any child, they are happy to raise him and his wife also needs a child for her.

Then, he also asked the boy to follow with him and promised that he would pay him 500 Kyat per day for daily expenses. As the boy's grandfather did not know what could happen to him and the village headmen were afraid to refuse, they offer the boy to the commander.

Then, the commanders also asked 10000 Kyat from village headmen for the expenses of the boy. But accordingly to the latest news, the boy was sent to Military Training School in Kaleing-aung Sub-town on the same day, by giving him 15000 Kyat to use at training school. But the village headmen did not know about it.

But later, the village headmen were informed by a low-rank commander or area intelligence officer U Win Myint that the boy was sent to military training school.

U Win Myint admitted to village headmen that the boy was sent to training school by the commander, Lt. Col. Thet Aung, for his future improvement in his life. He said it was not useful for him to live on in village among many difficulties and his life will be better one day in the future in the Burmese Army.

Although the village headmen informed about the true situation of Mehm Chai to his grandpa, but he could not find way to take his grandson back.

Accordingly to the local source, every battalion is instructed to recruit soldiers and send to military training school. If a battalion commander has no capacity to recruit new soldiers, he will not be promoted. Hence, Lt. Col. Thet Aung sought the boys who have no parents or orphans, and sent them to Military Training School.

(Based on: The Mon Forum, September 2005)

Burman dominated military government or new government after the National Convention, is continuing for the implementation of Burmanization policy, the conflict between the government and ethnic people will not cease.



REPORT:III

Plight of sex workers in Burma

Burma ratified the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1997, but it has still ignored the conventions chapters. The SPDC found itself in control of the Women Affairs Committee and the Mother and Child Care Organization. As the organizations have been recruiting new members forcefully, the new members have no skill in implementing the activities. The organizations did not support the women victims. They themselves were violated for they were forced to become members of the organizations.

The people in Burma, who live under the control of the SPDC that has committed human rights abuses regularly, have suffered in every field. They faced high prices in the market and inflation that is why there are not enough jobs. They must to do hard and unsafe work to earn money. The workplaces are not safe. There is looting and stealing happening regularly in urban area such as in Rangoon due to high prices and inflation. Wages are not high enough and the government servants have to work outside to earn money, some children are involved in looting.

There are many kinds of taxes and extortion by many kinds of groups including religious groups, which have a mandate from senior commanders. The people cannot continue to study in school. As there are big families in our society, only parents cannot support to the whole family. The eldest person in the family who is strong enough to work physically must to leave school to work. They leave the country to work in neighboring Thailand, China, Singapore, Malaysia and other countries. Even some women have good jobs in other countries, but some of them are forced to work in brothel houses.

I. Become a sex worker

Due to economic crisis in the country, women have left the country gradually to work neighboring countries, especially Thailand, while some of them work in the border area. The people who have good jobs can send money to their families but some cannot support them because of low wages. Some women who work in the garment factories in Rangoon earn a small income and they cannot support their families, they have only enough money for themselves.

The following is one young woman's recollections of her experience becoming a sex worker after coming into contact with human traffickers.

"My name is Ma Mxx Mxx. I am a native to Rangoon and I have six brothers and sisters, there are nine families. I left the school in four grades standard to support my family. I got married when I was 18 years old and divorced. I now have two babies. I worked in garment factory in Rangoon from 7:00 a.m to 9:00 p.m. including the weekend. There was no free time or holidays and I also had to work over time. I was disappointed because the factory gave me only 8, 000 Kyat (8 US Dollar) per month. While I was disappointed with the job I met with a human broker or trafficker through my friends. The broker said that I would get more money by working in a border town restaurant, at least thirty thousand Kyats per month. The job is not more hours and not hard, also the broker promised that he will arrange for the trip to get to the border and I have to repay him there. If I sleep with the guests I will get more money, but it was up to me. When I got to Three Pagodas Pass the broker took 4000 Baht from the restaurant owner that I would have to pay back. To my devastating surprise the restaurant was a brothel house. I was crying for I did not want to work as a prostitute as I had never dream of that kind of hard life."

"Most of my friends did not want to work as a sex worker, but they had no choice to pay back 4000 Baht to the employer or brothel owner. I did not work as a sex worker in the brothel house and the owner did not want me to stay long due to the fact he did not get back any money from me staying in his brothel. He let me go out to try to get money to pay him back, I went to Sangkhlaburi in Thailand, and my employer in Sangkhlaburi (a small border town in Thailand) paid the money back to the brothel owner then took money from my salary. I am not happy staying here in Sangkhlaburi and I want to go back to Three Pagodas Pass. I have to send money to families who face difficulties to survive."

There are many women who must to work as sex workers to support their families and their siblings to attend school. This kind of physical work is easy to get money. Women who were sold by human traffickers could work as a prostitute to pay money back. However, some owners and heads of sex workers want to exploit them by not giving money to them. Some

of them leave the brothel due to the impatience of the owner and with the brothel owners also threatened them.

Some brokers or human traffickers persuaded the sex workers. Some parents sell their young daughters to rich Thai men. A rich Thai person and got 20, 000 Baht, even though her daughter being sold. If a young woman loses her virginity, it means she is 13- 14. Their customers also believe that having sex with them Thai men are from sex workers' families. They were sold because

Some young women in Rangoon want more money to spend but they think that by being sex workers they can earn more money than to border town of Three Pagoda Pass to work as sex workers in industries due to economic hardship.

They said that to come to border town of Three Pagoda Pass is a long road; there are over 20 checkpoints along the road from Mon State to spend and they have to borrow money from their friends and some of them have to borrow from human traffickers, which is very dangerous. They have to pay back the borrowed money and some of them had their income cut from their employers by their traffickers more than they borrowed.

Some women were sold to brothel houses by human traffickers due to the fact they cannot pay back money that they had borrow along the road and they are actually not sex workers. Some women can earn just 700 and 800 Baht per month in Three Pagoda Pass when they work in the restaurants and the situation pushes them to become sex workers. Most of restaurants in Three Pagoda Pass have sex workers. Hoping to earn more money to pay back the borrowed money and to support families inside Burma, some of women have totally become sex workers. Some sex workers in Burma came to border town and hope to earn more money to support their families inside Burma.

According to the sex workers in Three Pagoda Pass more sex workers come to border town to earn more money for they cannot support their families by working inside Burma. Economic crises in the country force not only sex workers to go to border area but many young people to leave the country to work neighboring countries. Economic crisis, high price of goods, extortion, and human rights abuses are the main reasons for young people to leave the country.

How can the government reduce women from being involved in the sex work cycle? How should the government create jobs for the young women to prevent the sex worker life? Sex workers said that they don't want to take the risks with their life but what will the government plan to do for them, some sort of special program?

II.Appalling Cases of Sex Workers in Brothel Houses

Sex workers who live in brothel houses are more depressed than women working in industries. They were inhumanly treated by brothel owners, and scolded when they have no sex customers coming regularly. When they cannot follow the wish of their customers such as Thai police and Burmese authorities who base in the border areas, ceasefire group soldiers. They were threatened by hitting their heads and slapping in their faces. Some people who take them outside the brothels did not pay money even though they had sex the whole night. The sex workers still want to go outside of brothel because the owners are more cruel than their customers even though they sometimes have no money, but good food.

One sex worker from Three Pagodas Pass shares her experience:

“there are multinational here in Three Pagoda Pass. They treat us in a brutal way. Some of them punched us and threatened us with guns. I am afraid of their guns but on the other hand, our owners are very dangerous. We also get threatened when we suggest customers to use a condom. We must be afraid of everybody and I am so depressed. Some of us are so depressed because we don't want to do this kind of work. We must have relations with brutal people or customers. We must follow everything what they want. We must follow their wishes and we must be patient about what they do to us. When group of sex customers came and take us to go somewhere, the situation is bad because I cannot appeal to them to make sex smoothly, not in brutal way. After they get drunk the situation is very bad for they don't treat us as a human being.”

Ma Mxx Txx Txx from Three Pagoda Pass told about her experience: *“my friend told me that she had sex with a group people and gang sex. Sometimes they hit me even though I spoke to them politely. They can kill me during this time*

Article 14 of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

1. States parties shall take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which rural women play in the economic survival of their families, including their work in the non-monetized sectors of the economy, and shall take all the appropriate measures to ensure the application of the provisions of the present Convention to women in rural areas.

Invitation for Feedback to Our Publication
"The Plight"
of Women and Children in Southern Burma

Dear Readers,

With objectives to monitor the situation of women and children in southern part of Burma and to empower them with the rights described in CEDAW and CRC, which are both ratified by the current military regime in Burma, our "Woman and Child Rights Project (Southern Burma)" came into existence since 2000.

Under this project, "The Plight" Newsletter is produced quarterly and this newsletter especially describe the general situation of women and children in Burma and how their human rights are violated by the ruling regime and its army.

In a plan to evaluate our publication, we wish to get the FEEDBACK of our readers. Hence, you can kindly send your feedback. If you know anyone who would like to receive the newsletter or if you wish to send your feedback, please feel free to contact the following mailing and e-mail address.

Woman and Child Rights Project
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Website: www.rehmonnya.org

With regards,
Project Coordinator
Woman and Child Rights Project - Southern Burma

or customers. We must follow everything what they want. We must follow their wishes and we must be patient about what they do to us. When group of sex customers came and take us to go somewhere, the situation is bad because I cannot appeal to them to make sex smoothly, not in brutal way. After they get drunk the situation is very bad for they don't treat us as a human being."

Ma Mxx Txx Txx from Three Pagoda Pass told about her experience: *"my friend told me that she had sex with a group people and gang sex. Sometimes they hit me even though I spoke to them politely. They can kill me during this time because I was in their hands. This job is hard, however, women must to do this kind of work to earn more to support their families."*

Some sex workers have to keep their job secretly for they don't want their parents and relatives to know, this situation could lead them to be isolated or experience social sanctions. If their parents and relatives know their job, they are sure to be discriminated against because they caused their parents and relatives to be looked down on by other people. Other people could accuse their relatives as "a generation of sex workers." The impact is not small.

According to Ma Mxx Txx Txx, she wants to do something good for her parents even though she is sure her parents would disagree with her performance. *"I lied to them and said I was working in garment factory and I suggested my sisters should not work here for I am afraid of them knowing my job. I am afraid and worry for everything."*

The life they have faced is too vulnerable which can lead them to destroy all their dreams. They are psychologically weak and they themselves think they lack value. Even though they themselves choose the job, they still feel guilty. They feel that the future is not certain for them. They all wish to have good job and to drop their current risky and vulnerable job.

III. The Situation of Health

A report of UNAIDS shows that in Burma, 25% of women in prostitution are living with HIV/ AIDS, while 80% of women who returned from Thailand after earning through prostitution have been infected with HIV virus.

Activ- ity

International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women Ceremony

International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women ceremony was held in Sangkhlaburi on November 25 initiated by Woman and Child Rights Project (WCRP) supported by Women League of Burma.

About 100 representatives from various organizations Mon women Organization- MWO, Oversea Mon Women Organization- OMWO, Human Rights Foundation of Monland- HURFOM, Independent Mon News Agency- IMNA, Kao Wao News Group- KWG, Medicine San Frontier- MSF, Mon Unity League- MUL, Mon National Democratic Front- MNDF, Safe House, Karen Women Organization- KWO, Pattanarak Foundation- Thai NGO, Mon Youth Progressive Organization- MYPO, Women and Child Rights Project- WCRP and Mon Relief and Development Committee- MRDC attended ceremony.

The historical event of three Mirabal Sisters and sixteen days movement that was the key point to create the international day was discussed in the meeting.

The various organizations presented their condition that they have faced in their society. Some Mon Women organization sing songs composed about violence against women while women from Save house presented the condition of women focused on traditional saying: "women are leafs and men are sharp-point" that means women are always suffered challenging to men including in term of sex.

"Women were more suffered comparing with men in term of human rights violations in Burma," director of HURFOM Nai Kasauh Mon said in the meeting.

Women attended the meeting shared their experiences with each other. Many women have experiences on the domestic violence, mostly from their husbands - "don't come to prevent me and I have to beat her because she is my wife, and she is not good character."

Most of men participants including women participants did not know what is White Ribbon Campaign. Some men look after their babies outside the meeting while their wives attending the meeting inside.

"I have to look after my two babies outside the meeting room while my wife attending the ceremony," Nai Taing Htaw of Kao Wao News Group Assistant Editor said. "I do not know what is White Ribbon before, however, I now know it. Thank for your campaign."

Men participants putted small cards of White Ribbon in their close while attending the ceremony. In this area the ceremony is one of the biggest multi-ethnic national women and men from many organization participated.



International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women Ceremony in Sangkhlaburi

For sex workers who live in brotel houses or restaurants they can only earn half of the money, half of it is for owners. When a customer, for instance, came to them they earn around 300- 500 Baht and the must pay the owners around 150 – 250 Baht in most brotel houses along Thailand-Burma border. They have to pay themselves for medical service. According to a sex worker in a restaurant in Sangkhlaburi, Thailand, she has to use money when she goes to hospital to test blood and to have treatment.

Sex workers can get one condom per night from brothel owners, this situation can lead to a vulnerable life. They claimed that a Thai NGO provides condoms to them as much as they can use freely, though their owners sell them out of financial purposes. Later on, a Thai NGO bases on the border contacted with them secretly and gave them condoms as much as

Acronyms

CEDAW-	Covention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
GONGO-	Government Organization Non-Government Organization
IDP-	Internally Displaced Persons
MCWA-	Maternal and Child Welfare Association
MNCWA-	Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs
MNSP-	New Mon State Party
MOMC-	Military Operational Management Command
SPDC-	State Peace and Development Council

they want and pay for their HIV test when they want to go hospital. Still, some of them do not care about HIV test. On the other hand, some customers who do not want to use condom give them extra amount of money around 500-1000 Baht. Most of Burmese customers prefer to have sex without condom; they say putting a condom on makes them have a lack of feeling while having sex. *"Putting on a condom is making a different world between them."*

Some sex workers in Three Pagoda Pass get pregnant and they went to a traditional nurse house to have an abortion while some of them went inside Burma without having an abortion. According to Ma Mxx Txx Txx, they earned about 1000 and 1500 Baht to sleep one night with their customers and they earned extra amount 1000-1500 Baht when their customers do not use a condom. Some of her friends are concerned about their health, however, some of them are not concerned, they are only thinking about getting more money. She said, *"some campaigners came to educate us to take care our health, but some of us still do not care about health since some of us have a lack of education in our background."*

"I has witnessed about seven or eight friends getting HIV/AIDS infection," Ma Kxx Kxx Mxx said. She added that some of her friends get pregnant while using pregnancy prevention medicine.

IV. Conclusion

Most of sex workers said that they have faced financial difficulties before they decided to do this vulnerable and risky work. They already know that they are doing bad thing to themselves and to their families and relatives. They decided to accept every bad thing coming to them including HIV/AIDS. They feel they lack value for they are doing sex work. Therefore they welcome their customers not to use a condom.

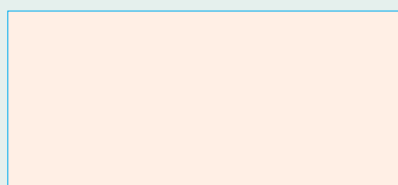
They hope to drop their risky life one day when there is good opportunity to work a permanent job, to survive, and to support their family regularly.

The questions are:

- Is there insurance of life for them in the near future and a job opportunity coming to them soon?
- How long will the economic crises last in Burma?
- What is the situation that led them to get into this risky life?
- How poor is Burma in the world today; small scale and large scale?



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