

Living Ghosts

**The spiraling repression of the Karenni population
under the Burmese military junta**

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*This report is dedicated to the
people of Karenni State and Burma
who continue to struggle against one of the
world's most oppressive military regimes.*

May peace come soon.

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Acronyms

ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
BERG	Burma Ethnic Research Group
CPB	Communist Party of Burma
HRDU	Human Rights Documentation Group
KNDA	Karenni National Defense Army
KHG	Kayan Home Guard
KNLP	Kayan New Land Party
KNPDP	Karenni National Peace and Development Party
KNPLF	Karenni National People's Liberation Front
KNPP	Karenni National Progressive Party
KNSO	Karenni National Solidarity Organisation
ILO	International Labour Organization
MSF-Switzerland	Médecins Sans Frontières Switzerland
NLD	National League for Democracy
SNPLO	Shan Nationalities People's Liberation Organisation
SSNLO	Shan State Nationalities Liberation Organisation
SLORC	State Law and Order Restoration Council
SPDC	State Peace and Development Council
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNSC	United Nations Security Council

Abbreviations

ATS	Amphetamine-Type Stimulants
CBO	Community Based Organisation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IB	Infantry Battalions
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
LIB	Light Infantry Battalions
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ROC	Regional Operational Command

Executive Summary

The people of Karenni State are living ghosts. Their daily survival is an achievement; however, it also signifies their further descent into poverty and a spiralling system of repression. Whilst this report documents the deteriorating situation in Karenni State over the past six years, this is nothing new for the ethnically diverse population of this geographically small area. They have been living in a protracted conflict zone for over 50 years with no respite from decades of low-intensity conflict and frequent human rights abuses. All the while both State and Non-State actors have marginalised the grassroots communities' voices, contributing to the militarisation of their communities and societies.

Burmese soldiers oppress Karenni villagers on a daily basis. Villagers are isolated from members of their own communities, and other ethnic groups; they report daily to local Burmese troops about Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) troop movements and other activities in their areas; community members spy on one another, reporting back to the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC); and they are punished by the SPDC in retaliation for the actions of the KNPP. All of these strategies create an environment of fear and mistrust between ethnic groups, communities, and even family members. These tactics successfully oppress the villagers, as they are too fearful and busy to think beyond daily survival.

Further exacerbating the situation is the fact that villagers face oppression not only from the Burmese army, but also ceasefire groups and the KNPP. Soldiers from both the KNPP and ceasefire groups physically maltreat villagers and undermine their livelihoods. While these occurrences are certainly less frequent and less severe than similar acts by the SPDC, they still oppress the civilian population and undermine their ability and capacity to survive.

Additionally the presence of many different actors has resulted in the militarisation of Karenni State. Thousands of landmines have been indiscriminately planted throughout the state, without adequate mapping or markings to minimise civilian casualties. The SPDC, ceasefire groups and the KNPP all recruit and have child soldiers in their armies. The Burmese army has the largest number of child soldiers anywhere in the world, and approximately 20 per cent of the KNPP's troops are under 18 (the minimum age for recruitment into the armed forces under Burma's national law). The increased militarisation of Karenni State has resulted in increases in human rights abuses.

However villagers are staging their own non-violent resistance movement. They have developed and implemented a number of early warning systems and household and village-wide risk management strategies so as to minimise the impact of the SPDC and other armed groups violence and abuses. These resistance strategies have become the biggest threat to local and regional authorities; consequently the villagers are increasingly becoming the targets of hostilities from the Burmese army.

Most people in Karenni State rely on agriculture as their primary source of income and are living a subsistence existence. Despite the villagers' best efforts to secure their livelihoods, their ability and capacity to do so is constantly undermined by the SPDC and, to a lesser extent, ceasefire groups and the KNPP via crop

procurement, forced production of dry season crops, arbitrary taxation and fines, theft and destruction of property and food, forced labour and land confiscation. This is further exacerbated by the drought that has been occurring in Karenni State for the past decade, which affects crop yields. When coupled with skyrocketing commodity prices, villagers' ability to ebb out a living is further eroded – to the point of impossibility in some cases.

The abject poverty in Karenni State prevents villagers from accessing basic health and education services. Whilst the SPDC claims to provide free health care and education, in reality this does not occur. Health and education services provided by the state are extremely expensive and are well-below international standards. As a result, for most people education and medical treatment becomes a luxury they simply cannot afford.

As a result of poverty some villagers are turning to illegal activities in order to survive - mainly poppy production. In Karenni State there are two areas where villagers are growing poppies with the permission of ceasefire groups. Farmers can earn a significantly higher monetary return on their poppy yields than for other crops using the same quantity of land. Poppy growers can earn up to 300,000 Kyat per 1.5 kilogram package of raw opium they produce (a 1.5 kilogram package of raw opium can be produced in four months). A teacher supported by the SPDC would have to work for 60 months in order to earn the same amount.

Additionally amphetamine type stimulants (ATS) are being produced in Karenni State. Three factories producing ATS in Karenni State have been identified, again in areas controlled by ceasefire groups; however as it is difficult to distinguish between factories and ordinary dwellings it is possible that there are many other ATS factories in Karenni State that have not been identified. Each factory can produce between 250,000 and 300,000 pills per month. From the three known factories in Karenni State between 9 million and 10.8 million ATS pills are being produced and released into the international drug market each year.

Today over a quarter of the population in Karenni State have been forced from their homes as a direct result of the actions of the Burmese military junta. Between 70 and 80 per cent of those displaced are women and children. Displacement has increased 42 per cent since 2002 and represents eight per cent of the total population in Karenni State. Karenni State has the highest level of displacement to population ratio in all of eastern Burma. When similar comparisons are made to the five countries with the largest displaced populations in the world (Sudan, Colombia, Uganda, Iraq and the Democratic Republic of Congo) the percentage of displaced persons in Karenni State is alarmingly higher. Over 12 per cent of Sudan's population is displaced – less than half that of Karenni State.

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) in eastern Burma receive very little assistance, if any at all, primarily due to the policies of the SPDC, which severely restrict humanitarian agencies accessing these vulnerable populations. The SPDC deems IDPs as enemies of the state and implements a shoot on sight policy, which includes children and the elderly. IDPs are vulnerable to human rights

abuses, exploitation and violence from the SPDC, as well as food shortages and have severely limited access to education and health care services.

The most pressing need of the people and the IDP population is physical security. Most people have the capacity to earn a livelihood mitigating food shortages, to educate their children, establish a medical clinic and develop their communities; however, they lack the security necessary to do so. There are humanitarian organisations working in Karenni State, including local community based organisations (CBOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme. Despite this presence the humanitarian situation in Karenni State continues to deteriorate and people are finding themselves slipping further and further into the poverty abyss – with no foreseeable escape.

The impacts from the situation in Karenni State are not confined to the State's boundaries - they spill over into other states and divisions in Burma and also across international borders, especially into Thailand. These spill over effects include, but are not limited to: the mass exodus of people from Burma to neighbouring countries as refugees and migrant workers; illegal trafficking of drugs and people and associated health concerns, especially HIV/AIDS. These non-traditional security threats impinge on Burma's neighbours economies and social welfare systems, affecting regional stability and security.

The situation in Karenni State cannot be rectified without genuinely addressing Burma's complex issues, including ethnic chauvinism, in a participatory manner, which engages the whole nation's citizenry. Only when these issues are truly addressed may the people of Karenni State find peace and start living life for the future, and not as living ghosts.

The situation in Karenni State has reached a new crisis point. The Karenni people need and are asking for:

- **Increased humanitarian assistance** (delivered through Rangoon and across the Thai-Burma border)
- A genuine solution to the conflict, supported by the international community through a **United Nations Security Council Resolution**

1. Introduction

Chapter Overview

This chapter provides an introduction to Karenni State's political, economic and social situation, as well as to the Karenni population. Also examined is the research methodology.

In this chapter:

- History
- Geography and Climate in Karenni State
- Customary Economy in Karenni State
- People in Karenni State
- Gender Roles
- Armed Actors in Karenni State
- State Actors
- Non-State Actors
- Research Methodology

1.1 History

Historically, it can be argued that Karenni State was an independent jurisdiction falling outside of Burma's national boundaries. During the 18th and 19th centuries Karenni State was split into five sub states, each ruled by a King called a Saophya. Some Saophyas made treaties with other rulers, such as the Saophya of Kantarawaddy and the ruler of Chiang Mai.¹ The Saophyas did not pay regular tributes such as food, items of value, etc., to the Burman monarchs as other ethnic groups did, furthering the claim that Karenni territory was never a part of Burma. There are counter-claims that the five sub states were not stable entities, however, there are also assertions that the Saophyas had offices throughout the state and departments for health, education, forestry and tax revenue, thereby demonstrating their control over the region.²

As Karenni State is rich in natural resources, in particular teak, there was a lot of conflict within the state over control of these resources. This included fighting between the Saophyas and from external forces, such as Thais, Shan, British and Burman. The fighting intensified in the 1840s and in the second half of the nineteenth century the population of Karenni decreased, partially due to people migrating to avoid the fighting, but also because of the drought that the state was suffering.

In 1875 the Burman monarch and the British government, through an agreement, formally recognised the independence of the four western Karenni sub states (the fifth Karenni sub State was included in the Union of Burma in 1888 following fighting between the British and the local Saophya).³ Under British colonial rule, the government of India (Burma was annexed to India in 1885) used two different methods to rule. The lowlands and plains became ministerial Burma, and the British ruled directly, while the administration of the frontier areas, mainly the ethnic areas, remained with the traditional leaders under the loose supervision of the British government. The four Karenni Saophya were left to continue ruling their sub states.

During World War Two, as with many other ethnic groups, the Karenni supported the British and played an active role in defeating the Japanese. The British promised that they would in return help Karenni State retain their independence.⁴ During discussions about Burma's independence from Britain, the British tried to persuade the Karenni to join the Union of Burma and the Frontier Areas Administration Board, but the Karenni declined. The Burmese Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League also lobbied the Karenni to join the Union of Burma, but with no success.

¹ "Conflict and Displacement in Karenni State: The need for considered response", Burma Ethnic Research Group, May 2000

² "Conflict and Displacement in Karenni State: The need for considered response", Burma Ethnic Research Group, May 2000

³ "Conflict and Displacement in Karenni State: The need for considered response", Burma Ethnic Research Group, May 2000

⁴ "Karenni Homeland", <http://www.karennihomeland.com/ArticleArticle.php?ContentID=58>, Accessed October 22nd, 2007

In 1946 the United Karenni Independent States Council was established as a representative body of the Karenni population. It was made up of elders and village leaders from Kantarawaddy, Kyehepogyi, Bawlake and Moebye.⁵

Despite continued assertions from Karenni representatives that Karenni State was an independent, sovereign nation and did not want to be included in the Union of Burma it was incorporated into independent Burma in the 1947 constitution. Under the 1947 constitution Karenni State was afforded the right to succession after 10 years in the Union of Burma, along with Kachin and Shan States. When Burma became independent on January 4th 1948, Karenni State, as a part of the independent Union of Burma, allegedly was freed from colonial rule.

Following independence the Burman majority dominated the political institutions, marginalising the ethnic minorities. The state framework did not create a sense of political equality for all the ethnic groups and nationalities, leading to tensions among the different actors. On August 9th, 1948 Burmese army troops entered Karenni State. This was viewed by the Karenni population, who had opposed being part of the Union of Burma, as an act of aggression upon their sovereignty. An armed opposition to this incursion was established giving birth to decades of resistance to the central authority rule which has continued to the present day. This protracted conflict in Karenni State has had no victors - only hundreds of thousands of victims.

Many ethnic nationality groups began armed resistance. The central government tried to retain power and develop the country's economy, but was unable to stabilise the situation. Armed conflict continued and pressure from ethnic groups, including the Karenni, for self-determination increased.

Against this backdrop of civil war General Ne Win, who had been the head of the armed forces since 1949, staged a military coup in 1962 seizing power. The ensuing period saw mass political and economic mismanagement which drove the country into poverty and continuing civil war between the ethnic nationalities and the military dictatorship. The early 1970s Ne Win introduced the Four Cuts Policy, a counter insurgency strategy. The policy was designed to cut resistance groups from four essential supplies (recruits, food, intelligence and finance) that were provided to armed groups by the people. Instead of targeting the armed groups this policy was aimed at the civilian population, predominantly in ethnic areas such as Karenni State. This policy is still being implemented today.

Since then the Burmese regime has launched numerous offensives against the Karenni opposition forces, and since the 1980s the capacity of the opposition forces to resist the Burmese army and protect the civilian population has decreased dramatically. In 1984 the KNPP controlled large tracts of land; however, following widespread forced relocation programs and intensive militarisation in the 1990s⁶ the KNPP's control over Karenni State has weakened considerably.

⁵"Karenni Homeland", www.karennihomeland.com, accessed September 2007, and village elders

⁶ "Preliminary Findings and Conclusion on the material support for terrorism bar as applied to the overseas resettlement of refugees from Burma", *The Immigration and Refugee Clinic and the International Human Rights Council (Human Rights Program Harvard Law)*, January 2006

The KNPP made a ceasefire agreement with the junta in 1995. However, this ceasefire only lasted a few months.⁷ Immediately following the breakdown of the ceasefire the junta launched a large scale offensive, targeting Karenni villagers through a mass forced relocation programme. In the area between the Pon and the Salween rivers all the villages were ordered to relocation and not a single household remained in the area. The Burma Ethnic Research Group (BERG) estimates that during 1996 about 25,200 people were forced to leave their homes.⁸ However the Karenni Public Relations and Information Department estimates that as many as 75,000 people have been affected by the relocation programme.⁹

Numerous splits within the KNPP and the making of ceasefire agreements with the Burmese regime by the splinter groups and other opposition forces have further weakened the opposition forces in Karenni State. Despite waging a fifty-year battle with the central Burmese authorities, these days the KNPP does not offer a strong opposition to the *Tatmadaw* and has only one base in Karenni State, Nyarmu and an outpost, Mattai.

Karenni State is one of the poorest regions in Burma. This poverty has been further exacerbated by the protracted conflict and constant low intensity fighting over the last sixty years. Traditional community structures are being destroyed, and there is great mistrust between and within villages, leading to extreme isolation. Individuals further segregate themselves, to the degree that they do not engage in normal community life or access public services that maybe available. The Burmese military junta, ceasefire groups and the Karenni National People's Party policies and actions have contributed to this isolation.

1.2 Geography and Climate in Karenni State

Karenni State is a land-locked state in northeast Burma. It borders northwest Thailand to its east, Shan State to the north, Karen State to the south and Mandalay to the west. Karenni State is 11,731.5 km²¹⁰; making it the smallest state in Burma. There are eight townships within Karenni State: Loikaw, Demawso, Pruso, Passaung, Bawlake, Meh Sae, Shadaw and Mawchi, and there are five main rivers: the Salween, Htoo,



⁷ "Forced Relocation and Human Rights Abuses in Karenni State, Burma", All Burma Students' Democratic Front

⁸ "Conflict and Displacement in Karenni State: The need for considered response", Burma Ethnic Research Group, May 2000

⁹ "Burma Human Rights Yearbook 1996", Human Rights Documentation Unit, 1997

¹⁰ "Conflict and Displacement in Karenni: The need for considered response", Burma Ethnic Research Group, May 2000

Belu, Pai and Pon. Karenni State is approximately half the size of Holland. Due to the mountainous terrain of the state, it is one of the least accessible areas in Burma.

The climate of Karenni State is generally temperate, except along the river valleys where it is tropical. The average temperature in Karenni State near Loikaw is 21.9 degrees Celsius. However in the mountainous areas closer to the Thai-Burma border temperatures can drop suddenly to single digits. Throughout the year there are three seasons in Karenni State: hot (February – April), cold (November – January) and wet (May to October). During the rainy season access to areas outside Loikaw is very difficult and it is impossible to access some mountainous areas.

1.3 Customary Economy in Karenni State

Karenni State's economy relies primarily on three separate industries: agriculture, extraction of natural resources and hydroelectric dams. Traditionally, most villagers in Karenni State rely on agriculture for their livelihoods. The main crop is rice, along with maize, sesame, groundnut and vegetables. It has become extremely difficult for farmers to support their families due to a variety of challenges (please see chapter 2 and 3 for more information). Karenni State cannot produce enough food like rice for example to sustain itself and consequently needs to import basic commodities from neighbouring States and Divisions for survival.

However, Karenni State is rich in natural resources, such as teak, tin and alabaster (alabaster has similar uses to marble). In the 1930s the Mawchi Mine in Karenni State was the largest producer of tungsten in the world. The extraction of these resources could assist in sustaining the population and provide employment opportunities. However, the control of Karenni State's natural resources has always been linked to the conflict. Currently the SPDC and ceasefire groups predominantly, control the extraction of natural resources in Karenni State. Villagers have very little, if any, say over the management of the natural resources and receive no benefits from their extraction. Development projects have led to increased militarisation of these areas, and subsequently an increase in human rights abuses and oppression for the villagers.

¹¹ "Damned by Burma's Generals: The Karenni Experience with Hydropower Development from Lawpita to the Salween", Karenni Development Research Group, 2006

Additionally, there are a growing number of hydroelectric dams in Karenni State. The largest is the dam at Lowpita Falls, which supplies over 20 per cent of Burma's total electricity needs.¹¹ There are also a number of smaller hydroelectric dams, and proposals to build more, particularly along the Salween River. Despite the fact that the Lowpita hydroelectric dam provides over one fifth of Burma's electricity needs, most people in Karenni State have no access to electricity, even those in villages surrounding the dam sites. Moreover, the junta prohibits villagers from accessing water vital for agricultural projects, because it is needed for hydroelectricity and thousands of villagers living in the dam site and the dam's flood area lost their homes and farmlands.

1.4 People in Karenni State

The Karenni population is difficult to estimate, as there has been no reliable census carried out for decades. The most common estimate is 300,000 and this is the population figure that we use in this report.¹² Seven sub-groups make up the Karenni ethnic group, including:

- Kayah
- Pu Ku
- Pa-O
- Yintalia
- Muno Monon
- Kayan
- GheKo/Gheba

Shan, Burman and other ethnic nationalities also reside in Karenni State.

This report documents the hardships and difficulties faced by the people of Karenni State. The report does not focus on the Karenni people (also known as the Kayah people) but rather examines the lives of all ethnic groups residing in Karenni State.

1.4.1 Gender Roles

Among the different ethnic groups in Karenni State traditionally there are clear gender roles and associated behaviours, especially in relation to the division of labour. In all tribes women are responsible for housework and raising the children, but in some ethnic groups they are also responsible for tending the household garden. Women from the Yintalia ethnic group gather all non-meat products that the family may need (the Yintalia men are responsible for hunting). Men from these communities are responsible for hunting, farming, trade and other income generating work, for example day labouring. Decisions within the household and relating to child rearing traditionally lay with women, while men are responsible for

¹² "Damned by Burma's Generals: The Karenni Experience with Hydropower Development from Lawpita to the Salween", Karenni Development Research Group, 2006

all other decisions. However, these boundaries have blurred during the last 50 years due to social changes and the instability within Karenni State.

1.5 Armed Actors in Karenni State

There are numerous armed groups operating in Karenni State, with the largest being the *Tatmadaw*, the Burmese army. A number of non-state actors operate in Karenni State however, most have made ceasefire agreements (some verbal, others written) with the Burmese junta. The Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) is the only active group within Karenni State that does not currently have a ceasefire agreement with the SPDC.

1.5.1 State Actor (the Burmese army)

The *Tatmadaw*, Burmese army, first arrived in Karenni State in 1948.¹³ Since then the Burmese military presence in Karenni State has increased. Currently there are seven Light Infantry Battalions (LIB) and six Infantry Battalions (IB) based permanently in Karenni State that are answerable to the Loikaw Regional Operational Command (ROC) and Military Operation Command in Pekon.¹⁴ In addition to these troops who are permanently based in Karenni State, there are also 10 mobile battalions that carry out patrols throughout the state.¹⁵ These mobile battalions carry out rotational patrols, so that there are always troops in addition to those permanently based in Karenni State.

1.5.2 Non-State Actors:

Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP)

The KNPP was established in 1957 and is continuing to resist the Burmese military junta. The KNPP acts as a de-facto government for the Karenni population however their authority has emerged out of need, rather than consensus among the people.

The KNPP entered into a ceasefire agreement with the Burmese junta in 1995. This ceasefire only lasted three months and human rights abuses and armed skirmishes continued throughout this period. Following the collapse of the ceasefire, communication between both sides continued however it did not eventuate into formal talks. In 1997 and 2007 there were talks between the KNPP and the Burmese junta, however, no ceasefire was agreed to. Factions of the KNPP that have supported ceasefire agreements with the Burmese military have often split and formed new groups, negotiating their own peace deals with the junta and weakening the KNPP.

¹³ "Conflict and Displacement in Karenni State: The need for considered response", Burma Ethnic Research Group, May 2000

¹⁴ "2007 Survey Internal Displacement in Eastern Burma", Thailand Burma Border Consortium, October 2007

¹⁵ "2007 Survey Internal Displacement in Eastern Burma", Thailand Burma Border Consortium, October 2007

In the late 1990s the KNPP was further weakened by three major splits. The first faction that broke away was led by U Goeri and agreed to a ceasefire with the SPDC in July 1999. The second split, led by U Day Moo, agreed to a ceasefire in 1999. The final faction led by U Saw Bae Bay, signed a ceasefire agreement with the central government in November 1999. Some groups estimate that approximately 200 KNPP soldiers allied themselves with these three groups, while others say the number is closer to 100.

Ceasefire Groups

There are eight ceasefire groups in Karenni State:

- Karenni National Defense Army (KNDA)
- Karenni National People's Liberation Front (KNPLF)
- Karenni National Solidarity Organisation (KNSO)
- Shan State Nationalities Liberation Organisation (SSNLO)
- Shan Nationalities People's Liberation Organisation (SNPLO)
- Karenni National Peace and Development Party (KNPDP)
- Kayan New Land Party (KNLP)
- Kayan Home Guard (KHG)

The Burmese junta use ceasefire agreements as a tool to suppress armed resistance groups. The regime exploits differences between the factions of armed groups by offering leaders of these factions' economic concessions in exchange for making a ceasefire agreement. Most members of armed resistance movements are living in abject poverty and have been for many years. They have spent their lives fighting a war that is still continuing today, while the situation for the Karenni people continues to deteriorate. Consequently leaders enter into ceasefire agreements with the hope of acquiring a more comfortable lifestyle and improving the living standards of the people. Returning to the SPDC's alleged legal fold has offered opportunities to the leaders of these groups, but the soldiers are still required to fight and die.

Currently ceasefire groups are prohibited from organizing their own activities and must cooperate with SPDC troops, acting as a proxy army for the Burmese army. Ceasefire groups' participation in operations with the Burmese army requires their troops to travel ahead and identify the people who have connections with the KNPP. These people are subsequently arrested, imprisoned and tortured by the SPDC troops. Splinter groups also guide the SPDC troops to the jungle hiding places of the KNPP.

1.6 Research Methodology

All names of villagers, villages, and village tracts from this publication in order to protect the people and communities who shared their stories and experiences with us. For Burma Issues field staff who collect information for this report we refer to them as BI Field Staff 1, BI Field Staff 2, etc. to protect their identities and ensure that they can continue to work in the future without fear.

This report is based on field research carried out in Karenni State between 2001 and March 2007. During this time five trips to Karenni State were undertaken by staff from Burma Issues' Mae Hong Son office. Throughout these trips intensive population surveys and in-depth interviews were conducted. Information about human rights abuses was also collected. During the 2006/2007 trip alone over 100 villages were visited.

The trips carried out by Burma Issues members are arduous, difficult and very dangerous.

“When we tried to carry out the work in Karenni State there were problems with communication, transportation, security, health care and food. We started the journey at the border. Each person had to carry enough food for 10 days, which is heavy and other equipment. We had to detour around minefields, SPDC troops and army bases. On our journey we had to cross a river, but we did not have a boat. The current was strong and there were rocks; to get to the path from the river we had to clear a landmine field. It was a long and slow journey,” BI Field Staff 1 said.

The staff members who undertook these trips risked their lives in order to collect information and document the situation in Karenni State. Their work supplied information that is the basis of this report, as well as other supplementary interviews that were vital to truly represent the voices of the grassroots people in Karenni State. Without their bravery and unwavering dedication this report would not have been possible.

This report is unique in that it documents the situation in Karenni State over the past six years. While a lot is known internationally about the situation in Karen and Shan States and along the Thai-Burma border, little is known about the Karenni. This report aims to rectify that by acting as a platform for the issues, concerns and voices of the Karenni grassroots communities to the international community and an awareness raising and advocacy tool.

2. Oppression

Chapter Overview

The people of Karenni State are oppressed by the Burmese army, ceasefire groups and the KNPP. The state is becoming increasingly militarised; human rights are frequently violated; villagers have to report to Burmese military camps on a daily basis, which can be 12 hours walk (round trip) away. Villagers live in constant fear of spies for the Burmese army within their communities and of being punished in retaliation for KNPP acts by the Burmese army. Whilst all of these tactics have resulted in villagers living in extreme isolation, however, they are not defeated and in fact, implement a number of different strategies, staging their own non-violent resistance movement.

In this chapter:

- SPDC Tactics
- Non-State Actors Tactics
- Non-Violent Resistance Tactics

In Karenni State the people are oppressed and their lives are consumed by fear. The Burmese junta employs a strategy of total control under the guise of counter-insurgency. For decades the main target of the junta's military campaigns has been the civilian population.

2.1 SPDC Tactics

2.1.1 Human Rights Abuses

The Burmese army continues to oppress the ethnic people of Karenni State and all of Burma through indirect tactics. While extra-judicial killings still take place, the army concentrates its efforts on destroying villagers' capacity and ability to survive. The military destroys food sources, forces people to undertake labour intensive projects, demolishes houses, forcibly relocates entire villages, confiscates land without compensation and arbitrarily extorts money and commodities from communities. While not directly killing people, these tactics slowly and systematically erode their livelihoods, spirits and eventually their ability to survive.

Theft and/or destruction of Property and Food

Burmese soldiers extort food and possessions, including clothing from villagers. Lists of demanded items are presented to village headmen who are required to collect the goods from villagers and deliver them to the soldiers. Failure to do so results in fines, punishment and/or future harassment.

In addition to the theft of food and belongings, the SPDC destroys food stores, crops and villagers' possessions. Cooking pots and plates are bayoneted and the resulting holes making them useless. Entire villages are burned down and stores with the whole communities' crops for the year are destroyed.

On December 21st, 2002, messengers from D—P- S— and B- Ku villages told their communities that Warrant Officer Aung Shwe from the H— L— base had demanded that the villages provide 1.6 kilograms and 3.2 kilograms of chicken respectively.

On December 25th, 2003, fighting broke out between the SPDC LIB 250, 261 and 242 and KNPP troops near Tenuso Mountain. During the fighting, the SPDC troops destroyed 1,600 tins of rice (24,000 kilograms) from Dxxx Tx Ax village. This was enough rice to feed 133 adults for an entire year.

Villagers are not compensated for this loss. Statistics show that villagers whose food supplies have been compromised are 4.6 times more likely to be injured by a landmine than those whose food supplies are secure, because they are looking for food in the jungle where there is landmine contamination.¹⁶ Furthermore, as a result of the villagers' isolation, travel restrictions and poverty, it is not possible for them to replace their belongings. Villagers are expected to silently manage somehow.

¹⁶ "Chronic Emergency: Health and Human Rights in Eastern Burma", Back Pack Health Worker Team, 2006

Restriction on Movement

“Whenever the Burmese army heard that KNPP soldiers were nearby, they tell us not to go to our fields. But if we listen to them and do not go to our farms, what will we eat?” – K- R— said.

Villagers’ paddy fields are far away from their homes, however, the Burmese army and ceasefire groups restrict villagers’ movements. The villagers have to buy a day pass, which are only valid for one day, from dawn to dusk, to travel outside their village. This does not give people enough time to travel to their fields, work, search for food and return. If the villagers do not return or are late they are accused of contacting the KNPP and are often punished. The restriction of villagers’ movements effects their crops, the yield and how much food they have for their families.

“The SPDC prohibits us from staying at our fields for more than one week and we are not allowed to light fires. If there is fighting near our farms, we are too scared to go to our fields. If you go and the Burmese soldiers find you, they will accuse you of helping the KNPP and punish you. Some people have been beaten,”
– T--- R-- said.

The SPDC also arbitrarily closes roads for non-military travel in Karenni State, further restricting villagers movements. Landmines are often planted along roads to prohibit the villagers’ movements. Villagers, fearful of landmines and potential injuries, further restrict their own movements.

Even with a valid travel pass villagers are still vulnerable to abuses and exploitation. There have been reports of arrests, torture, extra-judicial killings and rapes of villagers who have had permission to travel. Villagers have also been shot at when they have been outside of their communities.

Arbitrary taxation and fines

Only 40 per cent of the SPDC’s annual budget is covered through ordinary taxes.¹⁷ Printing more money, foreign investment, arbitrary taxation and fines covers the 60 per cent deficit. While taxation is necessary in every country, in Burma taxation amounts to systematic extortion undertaken with impunity.

Villagers cite arbitrary taxation and levies as the largest threat to their livelihoods. In Karenni State people face taxation from the SPDC, ceasefire groups and the KNPP. This multi-lateral taxation creates further hardships for villagers who are already facing difficulties making ends meet. In some instances villagers are not informed what the tax is for or how their money will be used – they simply pay the tax.

¹⁷ *“Inflation in Burma: When the State budget deficits are financed by the money printing machine”, Burma Issues Newsletter, August 2007*

“When an armed group came to the village they would demand money. When the villagers tried to explain that they had already paid taxes to another group, they would get angry and say “If you can pay them, you can pay us”” – T-- R-- said.

Additionally, fines are linked to other restrictions imposed on the villagers, such as the restriction of movement. For example, if a villager is caught traveling without a valid pass they are fined.

Community Forests

Many villagers depend on the forest surrounding their communities as a source of income. Villagers will search through local forests looking for plants, herbs and roots that they can sell at the markets. The sale of these items supplements their income, and enables villagers to buy essential commodities such as rice.

The SPDC and ceasefire groups have prohibited villagers from visiting the forests. Villagers now need to purchase a pass from the local authorities giving them permission to travel into and through the forests. This is a form of arbitrary taxation.

In order to avoid punishment and further human rights abuses villagers put taxation demands before their own needs. Families cannot afford to adequately feed their children, educate them or access health services because they simply do not have the financial resources. For villagers being financially exploited further compounds the situation they are in. As their financial resources are constantly being depleted, their escape from poverty becomes less and less likely.

Forced Labour

Burma became a signatory to the Convention Against Forced Labour in 1955. Despite this the practice of conscripting people to work without compensation is common through out the country and in Karenni State. Villagers cite forced labour as one of the most common human rights abuses in Karenni State. The International Labour Organization (ILO) stated in a 2007 report that the SPDC’s systematic use of forced labour is widespread throughout the nation. Ceasefire groups and the KNPP also use forced labour.

Villagers are obliged to perform a variety of tasks, some lasting a few hours, while others, such as portering, can take weeks. Failure to serve the demands of the army results in punishment. The most common tasks imposed on villagers, regardless of age, gender or infirmity, include:

- Construction or repairs of military camps and facilities
- Portering (carrying military equipment, rations, supplies, etc during military activities)
- Other support activities for the military camps (sending messages, acting as guides, cooking, etc)
- Income generation for the military (working on military plantations)
- Building or maintaining national or local infrastructure projects
- Militia duty
- Sentry duty

Instances of Forced Labour:

Example 1:

“In January this year (2003) one member from every family in the nine villages in Hxxx Pxx Kx Lx village tract and the five in the Dxx Kx Lxxx Dx village tract had to go and work for the military every day during the dry season. The villagers had to take their own food and equipment, such as hoes and pickaxes. They were building a fence for the SPDC. Anyone who did not send someone had to pay a 500 Kyat fine per day.”

Example 2:

Burmese troops from LIB 250 and 261 ordered villagers at the Nxxx Lx Bxx relocation site to send a messenger to their military base once a week. If they failed to send someone the villagers were fined 400 Kyat. If the messenger failed to turn up three times they were imprisoned for four days.

Example 3:

Burmese troops from LIB 427 ordered four villagers from Rx Pxx Kx section of Dxxx Mxx Hxx to guard the towns check point every day. If the villagers failed to send a guard or if the guards fell asleep on duty they would fine the villagers 3 chickens each time.

Forced labour directly contributes to food scarcity, loss of income, loss of opportunity to go to school and consequently poverty. When villagers are forced to work for the SPDC for extended periods of time, without compensation, they neglect their own livelihoods.

While being forced to work villagers are also subjected to additional human rights abuses, such as beatings, destruction of property, rape and even extra-judicial killings.

Prison Porters

In 2007 the Burmese troops under Light Infantry Battalion 55 (LIB 55) took prisoners to use as porters in eastern Karenni State. Most of the porters were prisoners from well-known prisons: Mandalay, Insein, Myin Chan and Lashio. It is believed that by taking prisoners from areas far away from where the offensive is taking place, the porters will be less likely to attempt to escape, because they do not know the language or the area. The prisoners that are used as porters include murderers, bandits, drug users and others, anyone who cannot bribe their way out.

A group of five prison porters assigned to the LIB 55 serving in the frontline fled the military camp that they were assigned to and escaped to the Thai-Burma border. One porter, who deserted the Burmese army base in February 2007, said that he was a prisoner from Mandalay Prison and taken from the prison to be a porter in January. He said that there are a total of 250 prisoners taken from Mandalay Prison. Some of the 250 were sent to the battalions under Burmese army LIB 55 and others were sent to troops in other parts of Burma.

The porter said that when the prison official calls for porters, the prisoners who could pay a bribe to the officials were excused from being a porter. "I couldn't pay the money, so they removed me and sent me to be porter in the frontline" he said.

After he and other prisoners were taken from the Mandalay Prison, they were moved to a prison in Loikaw and then to Shadaw, both in Karenni State. After they crossed the Salween River, they arrived at a Burmese army camp. All prisoners were left in the camp, while the others moved to another army camp which was near the KNPP's base Nyarmu.

During the trip the prison porters had to carry heavy loads consisting of food supplies, ammunition, shells and equipment for the army over steep and mountainous terrain along jungle tracks. The porters were forced to carry soldiers who had been injured from landmines and battle. Upon arriving at their destination, the porters are not given any respite. They are immediately put straight to work digging trenches or bunkers, building fences and carrying water from faraway sources.

Another prisoner who was taken from Mandalay prison, who was serving a seven-year sentence for murder, said that "the porters were made to walk all day and night and the things that we carry are unfairly heavy. The way is very mountainous and rocky, and some of us don't have shoes. If we stop walking, the troops kick us and hit us with their gun. One of my porter friends was shot dead by a troop because he was so weak and couldn't walk after a long trip."

Many porters risk their lives to escape from the ruthless condition under the military troops where they can be worked to death. One of the five prison porters mentioned above said "we porters were beaten often, hit and punished by the commanding officers through we did nothing wrong. I saw one of my porter friends was shot, dead, in front of me. Many porters are waiting for the chance to escape but if the troops discover them, the porters will be shot".

Land Confiscation

People from Karenni State have a special connection with their land that goes beyond ownership. While people have the opportunity to resettle or seek asylum in Thailand they do not want to move away from their land. It is a part of their identity.

The Burmese army confiscates land from villagers with either inadequate or no compensation. The 1953 *Lands Nationalisation and Agricultural Lands Act*, the 1963 *Tenancy Act* and the 1963 *Protection of the Right to Cultivation Act* effectively striped all farmers of the right to own land. Notification Number 4/78 further restricts people's rights to own land. Under the notification land can be confiscated if farmers fail to cultivate the land with a specific crop and produce a set yield, or if they failed to sell a set quota to the junta at a predetermined price. Farmers have no avenues for redress under these laws.

In 2007 over 3,000 acres of farmland was confiscated by the SPDC in northern Loikaw. This area is being converted into an industrial zone.¹⁸

Self Reliance Programme

The Self Reliance Programme introduced in 1988 aimed to compensate for deficits in the national budget. Villages and townships became responsible for funding public services in their communities, such as schools. Under this programme, in the 1990s soldiers stopped receiving full rations and salaries and were encouraged to be more self-sufficient. This led to increased: land confiscation, extortion of money and property, and forced labour demands.

While the soldiers in the frontline did abuse the villagers' human rights, and continue to do so, they too are victims. The policies implemented by the upper echelons of the military created a system where the soldiers' were encouraged to use their resources in order for their basic needs to be met.

In addition to confiscating the land, the crops that are being grown on the land also become property of the SPDC. Villagers do not only lose their source of livelihood but also their harvest, making them vulnerable to food shortages. The majority of people in Karenni State are dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods and there is a direct link between land confiscation and loss of livelihood.

The SPDC confiscates land for three purposes: to control the local population, for development projects and to support the militarisation of areas (usually the land is used to grow food for the soldiers).

¹⁸ "Internal Displacement in Eastern Burma: 2007 Survey", Thailand Burma Border Consortium, October 2007

Extra-judicial killings

N--- M-'s Experiences

N--- M-'s husband was killed about four years (2003) ago by troops from the KNPLF, a group affiliated with the State Peace and Development Council SPDC.

“When he came back from the field, someone sent from the KNPLF came to tell him to go with him. After that, I never saw him alive again. The next morning, other villagers told me that they had heard a gunshot coming from the area where my husband was detained. As soon as I heard that I told my eldest daughter and together we went there to see what has happened. When we arrived there I saw him lying on the ground. His head was covered with blood. He was dead,” she said.

Sadly, N--- M-'s father-in-law, who was 80 years old, was shot dead by a Burmese soldier in June 2006.

“On that night, he was walking home after visiting his grandchildren when he accidentally ran into a drunk Burmese soldier. Without any search or question, the soldier took out his gun and shot him without any mercy,” N-- M- said.

Even though the soldier had murdered a villager, the military took no action against the culprit claiming that it was an accidental shooting.

Arbitrary Detention

B--- R----- S----'s Experience

“The Burmese soldiers detained me when I was about eight months pregnant, together with my two sons who are twelve and three years old after they couldn't find my husband,” B— R—— S— said.

The Burmese troops wanted to arrest B--- R----- S----'s husband after a clash between SPDC troops and Karenni National People's Party soldiers took place near Kxx Txxx village. At the time B--- R----- S----'s husband, - T- was not in the village. He was working in his paddy field. Because he was not in the village the army accused him of helping the Karenni armed group.

After they couldn't find the T--- , the soldiers arrested his wife and children instead of him and imprisoned them for 15 days.

“In the prison, they interrogated me, asking if I knew where my husband was. When questioning me, they slapped my face and hit me with bamboo,” she said.

The people of Karenni State have been facing hardships and human rights abuses for decades, which have become worse as militarisation increases. It is important

to remember that the use of human rights abuses to oppress the population is not a short-term tactic.

2.1.2 Militarisation

Militarisation in Karenni State has increased over the past six years. Currently there are 13 battalions permanently deployed in Karenni State, as well as additional rotating troops. In order to support these troops, army bases have been established throughout Karenni State in strategic locations, which have disrupted traditional trade routes. Roads have been constructed in Karenni State to transport supplies and equipment to army bases – ensuring that they are always well stocked and, sadly, ready for action. There is also a high prevalence of landmines in Karenni State, and death and permanent disability because of landmines is common. Both the SPDC and non-state actors have laid landmines, and both parties rarely map or make villagers aware of minefields.

“The SPDC lays landmines in the farms, gardens and at the bottom of ladders into rice stores,” K- R--- said.

As with landmines, both the Burmese army and non-state actors, including the KNPP use child soldiers. The Burmese army systematically and forcibly recruits children as young as eight¹⁹ into the army and currently has an estimated 70,000 child soldiers.²⁰ This is the largest number of child soldiers anywhere in the world. Among the 1,000 to 1,200 KNPP troops, an estimated 20 per cent of them are under the age of 18²¹ (the minimum age for recruitment into the armed forces under Burma’s national law²²). Many children also fight as part of the local militias. In 2006 the KNPP started working with UN agencies to disarm, rehabilitate and reintegrate child soldiers into Karenni society.²³ The SPDC has made token gestures towards disarming child soldiers, however, recruitment practices, including rewards for fulfilling recruitment quotas, continue.²⁴

The reasons behind the militarisation of Karenni State have shifted. Previously, defeating the armed resistance movement was the main reason for

After 50 years of protracted conflict, the effects of the civil war can be seen everywhere in Karenni society. Battered into submission by an unrelenting military regime, ceasefire groups and the armed opposition groups’ villagers dare not express dissent. Suspicion of strangers, friends, and neighbours is a way of life, as betrayal to the authorities for expressing discontent can come from any direction.

¹⁹ “Growing Up Under the Burma Dictatorship”, *International Confederation of Free Trade Unions*, August 2003

²⁰ “My Gun was as tall as me: Child Soldiers in Burma”, *Human Rights Watch*, October 2002

²¹ “My Gun was as tall as me: Child Soldiers in Burma”, *Human Rights Watch*, October 2002

²² Myanmar Defense Services Act (1947), Letter to Human Rights Watch from the Permanent Mission of the Union of Myanmar to the UN, May 8th, 2002

²³ “UN: Imposes Burma Arms Embargo to End Child Soldier Use”, *Human Rights Watch*,

<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/12/05/burma17481.htm>, December 5th, 2007, Deed of Commitment signed on April 13, 2007, by the chairman of the KNPP and the commander-in-chief of the KA.

²⁴ “Child Soldiers: Victims and Oppressors”, *Burma Issues Newsletter*, September 2006

militarisation, whereas nowadays it is to secure sites for development projects and the extraction of natural resources. Without stability around development project sites and along transportation routes, international companies and foreign governments will not invest. In order to secure complete control villagers are often relocated to areas close to military bases where they can be easily monitored by the SPDC. The military launch patrols to search for villagers who are remaining in their villages or hiding in the jungle resisting relocation orders. Once an area has been depopulated, or the population is being controlled in a forced relocation site, it is easier for the SPDC to begin a development project.

The increased in militarisation in Karenni State has significantly impacted on the people. The presence of extra troops has resulted in more human rights violations, especially arbitrary taxation (money extortion) and land confiscation, undermining people's ability and capacity to survive.

2.1.3 Retaliation for KNPP acts

Civilians, in both villages and relocation sites, are often punished by the SPDC in retaliation for the actions of the KNPP. This is done despite the fact that villagers have no control over the movement or actions of soldiers from the KNPP. This retaliation can take the form of money extortion (arbitrary taxation), forced labour (especially sentry duty), beatings and torture, as well as other punishments.

Retaliation

On the evening January 1st, 2007, there was fighting between the SPDC (Kx Mx Yxxx 250) and the KNPP near Pxx Kxxx Kxx village, Pxxxx Sxx Township. During the fighting the SPDC deputy commander was killed. The fighting only lasted about 15 minutes before the KNPP left the area. After the fighting the SPDC troops came to Pxx Kxxx Kxx village. The SPDC troops burnt nine villagers' rice stores.

Two days later (January 3rd, 2007) at 7.30 in the morning they sent a message ordering the Pxx Kxxx Kxx village chairman to come to the army camp. When he arrived at the army camp the SPDC soldiers arrested him and killed him.

Later that same day, the soldiers ordered all the villagers to come to the army camp. The village secretary and religious leader were among the villagers that went to the army camp. When they arrived the soldiers asked in a threatening way where the village secretary and religious leader were. But no one told them. That day the SPDC soldiers stole two pigs and more than 30 chickens from the villagers.

Later some villagers went to the army camp and asked the camp leader where the village chairman was. He did not answer them or tell them where they had buried him. The villagers searched around the army camp and found a fresh grave. They knew that their village chairman had been killed

2.1.4 Daily Reporting

“Every day one villager from each village has to go to the army camp to report about the situation near their community, in particular if there have been any opposition troops in the area. On every Thursday all village headmen must go to the army camp. After the headmen have gathered in the camp, a soldier will call each headman by their name and ask if you have something important to report or not. Normally, we tell them “no. No important news”. Afterwards the soldiers will tell us we can leave. If you are late, even only a few minutes, they (the soldiers) will accuse you of contacting KNPP troops and threaten you.” – K- R-- said.

Every day a representative from each village has to go to the local Burmese army base or camp and report on what has happened in their communities over the past 24 hours. Once a week all village leaders have to go to the military camp/base for a meeting. If a village does not send a representative each day or their leaders, there are serious consequences, such as the village headman being tortured, villages being looted, houses, or crops being destroyed.

Villagers, stressed and pressured to report to the SPDC, are too busy to think beyond sheer survival, they do not have time to think about the future, or to plan non-violent resistance to oppression enforced upon them by the Burmese military.

2.1.5 Spies

“People look at each other with suspicion eyes,” D--- W-- said.

A common trend among ethnic groups in Karenni State is the continuing mistrust within communities and between tribes. The SPDC uses spies within communities to control villagers. Spies report to the SPDC about villagers activities, who is absent from the village for extended period of times, who is suspected of sharing information with KNPP soldiers, etc. The junta gives concessions to people who act as spies, for example they may be exempt from forced labour demands.

Villagers usually resort to spying on their friends and families because the situation they are facing is so desperate and they can see no other way to survive. Subsequently, villagers are so scared that their activities are going to be reported to the local authorities that they do not trust one another, even to the extreme of not trusting family members. Based on the information provided by spies, community members are punished if they have done something that does not fit in with the SPDC’s narrow definition of acceptable activities.

“People have been killed because spies in the village have given information to armed groups,” K-- R-- said.

This impacts on humanitarian assistance being delivered to vulnerable people, as communities are less willing to work with or even receive community based organisation (CBO) staff because they fear that the CBO workers are spies. This extends to within communities where people are further isolated because they cannot trust their next-door neighbours, let alone outsiders.

2.1.6 Extreme Isolation

Tactics employed by the SPDC have deliberately isolated different ethnic groups to create divisions and tensions between these groups. Using divide and rule strategies, the Burmese military junta develops a specific plan of action for each ethnic area.

This isolates communities and divides them from other ethnic groups. Furthermore, organised resistance is done so on ethnic divisions, tribes are further isolated from one another. As different ethnic groups have made ceasefire agreements with the military junta, this act has created tensions between ceasefire and non-ceasefire groups. In different ethnic areas ceasefire groups act as a proxy army for the SPDC, which result in Karenni's killing Karenni people.

2.2 Non-State Actor tactics

“We lead a very hard life. We have to listen to both the KNPP and the SPDC. We have to balance them carefully. If not one side or the other will punish us. We are being treated as mere dirt,” P---
- R-- said.

Villagers face oppression not just from the Burmese military, but also from ceasefire and armed opposition groups. As the SPDC presence in Karenni State has grown stronger, the ceasefire groups control over areas of land has decreased. Consequently the protection that ceasefire groups offer to villagers and IDPs has also decreased significantly. Nowadays, in ceasefire areas, groups conduct patrols with the Burmese army and extort money from villagers in the form of taxation. Instead of protecting villagers from human rights abuses, ceasefire groups are violating the people's rights and are assisting the SPDC to do so.

However, grassroots communities are not just oppressed by the Burmese military junta or the ceasefire groups. Some KNPP soldiers abuse their power. The soldiers ignore the people's opinions, threaten them, and use violence against them. KNPP soldiers also commit human rights abuses against the villagers and lay landmines.

As a result of this behaviour, some villagers are supporting the KNPP soldiers out of fear, not respect. In fact, the people in some village tracts visited by BI Field Staff were so afraid of the KNPP soldiers, that they requested CBO workers replace them. The villagers were worried about the security risk the KNPP soldiers were posing and it was having a negative impact on some of their livelihoods.

2.3 Non-violent Resistance Tactics

“The Karenni soldiers and the Burmese soldiers come to the village and eat people's food. Villagers have no authority to stop either side from coming to their village. We want the SPDC to keep their promise and not harm civilians, and we also want the KNPP to respect the requests of villagers especially when their activities compromise the safety and security of civilians,” – T--- R--- said.

In areas of active armed conflict, after decades of military attacks and offensives, villagers have developed a number of coping strategies that aim to minimise the impact of the SPDC's violence and abuse. Villagers monitor troop movements through a number of different channels including displaced villagers passing through their area, pre-established communication networks among local communities (for example regularly meeting with members of different communities to share information), civilian security guards and opposition troops. These early warning systems enable villagers to prepare and flee before SPDC troops arrive, avoiding the threat of violence and human rights abuses.

In addition to early warning systems, villagers also establish a number of household risk management practices that include: hiding food supplies and crops, preparing an emergency evacuation procedure, regularly moving locations, working at night to avoid detection, paying fines and complying with forced labour orders. Villager level risk management plans are also established, in which the community works together and pools their resources in order to avoid the SPDC troops.

Since the SPDC gained control over most of the border areas in the late 1980s and early 1990s, it is no longer armed groups that are seen as the strongest form of resistance to the junta - the people are. By defying forced relocation orders, bribing officials to avoid forced labour quotas and fleeing to the jungle rather than being controlled, the villagers are staging their own resistance movement. The SPDC has realised that if they want to gain control over the entire area and population they need to attack the villagers, not the armed groups.

Village Headman

In some villages in the rural areas of Karenni State where the Karenni National Progressive Party and the State Peace and Development Council's troops and ceasefire groups are active, no one wants to serve as the village headman. Villages have started to practice a compulsory rotating system among villagers, to serve as headman when no one volunteers for the position. Being a village headman is not about governing the community, it is to share the torture.

The term of headman is different from one village to another; some villages practice three months per term, others four months or six months and the longest term is one year. People who take their turn, according to the compulsory rotating system, and serve as village headmen are called "bad-lucked persons", as they have to encounter many dangers during their turn.

Daily duties of headman are that he/she must send one of their villagers to the SPDC army camp (which for some villages entails about a 12 hour walk (round trip)), and report the situation, in particular whether KNPP troops have been around their village or not. The headman is responsible for the accuracy of this daily report. Then, every Friday, all villages' headmen themselves must go to the army camp for a meeting and report on the situation.

3. Livelihoods

Chapter Overview

The Karenni population relies extensively on agriculture for their livelihoods which is constantly under threat. While environmental factors such as drought affect crop yields, the continuing oppressive policies and devastating strategies, for example crop procurement, implemented by the Burmese junta directly undermine the Karenni villagers' ability and capacity to sustain their livelihoods. Civil servants and day labourers are affected as a result of inadequate incomes and corruption. The combination of economic and social hardships are further exacerbated by unstable commodity prices that increase dramatically without warning.

In this chapter:

- Types of Livelihoods
- Threats to Livelihoods
- Local Economy

3.1 Types of Livelihoods

3.1.1 Agricultural Sector

The vast majority of people in Karenni State rely on agriculture for their survival. In 2006 Burma's agricultural industry made up 56.4 per cent of the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employed 70 per cent of the nation's workforce.²⁵ Senior General Than Shwe acknowledged the sector's importance saying that Burma's agricultural industry was "the nation's main economic pillar".²⁶ Despite this, farmers are struggling to meet their basic needs and 75 per cent of the country lives below the poverty line²⁷ – a figure that has not improved in the last five years.



Most villagers in Karenni State live a subsistence existence – producing barely enough food to feed their families and bartering or selling any excess produce at local markets. Their livelihoods are constantly undermined by the policies and actions of the SPDC and to a lesser extent ceasefire groups and the KNPP.

3.1.2 Employment Sector

Despite working for the state, civil servants face hardships in meeting their basic needs. Salaries are heavily taxed (some ordinary taxes, others arbitrary) and any salary increases over the past six years have been nullified by skyrocketing commodity prices. To counter low salaries and high commodity prices many civil servants have additional businesses to earn extra money for their families' income, while others, especially health workers and teachers, resort to extortion by charging exorbitant fees for their services (see Chapter 4 and 5).

Day labourers also face severe economic difficulties. In 2003 labourers earned approximately 600 Kyat per week. In one month a labourer would earn less than 3,000 Kyat. By comparison a tin (15 kilograms) of poor quality rice cost 3,000 Kyat. Whilst labourers' incomes have increased slightly over the past four years, it has not matched the increase in commodity prices. As villagers have faced these deficits year after year, they simply do not have the financial resources to cope.

²⁵ "Burma Human Rights Yearbook 2006", Human Rights Documentation Unit, 2007

²⁶ "Economic Development must be building up the Nation", *New Light of Myanmar*, March 20th, 2004

²⁷ *Economist Country profile 2004*, "Failing the People of Burma? A call for a review of DFID policy on Burma", *The Burma Campaign UK*, December 2006



3.2 Threats to Livelihoods

3.2.1 Environmental Threats

For the last ten years there has been a drought in Karenni State - rains are late, and the rainfall is often too heavy to seep into the soil. Consequently, while Karenni State may receive high rainfalls, the water merely runs off the dried out ground taking with it nutrient rich top soil.

As a result crop yields have suffered. For example, in 2003 the rains arrived during harvesting, rather than after planting. The result was stunted growth of the crop, causing some villagers to produce only 40 per cent of their expected crop. In 2002 in Dxxx Px, Dxx Tx Mx, Mx Kxxx Sxx and Dxxx Pxx village tracts the situation was even worse, as farmers only produced 25 per cent of their expected crops. Some villagers from these four village tracts had to plant a second crop because the yields from their first crops were insufficient; others who did not have the financial resources to plant a second crop had to live of their meager first harvest.

Some townships and village tracts have better irrigation systems however the entire state faces water shortages. Despite this, areas where there is irrigation there are higher yields. In Hxx Pxx Kx Lx and Hxx Pxx Hxxx village tracts, where there are better irrigation and water sources, the production rate in both areas was 50 per cent of the expected crop. In comparison, Dxxx Px, Dxxx Tx Mx Gxx and Kxx Lxx village tracts, where there is no irrigation, had a crop yield that was only 25 per cent. Irrigation projects are expensive to establish and farmers' simply

do not have the capital to finance these systems even though their crops would improve significantly

Despite the drought, Karenni State is also prone to flooding. Flood water damages crops, and washes away nutrient-rich soil. In September 2006 the Pon River in Shadaw Township broke its banks, damaging around 500 acres of crops. Sxx Lxx village alone had 150 acres of sesame and betel nut crops damaged.²⁸ Farmers receive no assistance or compensation for the loss of crops from the junta.

3.1.2 SPDC Policies

On top of the environmental hardships Karenni communities face, SPDC policies have gone a long way to make the livelihoods of Karenni villagers worse, if not impossible to sustain. The result is that many villagers have no other choice but to flee their homes in search of more secure surroundings and food sources.

3.1.2.1 Crop Procurement

In 2002 the SPDC forced villagers to sell six large tins (1 tin weighs 15 kilograms) per acre of paddy they produced to the military. The SPDC paid only 350 Kyat per tin, while market price was between 1,000 and 2,000 Kyat per tin. The soldiers threatened to confiscate the villagers land if they did not comply," – B--- R--

For the last 40 years, villagers in Karenni State and the rest of Burma who produced rice were forced to sell a quota of rice at a reduced price to the military or civil servants, on occasion at one-sixth of the market price.²⁹ The Myanmar Agricultural Produce Trade, a state agency, was responsible for the implementation of this paddy procurement policy. The amount that villagers had to sell differed depending on the size of their farm – the larger the farm, the larger the quota.

After 40 years of implementing this policy, the SPDC announced in April 2003 that in 2004 the policy would be removed. At the end of 2003 the SPDC raised the salaries of civil servants by 5,000

Kyat per month to counter the upcoming rise in rice prices.³⁰ The rescinding of the policy also allowed for rice to be exported privately, enabling villagers and citizens to sell their product to the highest bidder and turn over a profit.³¹ However, the SPDC still controls the exporting and pricing of rice and has prohibited the export of rice on a number of occasions.³² Farmers are also still required to sell quotas to the armed forces at below market prices.

"We work hard and produce rice, but we do not get to keep our rice. If we could keep it, it would be enough for us. But we have to sell it and we do not get fair price. Now we do not have enough," P--- R---- said.

²⁸ "Flooding Damages Many Lands and Plantation Sites in Karenni State", *Kantawaddy Times*, October 7th, 2006

²⁹ "Burma Human Rights Yearbook 2004", *Human Rights Documentation Unit*, 2004

³⁰ "Salary Hike for Burmese Civil Servants", *Democratic Voice of Burma*, December 30th, 2003

³¹ "Burma's rice policy chaos sows economic seeds of doubt", *The Financial Times*, February 14, 2004

³² "Burma Human Rights Yearbook 2004", *Human Rights Documentation Unit*, 2004

3.1.2.2 Dry Season Crop

“The Burmese army orders villagers to grow rice paddy (a second crop) during the dry season”, - K-- R---- said.

Traditionally farmers produced one crop per year. Most villagers are swidden farmers who have many fields and rotate between these fields. This method allows nutrients in the soil to be replenished before the next crop is sown, resulting in higher yields.

The SPDC however, in a move to generate more income as a result of taxation and crop procurement, has been forcing farmers to produce two crops per year. Growing a second crop does not give the soil adequate time to recover and restore much needed nutrients. This second crop, grown during the dry season, puts additional demands on already limited water resources.

Both of these factors contribute to a lower crop yield for both the first and second crops. In some cases despite growing two crops a year, farmers are worse off than when they produced only one. As farmers continue to grow more than one crop per year, yields continue to decrease and will continue to do so until they will not even be able to scratch out a subsistence existence. Farmers will no longer have a primary source of food or income and will be forced to move.

“The dry season crop damages the land. There is not enough water and we have to plant soon after ploughing. The paddy does not grow strong,” w--- R---- said.

Farmers can purchase fertilizers and other chemicals to counter the lack of nutrients in the soil; however, these are costly and not readily available in all areas (please see Chapter 3.3). Additional equipment and labour is needed to tend to the dry season crops, which is another expense. As most farmers in Karenni State are making a subsistence living, they simply do not have the money to improve their yields.

“In three months the price of a tin (15 kilograms) of rice increased by 150 per cent,” – S--- R- - said.

“The labour costs you invest into the dry season crop does is not covered by what you harvest,” – P-- R--- said.

Villagers, in fear of the SPDC, have no other option than to grow the second crop or face having their land confiscated if they do not comply with the SPDC's demands.

3.1.2.3 Human Rights Abuses

People's livelihoods are constantly undermined by the systematic violation of human rights by the Burmese army. As most villagers in Karenni State rely on agriculture for their livelihoods, the destruction of villages (and surrounding fields) and forced relocation directly decreases their families' food supply. Land

confiscation means that villagers lose their source of livelihoods, but also their harvest making them vulnerable to food shortages. This is further exacerbated when villagers are forced to work on their land by the Burmese troops after the soldiers have stolen it. Additional forced labour and extortion demands are also common (more detailed information is available in Chapter 2).



3.3 Local Economy

Commodity prices in Karenni State are unstable and often there is no coloration between the price of goods and people's incomes. Additionally, commodity prices are susceptible to dramatically increasing with little warning. A tin (15 kilograms) of good quality rice was priced at 4,000 Kyat and a tin of low quality rice was 3,000 Kyat in 2003. A tin of groundnut was between 1,200 and 1,500 Kyat, a viss (1.63 kilogram) of maize was 120 Kyat, a viss of green peas 350 Kyat and a tin of sesame was 6,000 Kyat. In contrast a public servant received a monthly salary of 4,000 and 5,000 Kyat and a seasonal labourer only 600 Kyat per week.

In Karenni State the SPDC restricts what commodities can be sold in villages. Local businesses (shopkeepers) have to bribe local Military Intelligence to bring restricted commodities into the village, including batteries, boots (similar to military boots) and alcohol. Fireworks, gunpowder and firecrackers are prohibited throughout the state. Unless they have bribed the local SPDC representatives, shopkeepers found stocking banned supplies will be interrogated and possibly tortured or executed.

"In the second week of June 2003, a villager named P--- from Dxxx village bought a pair of military boots, a belt and a pack of batteries in the market in Pxxx. On the way home, KNPLF troops led by T--- S-- and P--- R--- captured P---. They killed him because he was in possession of prohibited materials. Additionally, the women who were traveling with P--- were searched. The KNPLF checked all the women by stripping them naked, searching them and their belongings. They were also interrogated," P--- W--- said.

4. Health Care

Chapter Overview

Many people die from preventable or easily treatable diseases in Karenni State. Basic health services are virtually non-existent due to a lack of state funding and instability within Karenni State. Clinics lack the very basic equipment and medicine. Health Workers either have receive severely inadequate or none at all, and are severely restricted in their access to the population. These factors, compounded with harsh environmental conditions and a lack of health awareness and education people have led to a health crisis. There is a widespread need for more health services in Karenni State and health workers need unrestricted access to all parts of the population. Additionally, people need access to clean drinking water, appropriate sanitation and education about basic health care, including disease prevention.

In this chapter:

- State Spending on Health
- Common Diseases
- Health Services
- Medicines
- Health Workers
- Health and Sanitation
- Public Health Education

4.1 State Spending on Health

Only 2.2 per cent of Burma's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is spent on health care.³³ The State Peace and Development Council spends less than one US dollar per person on health care each year (US \$0.60).³⁴ In comparison Cambodia spends US \$6.1 per person on health care, and health expenditure represents 6.7 per cent of their GDP. Thailand and Laos spend 3.5 per cent and 3.9 per cent of their GDPs respectively, which represents a spending of US \$57 and US \$3.4 per person each year on health care.³⁵ Sudan spends 4.1 per of their GDP on health care, which amounts to US \$8.7 per capita.³⁶ Health care in the USA represents 15.4 per cent of their GDP and US \$2724.7 per person.³⁷

While these figures reflect national expenditure on health care, they do not reflect health care expenditure in ethnic regions where these areas receive very little, if any, public funding for health care. In 2004 over 99 per cent of expenditure on health services in Burma came out of the patients own pockets.³⁸

4.2 Common Disease

Most common diseases in Karenni State can be easily prevented and treated. The serious lack of awareness among the general public and health care workers, in addition to severely inadequate health care resources, results in a disproportional high number of health conditions and fatalities to disease that could otherwise be easily treated.

Over 2,000 villagers in Karenni State were surveyed with regards to their health situation, in 2003. All people surveyed had been ill in the past year. The table below outlines diseases people suffered and how common they were among the surveyed population.

The Back Pack Health Worker Team, a CBO working cross-border from Thailand that provides health care to communities in eastern Burma, conducted a similar survey and had similar results. Their survey also found that one in five children, (20 per cent), die before their fifth birthday, with 80 per cent of these deaths were caused by diarrhea, malaria and acute respiratory infections. In Burma 10.4 per cent of children die before their fifth birthday.³⁹ By comparison, in the USA the under-5 child mortality rate is 0.8 per cent.⁴⁰ Whilst Burma's national statistic is

³³ World Health Statistic 2007, http://www.who.int/whosis/database/core/core_select_process.cfm , accessed November 2007

³⁴ World Health Statistic 2007, http://www.who.int/whosis/database/core/core_select_process.cfm accessed November 2007

³⁵ World Health Statistic 2007, http://www.who.int/whosis/database/core/core_select_process.cfm accessed November 2007

³⁶ World Health Statistic 2007, http://www.who.int/whosis/database/core/core_select_process.cfm accessed November 2007

³⁷ World Health Statistic 2007, http://www.who.int/whosis/database/core/core_select_process.cfm accessed November 2007

³⁸ World Health Statistic 2007, http://www.who.int/whosis/database/core/core_select_process.cfm accessed November 2007

³⁹ World Health Statistic 2007, http://www.who.int/whosis/database/core/core_select_process.cfm accessed November 2007

⁴⁰ World Health Statistic 2007, http://www.who.int/whosis/database/core/core_select_process.cfm accessed November 2007

very high and needs urgent attention, the fact remains that children in ethnic areas are twice as likely to die before their fifth birthday. There is also a high risk

Disease	Per cent of population afflicted
Pneumonia	9.22 per cent
Tonsillitis	7.71 per cent
Urinary Tract Infection	7.3 per cent
Malaria	6.73 per cent
Dysentery	5.22 per cent
Beriberi	3.9 per cent
Skin Diseases	3.56 per cent
Diarrhea	1.4 per cent
Other (bronchitis, gastritis, worms, vitamin deficiency, colds, hypertension, anemia, etc.)	54.9 per cent

of maternal death for mothers with one in 12 women dying (maternal death relates to deaths shortly before, during or just after child birth).⁴¹ Most of these deaths could be prevented if women and children could access basic medical care.

“During January and February 2007 many villages in Karenni State suffered severe diahoerra, which led to the deaths of many people, including children. In Tx Kxx Sxxx village two children under the age of 15 died from diahorrea and in Jx Lx Kxxx village one child, who was not yet one, died. In Yxxx Sxx Pxx village six people got diahorrea and two of them died, in Hx Hxx Kxxx village three people got diahorrea and one died,” T--- R-- said.

Food shortages and malnutrition add to the health care crises. Many villagers, including pregnant women and children, have sub-standard diets (in terms of nutritional value of food eaten and frequency). Malnutrition is rife. Across Burma over 40 per cent of children under-5 have stunted growth and nearly 30 per cent are underweight.⁴² These figures are higher in ethnic areas such as Karenni State. In some villages where moderate and severe malnutrition is widespread and

⁴¹ “Chronic Emergency: Health and Human Rights in Eastern Burma”, Back Pack Health Worker Team, 2006

⁴² World Health Statistic 2007, http://www.who.int/whosis/database/core/core_select_process.cfm accessed November 2007

other support. There is also the need for greater awareness among villagers and other support. There is also the need for greater awareness among villagers there is a need for community intervention in the form of feeding programmes of dietary requirements.

4.3 Health Services

Within Karenni State the population can be split into three groups: rural (villagers), urban (people that live in towns) and semi-urban populations (people who live between villages and towns). Living standards and access to health care differ dramatically between Urban and Rural areas and yet health services provided in towns is still drastically inadequate.

Despite their efforts, clinics, hospitals and health services that the State, NGOs or religious groups support simply do not have enough resources to provide adequate health care for the Karenni population. Additionally, many villages and surrounding areas do not have a basic clinic. Villagers who have no access what so ever to health services must travel for days over rugged terrain to access medical treatment.

“A free clinic supported by MSF-Switzerland is located in Nxxx Lx Bxx Sxxxx village, north of Loikaw, the capital of Karenni State. Although there is a free clinic, it lacks the resources to treat medical emergencies. Consequently, patients with emergencies are sent to the public hospital in Loikaw. In such situations, the free clinic pays for only one-third of the medical cost and the patients have to make up the difference. As many patients cannot pay, the hospital staff do not provide them with care. “ – N--- R-- said.

4.4 Medicine

There is a lack of vital medication in Karenni State. Hospitals and medical clinics that are operated by state, local and international NGO's are allegedly suppose to provide free or affordable medicine; however this is far from the case. Hospitals and clinics do not receive any medical supplies from the SPDC and supplies that come from alternative sources are often pilfered by private chemists, with supply shelves in clinics and hospitals remaining empty. BI Field Staff reported seeing medicine from the UNICEF, with UNICEF labels, that were proclaimed to be free, being sold in private drug stores in Karenni State.

Further exacerbating the shortage of medicine in Karenni State are the restrictions imposed by the Burmese regime, in particular, prohibiting medicines being transported to areas outside the SPDC's control. Health workers take great risk carrying medication on their persons, and face possible imprisonment, torture and execution if discovered by the Burmese army. Consequently, health workers

Among 81 villages surveyed in 2006 and 2007 only four had any clinics or health care services. One of the four clinics did not have any medicine or health workers. That represents less than five per cent of villages having any level of health care services on a permanent basis – BI Field staff 3 and 7

that do carry medicines often charge patients very high prices as compensation for the risk they take - often making them unaffordable for the majority of the population.

Additionally, if a villager does receive medicine from a health worker the treatment is often split between a number of patients, in order to maximize profits. Consequently no one receives the full course of medication and making the treatment ineffective.

Patients or family and friends must visit private pharmacies upon receiving their prescription from a doctor or health worker to purchase medicine and then return to either the hospital or clinic where it is then administered.

Traditional Medicine

In areas where people cannot access medical treatment many villagers use traditional medicine. Sometimes traditional remedies work, however, they are often inadequate. In many cases people with knowledge of traditional medicine are the only ones who can offer any relief to villagers who are in pain or ill. Knowledge about traditional medicine is passed down from one generation to the next orally. However some do not want to share their knowledge and it is being lost.

4.5 Health Workers

Health workers face formidable obstacles and challenges in providing adequate health care to the public.

4.5.1 Shortage of Health Workers

“In one village tract in Karenni State 18 villages are dependent on one nurse to provide health care for all the people,” – D- W----- said.

Per 1000 people in Burma, there are 0.36 doctors, 0.2 nurses, 0.79 midwives, 0.0 pharmacists (there are only 127 pharmacists in the country), 0.99 community health workers and 0.04 other health workers.⁴³ Burma’s health worker numbers are similar to those of Thailand, Cambodia and Sudan; however, they are very different from those of western countries. In the USA for every 1000 people there are 2.56 doctors, 9.37 nurses, 1.63 midwives, 0.88 pharmacists and 14.52 other

health workers.⁴⁴ In total, for every 1000 people in Burma there are only 2.38 health workers, whereas in the USA they have 28.96 health workers for every 1000 people⁴⁵ – that is over 12 times the number of health workers servicing the same number of people. The situation in Karenni State is more severe. Many villages and surrounding areas have no health workers at all. The few health

⁴³ World Health Statistics, http://www.who.int/whosis/database/core/core_select_process.cfm accessed November 2007

⁴⁴ World Health Statistic, http://www.who.int/whosis/database/core/core_select_process.cfm accessed November 2007

⁴⁵ World Health Statistic, http://www.who.int/whosis/database/core/core_select_process.cfm accessed November 2007

Pxx Pxxx Village Tract

Due to its rugged location, the region has neither clinics nor health workers. As villagers cannot afford to get treatment from hospitals when they are sick, some people have died from minor diseases.

Sxxx Lxx Village Tract

Sxxx Lxx village tract has neither clinics nor health workers. Patients have to be carried to Bxxx Lx Kxx hospital by the people when their health condition gets serious. Patients have died on the way.

DxxxxTx Mx Gxx, Kxxx Lxxx and Dxxx Px Village Tract

Other than DxxxxTx Mx Gxx village, there are no clinics in the villages in this village tract. There are also no trained medical staff. In some villages there are some missionary health workers, midwives and some village health workers. Patients have to pay for their own medicines.

Kxx Lxxx Village Tract

In Kxx Lxxx village tract there is only one clinic at Kxx Lxxx village but there are hardly any medicines available. Though there are some midwives and mother-and-child care workers. Villagers have to pay for all medicines.

workers that are working in Karenni State are often ill trained, if at all trained, and lack adequate resources.

Some relocation sites have medical clinics, but no permanent health workers are assigned to these clinics. When villagers need health care, the SPDC will arrange health workers to come to the clinic. These health workers do not receive any salary from the SPDC. The villagers are required to pay for the cost of medicine and the travel costs for the health care workers to come to the clinics. These health workers sometimes do not bring medicine to the clinic despite being specifically called to treat people.

4.5.2 Salaries

The salaries of health workers employed by the state are inadequate. The issues that arise from this are that health workers often have to take second jobs, end up selling medicine on the black market or charge extra for medical services. The resulting crises means that clinics are often understaffed or closed, lack medicine and also drives up the cost of health services making health care unaffordable for most people. Salaries for health workers need to be increased.

4.5.3 Training

There is a lack of qualified health workers in Burma, especially in ethnic minority areas such as Karenni State. In order to fill shortages, unqualified people are hired who lack the necessary skills to diagnose and treat diseases and injuries effectively. This can lead to misdiagnosis causing permanent injury, disability, and on occasion leading to death.

In semi-urban and rural areas, self-employed nurses travel from village to village offering medical treatment in exchange for payment, either money or goods. These nurses rarely receive any medical education and they often engage in very unsafe practices, such as reusing hypodermic needles which increase the level for infection and can transfer HIV/AIDS.

Moreover many medics from Thailand that work cross border also have limited training. Some organisations that focus on cross border health care provide a two-year training course for medics, while others receive only a few months. There is a desire to improve trainings and services for health workers however, significant demands for assistance means that they do not have extended periods of time to upgrade their skills.

While some health care workers have attended short-term training, others have received no training. One health care worker admitted that he had limited knowledge and was ill trained to treat people effectively. Encouragingly however these health workers said they would be willing to participate in health-related workshops to upgrade their knowledge.

4.6 Health and Sanitation

Poor living standards result in poor health conditions and when combined with a perpetual lack of adequate health care, can lead to a health crisis. The systematic violation of human rights in Karenni State due to the armed conflict between the various fighting fractions and the Burmese military undermines the peoples' ability and capacity to sustain their livelihoods, or improve their living conditions.

4.6.1 Water

People do not always have access to clean drinking water. In Karenni State there are not many rivers and villages are not always located along a permanent water source. To have a permanent water supply some villagers build dams to store water. These dams are their only supply of water and villagers use this water to bath, clean cooking utensils as well as for drinking. Animals also use this water for bathing and drinking and contaminate the water with their excretions. The multiple use of one water supply leads to serious contamination and potentially has severe health repercussions.

These dams are also not large enough and most people face water shortages during the summer. In some cases villagers have to walk 45 minutes each way to collect water in the midst of a civil war zone which also has other threats, the most



predominate being from landmines. People therefore tend to limit the amount of water they use so that they do not have to travel too much compounding unsanitary conditions.

Some ceasefire groups made promises to provide communities with water tanks. This would help improve people's access to clean drinking water and an adequate water supply for sanitation purposes. However, the provision of these water tanks was conditional on there being no fighting in the area. The United Nations Development Programme also provides water tanks to villagers in Karenni State.

4.6.2 Sanitation

Among rural communities in Karenni State there is very little sanitation services or awareness of the issue. Many communities do not have basic toilet facilities and water supplies are often contaminated. In Karenni communities where there are facilities they are often unused as villagers are unaware of the potential health risks or simply choose to follow traditional practices. Globally it is estimated that 5 million people die from preventable water borne diseases as a consequence of unsatisfactory hygiene and sanitation practices. Preventable illnesses arising from inadequate sanitation add further pressure on an already failing health system.

4.7 Public Health Education

Villagers have little knowledge of good hygiene and sanitation practices that reduce the risk of illness. Awareness among the general public is an important aspect of improving the health situation in Karenni State.

“Between 1994 and 1996 seven or eight villagers died of diarrhea in one village. The outbreak was most likely caused by poor sanitation and a lack of health education in the area. Villagers did not know how to take protective measures during the outbreak of the disease”, a midwife from Kxx Lxxx village tract said.

However, there are limited opportunities for trainings or awareness raising campaigns. Travel restrictions mean that health workers need permission from the SPDC to access certain areas and this is rarely given.

“In Nxxx Lx Bxx Sxxx village, near Loikaw, the capital of Karenni State, there is a fee clinic supported by MSF-Switzerland. Health workers from the clinic provide health education programmes to the villages nearby. However, the workers are unable to travel to other areas and conduct these trainings, due to travel restrictions imposed by the SPDC,” N--- R-- said.

Cross border health workers cannot spend extended periods of time in villages as their presence is a security risk for themselves and community members. Consequently they are limited in their capacity to raise awareness of health issues and good health practices within villages.

When trainings are offered, a lack of motivation or interest makes it difficult to find participants for these trainings. People depend on agriculture for their

O- T- L---'s Story

In Loikaw there are two hospitals, a public hospital and a military hospital. O- T- L--- had served with the Burmese army for 27 years. After O- T- L--- retired he received a pension from the Burmese junta of 16,001 Kyat per month.

In 2007 O- T- L--- was ill. He went to the public hospital stayed in the hospital for four days. While he was in hospital he spent 84,800 Kyat.

Item	Cost (in Kyat)
Admission Fee	500
Blood Test (per test)	5,000
Exam Room Rent	2,000
Saliva Test (per test)	1,000
Food	41,600
Carer (per day)	100
Sterilised Gbves (per pair)	25
Prescription Fee	80
Bathroom Fee (per use)	12

All the hospital provided was the bed. O- T- L--- had to buy everything else. He needed to bring his own bedding, or buy some. When he required medicine or food he had to give money to someone to go outside the hospital and buy it for him.

When O- T- L--- was a soldier he had been to the military hospital. He said the military hospital was much better and that the SPDC provided everything. "If the people are sick, they will go to the local hospital, but the hospital is not there to save lives," O- T- L--- said.

livelihoods so time spent away from their work affects the yield of their crop and their ability to feed their families. Villagers also worry about their security and believe that people may become suspicious. This poses a serious threat should SPDC troops come to the village and question other villagers about where they were.

A level of mistrust between different villages further deepens this crisis. Some villagers fear that if they attend health training, other participants would betray them and inform the military.

5. Education

Chapter Overview

Most villagers cite education as a priority for their community in Karenni State. However, education is in a dire situation with levels of schooling seriously undermined due to severe abuses of the education system, deficient state controls and a lack of genuine commitment to provide adequate services in Karenni State by the SPDC. It is common for communities to face frequent school closures, extortions of arbitrary fees, salary theft, a severe lack of materials, resulting students and teachers alike are becoming more and more disillusioned and uninterested in education. The continued lack of support and funding over and above the implementation of policies detrimental to education means that more assistance is required to provide Karenni children with any hope for a better future. Currently, in rural areas, most people only complete primary school and have a basic level of education equating to around four years of schooling. The time for support is now. The future generations of Karenni children are at stake and the risk of not acquiring the necessary skills for survival is too high.

In this chapter:

- State Spending on Education
- Schools
- Education Resources
- Curriculum
- Monitoring the education system
- Hurdles to accessing Education services

5.1 State Spending on Education

The SPDC spends 0.6 per cent of the country's GDP on education.⁴⁶ By comparison, the Burmese junta spends 333 per cent more on the armed forces than they do on education. In relative regional and economic terms, Laos spends 2.3 per cent, Thailand 4.2 per cent and Sudan 6 per cent of their GDP on education.⁴⁷ There is no denying that Burma's education system is massively under funded, the consequences of which are that Burma in terms of education is falling further and further behind neighbouring countries.

5.2 Types of Schools

In Karenni State school systems can be categorised by three different types of schools. These are: SPDC-run state schools, church-run schools and local community-run schools. Where most villages have a primary school, middle and high schools are usually only found in towns. There are no church or community-run middle or high schools.

Of 81 communities surveyed in 2006 and 2007 76 had primary schools. No villages had either a middle or high school – BI Field Staff 3 and 7

5.2.1. Community-run schools

Communities have taken it upon themselves to establish primary schools for their children. The villagers hire and support teachers working in community-run schools. They provide the teachers with food, basic supplies for the school, schools buildings, etc. However, even with this support, teachers in community-run schools are struggling for their livelihoods.

Students, who have finished primary school at a community-run school, face difficulties accessing State-run middle and high schools. State-run schools do not recognise community schools or students from these schools and it is very difficult to transfer from one system to the other. As most communities run their own school this severely limits the education opportunities of children in Karenni State.

5.2.2 State-run schools

In Burma there are 39,000 state-run schools supported by the Burmese military junta.⁴⁸ There is one state-run school for every two villages in central Burma and one state-run school per 25 villages in ethnic areas, such as Karenni State.⁴⁹ The junta allegedly provides educational human resources and pays teacher salaries. However, there are severe teacher shortages and teacher's salaries are inadequate. Additionally there is a shortage of materials and supplies along with inadequate buildings.

⁴⁶ World Bank, <http://devdata.worldbank.org/edstats/SummaryEducationProfiles/CountryData> accessed November 2007

⁴⁷ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, <http://www.uis.unesco.org>, accessed November 2007

⁴⁸ "A dangerous journey to school: Why are students fleeing the Burmese education system?", *Burma Issues Newsletter*, July 2005

⁴⁹ "A dangerous journey to school: Why are students fleeing the Burmese education system?", *Burma Issues Newsletter*, July 2005

5.2.3 Religious schools

The church supports some local primary schools; however there is only partial support for schools. State-run middle and high schools refuse to recognise students' academic achievements who have attended religious backed primary schools. As a result of this policy from the state education system, students who have completed primary school at church-run schools are ineligible to attend middle or high school.

5.3 Education Resources

The affects that a lack of resources has on education is severe. SPDC run schools not only face depilating shortages of material and human resources.

5.3.1 Teachers

Teacher's Qualifications

Despite completing teacher training, teachers in State (or SPDC)-run schools receive inadequate training and are ill suited to providing an engaging learning environment. This insistency on ROTE learning throughout their education is commonly also used to train teachers. Teachers are therefore often ill prepared and lack the skills to effectively manage classroom behaviour and ensure that students cover all materials in the syllabus.



Teachers in community-run and religious schools are often villagers who have shown an interest in teaching, or are well respected among the community. They rarely receive any training and often have very limited educations themselves. Despite older, more experienced teachers mentoring community teachers, their experiences as ROTE learners often prevails in their own teaching style similar to that of the state trained teachers.

Salary and salary cuts

The salaries of teachers are considerably low. This low level of salary creates many problems for teachers which affects both their own livelihood as well as their ability to teach affectively. The normal salary of a teacher is between 4,000 and 5,000 Kyat per month. Township and state officers often cut teachers salaries by up to 1,000 Kyat per month. Due to the skyrocketing commodity prices,

teachers cannot realistically live on such meagre salaries and consequently need to supplement their income.

Teachers implement this in a number of strategies to help support themselves and their families. For example, teachers from other areas often close the schools for up to a month and return to their hometowns to work. Schools are also closed when teachers go for trainings, meetings, or to collect their monthly salaries from nearby towns. Even if the schools are closed for extended periods and there are complaints, the State authorities do not address the issue.

Teachers also charge their students arbitrary fees as a way to supplement their income, for example, charging fees for study-sessions to prepare for examinations that are compulsory. This leads to student discrimination between those students who can afford the arbitrary fees and those who cannot.

Teacher Shortages

Given the low salaries, lack of teaching materials, non-existent support from the education department and a genuine fear of armed opposition groups, it is very difficult to staff schools. As a result a teacher shortage is a chronic problem across the entire state and teachers have to assume additional responsibilities to fulfil the shortfall. This creates further hardships for teachers as it limits their time that they can spend working to sustain their livelihoods. This leads to supplementary income procuring as mentioned above.

5.3.2 School Buildings

Schools supported by the church have, generally, better conditioned buildings than those of the State or community-run schools. However, for the most part, the school buildings in Karenni State are inadequate for students. Most of the buildings of State-run schools are very old (between 30 and 40 years old). Some State-run schools are too small and are in constant disrepair. Community

Karenni Literacy

Most teachers in State-run schools in Karenni State are from different areas in Burma. They are unfamiliar with the area, the people, local traditions, customs and language. Villagers, teachers and students are forced to communicate through the common language – Burmese.

In State-run schools all lessons must be conducted in Burmese. Ethnic languages, including Karenni language, are prohibited from being taught even as a second language. As a result many Karenni children and young adults are not literate in their mother tongue.

Literacy for the Karenni is very important as it is an integral part of their culture. In 2002 to 2004 members of the Karenni Literacy Committee went to villages and taught people to read and write Karenni. However, the deteriorating situation in Karenni State has since made it impossible for people to continue doing this.

Nowadays the only opportunity for villagers to learn to read and write Karenni is through informal lessons among members of their communities. The ability to read and write Karenni is being lost.

supported schools often lack the resources and time to construct quality buildings and as a result some students have to take classes outside. Church, State and community run schools rarely have running water or basic toilet facilities. To replace a school building it costs between 300,000 Kyat and 500,000 Kyat, according to BI field staff.

5.3.3 Materials

There is a serious lack of learning materials for teachers and students to use, such as books, teaching aides, sports equipment, etc. Rural areas, in particular, face debilitating shortages of basic school supplies such as pens, books, pencils, etc. Parents also do not have the resources to pay for supplies and materials for their children.

UNICEF provides educational assistance to the Burmese regime in the form of materials however, only a handful of school materials provided by UNICEF have ever reached schools in some rural communities because of corruption.

“Headmasters charge students 20-30 Kyat per book when they are suppose to sell them for only 5 Kyat as stated by the provisional office”, a schoolteacher from Dxxx Tx Mx Gxx village tract, Karenni State said.

Teachers' equipment mainly consists of a blackboard and chalk. Consequently even if teachers want to engage in alternative, participatory teaching methods they do not have the equipment necessary to do so



5.4 Curriculum

The curriculum used by schools in Karenni State is inadequate. Knowing that most students will only finish primary school, the curriculum is aimed at providing the students with the bare essential skills of reading, writing and basic arithmetic.

The curriculum used in Karenni State is equally as limited. Important subjects, such as good governance, humanities and citizenship are missing from the curriculum, as are music and art. Extra curricular activities such as public speaking and sport competitions that contribute significantly to a child's development are also ignored.

In State-run schools social science subjects that are included (such as history) are taught from a Burmese perspective, with an emphasis on the Burmese-centric version of history that promotes the importance of Burman ethnicity over other groups, such as Karenni. This further exacerbates ethnic chauvinism as a new generation of children are being brought up to believe that their importance, value and identity in society is determined by ethnicity, rather than by their individual character and achievements.

In some community-run schools sympathetic to the ethnic armed groups, teachers are further developing ethnic tensions through the way educational material is presented to students. By emphasising the status of the Karenni armed resistance movement and the oppression of the people of Karenni State by the Burmese army, the teachers are developing a strong sense of ethnic nationalism among the students. Given the fact that Karenni society, like many other societies in Burma, is highly militarised, this type of education in some community-run schools is contributing to further militarisation in Karenni society.

Teaching Method

Teachers simply lecture their students and expect the children to repeat back what has been said, similar to the ROTE education method. This system does not encourage students to conceptualise the materials they are learning, but rather focuses on the student's ability to memorise. Under this education method, students do not learn critical and creative thinking or problem solving skills.

Furthermore often teachers do not pay attention to how the students are progressing. They continue teaching, and fail to check that students are keeping up. As students fall further behind in their lessons, they become less and less interested in their classes and will often stop attending school.

5.5 Monitoring the education system

The parents of students and community members said that it was difficult to redress issues relating to education in their villages. Despite having an education department as part of the central government the parents said that the state rarely monitors the schools and teachers. Parents do not feel that local staff at the education department follow up on their complaints because teachers were not reprimanded.

All of these issues could be addressed if there was an adequate monitoring system developed by the SPDC Education Department. However, the SPDC implements policies that prevent independent monitoring of education services.

One such policy was introduced in 2001, where students from 1st to 9th standard could not fail an exam. Students who fail subjects during the final exams are allowed to re-sit the examinations during the summer holidays. Teachers are expected to tutor students who fail their exams for free, however some teachers ask 500 Kyat from each student as a tuition fee to compensate for helping students during the holidays. Students from poor families cannot afford to pay the fee and as a consequence there is a level of discrimination that favours richer students. In other situations to ensure that all students pass the exams, teachers hand out examination papers to the students beforehand.

Whilst there are standardized testing during the 4th and 10th Standard. However, even with these tests it does not guarantee a high quality of education. During the 2005/2006 academic year in P—— 40 students sat standardized examinations and made submissions for 10th standard. Of the 40 only 4 passed.

5.6 Hurdles to access services

There is a very real desire among the population of Karenni State to be able to send their children to school so that they can have a better future. In order to achieve this dream they need to change a system that they have no voice in, or control over; a system that in fact controls them.

5.6.1 Costs

Education is expensive. In State-run schools families are expected to pay for everything, tuition, books, fees, teacher fees, sports fees, religious holiday fees, extra-tuition, study-fees, examination fees and many others. As students progress in their schooling, their fees increase each year.

For most families providing their children with a simple education (primary level) is beyond their reach. Community-run schools are more affordable (people



support teachers with food) and accessible. However, these finish at the primary level.

Students attending middle and high school are expected to pay the fees mentioned above (as well as any additional arbitrary fees). As most villages do not have middle or high schools, students have to travel long distances to attend classes. Often it is too far for them to return home each night; therefore they must lodge near their schools. Some stay with family while others need to pay for a place in a boarding house and incur the expenses of their accommodation and food.

“As parents, we are mainly using swidden farming to support ourselves. There are no rich families, a few families have a little more than others, but it is not much. There is almost no income. Struggling for daily survival is our main work. So to survive is more important than education,” T-- R--- said.

Additionally, as most people in Karenni State rely on agriculture for their livelihood many children are sent to work in the fields to contribute to the family's income rather than to go to school. Additionally, children are kept home to look after younger siblings while their parents go to the field to work. Sometimes families keep children to work at home for a few days to a week, and then allow them to return to their lessons. For many children however it means a permanent end to their education.

5.6.2 Limited Opportunities following Education

Students who have completed high school or have attended higher education have very limited employment opportunities. Most end up working in agriculture or forestry work, even though they are quite well educated. Opportunities for working with the government are limited and most require a bribe to obtain these positions regardless of how qualified one may be for the position. As a result some parents do not see the value in education and consequently stop sending their children to school.

6. Drugs

Chapter Overview

Farmers are turning to illegal drug cultivation as a way to escape extreme poverty thrust upon them by the relentless civil war. As the situation in Karenni State worsens, more and more farmers will turn to poppy cultivation and the more secure future it promises. Whilst the income that farmers can earn from drugs is significantly higher than from other crops, they remain vulnerable to economic hardships, exploitation and abuses from the Burmese military regime and non-state actors. Furthermore, the increased drug production has led to increased drug abuse amongst the Karenni people, in two districts 35 per cent of males are using opium. This adds pressure to an already inadequate health system while eroding the fragile social fabric of the Karenni people.

In this chapter:

- Types of drugs produced in Karenni State
- Why villagers are producing drugs
- Eradication Programmes
- Social Problems

6.1 Types of Drugs Produced in Karenni State

“Growing poppies is not part of our traditional way of life. We grow them purely to support ourselves,” – E-- R--- said.

The drug trade, including the growing or production of drugs and being a part of trafficking routes, has affected at least five out of the seven townships in Karenni State.⁵⁰ In 2004 Karenni State was the second largest producer of poppies in Burma, following Shan State⁵¹ and since then the situation has worsened with the continuing poppy cultivation and production of amphetamine type stimulants in the state.

6.1.1 Opium Poppies

There are two main areas in Karenni State where poppies are cultivated: the northern border with Shan State, in an area under the control of the Shan Nationalities People’s Liberation Organization (SNPLO) and in the western part of Karenni State towards the border with Mandalay Division which is monitored closely by the KNPLF. Both of these groups have ceasefire agreements with the SPDC.

“We can not stop growing poppies because the government (SPDC) cannot support and replace the poppies with other crops” – a SNPLO leader said.

Within these regions poppies are grown in both lowland and mountainous areas, but cultivation in lowlands areas is generally more productive as farmers have better access to irrigation. The strength of a crop is judged by the height of the plants: the taller the poppy plant, the higher the yield. In lowland areas poppy plants can grow to shoulder height, whereas in mountainous areas they generally only reach waist height. Additionally, farmers in lowland areas can harvest twice each year, while mountainous areas only produce one crop.

There are three different types of poppy plants being grown which can be distinguished by the colour of the flower: white, dark red, and a mix of white and red. However, the quantity and quality of product extracted is the same. Once a poppy crop has been cultivated, small incisions are made on the immature poppy seedpods and a milky sap from the cuts is collected. This sap is raw opium that contains morphine. Raw opium is quite bulky and difficult to transport, so it is often refined into a morphine paste by simply drying the material. A morphine paste can either be smoked or it can be further processed into heroin. In Karenni State most farmers produce and sell raw opium, which is later refined.

The KNPLF and SNPLO ceasefire groups closely monitor poppy cultivation. Ceasefire groups issue farmers permission to grow poppies via tax collection calculated on the yield (the higher the yield, the more tax). Armed groups issue mediators with permission letters bought for 700,000 Kyat allowing them to

⁵⁰ “Myanmar Opium Survey 2004”, UN Office on Drugs and Crime, October 11, 2004

⁵¹ “Myanmar Opium Survey 2004”, UN Office on Drugs and Crime, October 11, 2004

purchase raw opium directly from the farmers. Growers are prohibited from selling their harvest to mediators without permission letters. In these situations, the farmers must sell their crop directly to the ceasefire groups for approximately 200,000 Kyat for a 1.5-kilogram package. However, mediators with permission letters offer better prices usually 300,000 Kyat per 1.5 kilogram package.



6.1.2 Amphetamine-Type Stimulants (ATS)

While poppies continue to be grown in Burma and refined into opium or heroin, there has been a significant rise in the production of amphetamine type stimulants (ATS). The production of ATS can be easily hidden from international observers, as factories are often undistinguishable from other dwellings in the area.

A singular ATS factory can produce between 250,000 and 300,000 pills per month.⁵² To date three ATS factories have been identified in Karenni State (two in KNPLF territory and the other on the border with Shan State)⁵³ and most likely there are many others that have not been identified. Each year these three factories produce between 9 million and 10.8 million illegal chemical pills that are released into the international drug market.

⁵² "A Failing Grade: Burma's Drug Eradication Efforts", *Altsean*, November 2004

⁵³ "Burma Issues & Concerns Vol. 4: The Security Dimensions", *Altsean Burma*, April 2007

6.2 Why villagers are producing drugs

Opium has always been produced in Karenni State and Burma for medicinal purposes and personal use. Over the past five years there has been an increase in amphetamine stimulants being produced from Karenni State.

Chapter 2 and 3 of this report examines in detail tactics used by the SPDC to oppress the population and hardships people face in sustaining their livelihoods. As people's earnings from agriculture continue to dwindle, potential returns from growing poppies become increasingly attractive, as does having the financial means to

bribe one's way out of forced labour demands and other human rights abuses. Additionally, the unstable inflation rate in Burma and subsequent skyrocketing commodity prices are also factors pushing villagers toward poppy production. The official year-by-year inflation rates released by the SPDC for the period 2001 to 2005 vary between 3.8 per cent (2004) and 58.1 per cent (2002).⁵⁴

"I use it (the money from growing poppies) to buy clothes and pay for my children's school fees," – T-- M---, a Karenni woman said.

Monetary return from poppies is significantly higher than rice when using the same quantity of land and the decreasing value of rice has further exacerbated this issue, resulting in more farmers turning to alternative crops in order to overcome financial hardships. Moreover the price of opium has risen. In 2001 a package of opium, which weighed approximately 1.5 kilograms, was valued between 40,000 and 50,000 Kyat, whilst five years later an opium package of the same weight sold for at least 200,000 Kyat.

Households that are dependent on income from drugs, most often do not diversify their income, putting all their efforts into poppy cultivation, consequently families that grow poppies are completely dependent on this form of income generation. In comparison households that are not directly involved in drug production earn

P-- R--'s story

"I was forced to leave my university studies after two years. I had one more year before I would have completed my studies. I had to leave because my parents could not afford my tuition anymore. To send a child to high school costs about 100,000 Kyat per year, this covers everything (books, stationary, tuition, uniforms, etc.). For university it is much more, about 1,000,000 Kyat per year. My parents sold their animals and other belongings to raise extra money so that I could study at university for two years, but now they have exhausted all their resources and cannot come up with enough for the third year. My family is neither rich nor poor, but in the middle."

⁵⁴ Central Statistical Organisation, <http://www.csostatat.gov.mm/Sdetails.asp?ID=003&Desc=Prices>, August 29th, 2007

money from a variety of different sources, such as agriculture, textiles and handicraft production, etc. They are not dependent on one source of income, consequently, providing them with a more stable financial base.

This dependency makes it more difficult for poppy cultivators to break the cycle, as without income from poppies they will have no money to support themselves or their families. Members of the international community often talk about crop substitution programmes; however, this brings its own unique challenges.

Additionally, farmers are also vulnerable to demands from local authorities who continue to want their “cut” from the poppy income even though they are aware that the family is no longer cultivating the flowers. This can lead to human rights abuses such as beatings or being targeted to fill quotas for forced labour tasks.

6.3 Eradication Programmes

“The SPDC reports to the international countries, saying that they destroy the poppies and that they do not allow people to grow poppies. But that is not the truth,” – D-- R--- said.

As the international community has become more aware of the drug situation, especially after Burma was officially the biggest producer of poppies in the world in 2001, they pushed for the junta to take action. Following this the SPDC, in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, started to address Burma’s drug issue through a number of strategies, however, most predominantly crop substitution.

Crop substitution programmes are often not suitable for the region or the local market. Following years of poppy cultivation the soil has been stripped of vital nutrients and minerals and some crops that are being proposed for substitution, such as rice, simply cannot grow. The loss of income from only one poppy harvest results in food scarcity and having to go without other basic necessities such as clothing, education and health care. This vulnerability would be further exacerbated by the failure of the substitution crop.

According to UNODC figures the drug production inside Burma has dropped significantly. However, it is necessary to note that most of the UNODC’s information is collected from Shan State (where the Wa are also present) which has received intense international scrutiny in relation to drugs cultivation, especially activities by ceasefire groups. In a report released earlier this year it appears poppy cultivation has dropped by 34 per cent over the past year, and only 21,500 hectares

⁵⁵ “UN Agency Reports Big Fall in Burma Opium Poppy Cultivation”, *The Irrawaddy*, June 26th, 2007

⁵⁶ “UN Agency Reports Big Fall in Burma Opium Poppy Cultivation”, *The Irrawaddy*, June 26th, 2007

of poppies are currently being grown in Burma.⁵⁵ The report stated that since 1998 the area of poppy cultivation has dropped 83 per cent.⁵⁶

However, other reports present a very different picture. The UN's data is mainly gathered through satellite pictures and surveys made in Burma are not necessarily representative of the situation. Poppies are not produced less, but are rather grown in other areas, such as Karenni State, that are more concealed or are lesser known as drug producing areas.

Another reason for increased poppy cultivation is the geographical proximity to Shan State. In contrast to the Shan area, Karenni State is not globally known as a drug producing area. This offers a more secure situation for planting poppies and refining opium. Away from international attention the drug business can be done by, or in cooperation with, the same people without damaging the international image of the SPDC's drug eradication efforts portrayed by the junta. Consequently, in areas where drug production is occurring, ceasefire groups involved are often met with very soft, or non-existent, anti-drug policies from the SPDC.

6.4 Social Problems

Within society drugs can contribute to many problems. Habitual drug usage can result in impair judgment, dangerous behaviour, especially sexual behaviour, and mental health issues. In a study of amphetamine users 44 per cent of female and 53 per cent of male respondents admitted to becoming violent while under the influence of drugs.⁵⁷ These drug induced health issues strain the public health systems. In Karenni State where there is no public health care system; communities are left to deal with these crises on their own.

Another social impact of drug use and addiction is the toll it takes on families. Incidents of domestic violence and child abuse in families with an addict are high around the world and reports from grassroots communities say the situation is similar in Karenni State. The Karenni Anti Drug Action Committee (KADAC) surveyed opium usage in two Lawy Kaw and Shan Aung districts in Karenni State. Of the population surveyed, 20 per cent use opium, with male usage at 35 per cent and women 5 per cent. A KADAC report said "drug and alcohol use in Karenni/Kaya[h] communities is a critical issue".⁵⁸

Furthermore the drugs that are produced in Karenni State do not stay in Karenni State, but are trafficked to neighbouring countries, most often to Thailand, China and India. These nations' face their own social problems that can be attributed to Burma's drug trade (for more information is available in Chapter 8).

⁵⁷ "Methamphetamine use and violence", *Journal of Drug Issues*, Winter 2006

7. Internal Displacement

Chapter Overview

Karenni State is facing a disturbing displacement crisis with more than one quarter of the population displaced in 2007. The SPDC's continued policies of aggression and attempts to expand development projects in Karenni state have led to thousands of villagers fleeing into hiding. The affects of which are formidable. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are vulnerable to food shortages, human rights violations, exploitation and violence from soldiers if they are found. They face extreme difficulties in accessing health services, education and desperately needed humanitarian assistance (medicine, food, shelter, clothing, etc.). Additionally, displacement results in the disintegration of communities, further marginalizing grassroots people and excluding them from political, social and economic processes that affect their lives and their futures. This chronic displacement will not end until a genuine, participatory solution to the political, economic and social problems in Burma is found.

In this chapter:

- International Definition for Internally Displaced Persons
- Situation of IDPs in Karenni State
- Reason for Displacement
- Displacement in Karenni State in comparison to other areas in eastern Burma
- Displacement in Karenni State compared to other level of displacement in other countries
- Responsibility to Protect

7.1 International Definition for Internally Displaced Persons

Under the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, internally displaced persons (IDPs) are defined as:

“Persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or leave their homes or place of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.”⁵⁹

IDPs include people who are in hiding (free fire zones), forced relocation sites and ceasefire areas.

7.2 Situation of Internally Displaced Persons in Karenni State

“When we have to flee our village we can not all go together. Only two or three families will group together and each group will flee to a different hiding place,” W-- M---said.

Currently in Karenni State there are 81,000 IDPs⁶⁰ – more than 25 per cent of the state’s population. In 2002 there were 57,000 IDPs in Karenni State. While the level of displacement fluctuates (the highest displacement was in 2004 with 88,000 IDPs in Karenni State), an increase of 42 per cent in five years is alarming, especially when this increase represents eight per cent of the total Karenni population - a significant, and concerning, proportion.

The majority of IDPs around the world, between 70 and 80 per cent, are women and children.⁶¹ In Karenni State between 56,700 and 64,800 women and children at this moment are living as IDPs, vulnerable to food shortages, human rights abuses, exploitation and violence and who are denied access to basic medical care and education.

IDPs in Karenni State can be categorised into three groups: IDPs in hiding, IDPs in ceasefire areas and IDPs in forced relocation sites. Below are the IDP figures for Karenni State in 2007 broken down into the three categories mentioned above and into township levels.

⁵⁹ “Introduction, UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement”, United Nations, 1998

⁶⁰ “Internal Displacement in Eastern Burma: 2007 Survey”, Thailand Burma Border Consortium, October 2007

⁶¹ The Internally Displacement Monitoring Centre, <http://www.internal-displacement.org> , access November 13th, 2007

Townships	IDPs in Hiding	IDPs in Relocation Sites	IDPs in Ceasefire areas	Total
Shadaw	2,900	1,300	0	4,200
Lokaw	0	1,900	6,700	8,600
Demawso	0	0	38,500	38,500
Pruso	1,400	0	6,000	7,400
Bawlake	0	900	0	900
Pasaing	5,700	700	5,200	11,600
Mehset	0	0	9,800	9,800
Total	10,000	4,800	66,200	81,000

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7.2.1 Internally Displaced Persons in Hiding

There are 10,000 men, women and children hiding in the jungle. IDPs in hiding choose to stay near their villages and fields rather than moving to relocation sites, ceasefire areas or seeking asylum in Thailand. They do so because they hope to return to their villages and start rebuilding their communities once the threat of danger has passed. Villagers can sometimes return home for a period of time before they are forced to flee again, while on other occasions they can only go back for a couple of hours to collect belongings and search for food. In the worst case it is impossible for them to return at all.

Villagers hiding in the jungle are exposed to extreme temperatures and weather conditions. In the hot season temperatures can reach nearly 40 degrees Celsius and drop to single digits in winter. During the wet season IDPs have to endure heavy rain. Their protection from the elements is rarely adequate and usually consists of what materials could be taken from their village at the time of fleeing and what can be found in their new hiding area.

IDPs also remain vulnerable to soldier violence should their hiding area be found. The Burmese army classifies IDPs as combatants or enemies of the state and employs a "shoot on sight" policy. The SPDC refuses to distinguish between unarmed villagers and combatants. This is a direct violation of the Geneva Convention I-IV, 1949, Common Article 3, which the State of Burma has ratified.

There is no peace for IDPs in hiding. Troop movements and bases are often very close to IDP areas. Soldiers are deployed to search for IDPs and often come

⁶² "Internal Displacement in Eastern Burma: 2007 Survey", Thailand Burma Border Consortium, October 2007

within meters of where IDPs are hiding. As a result villagers are always on the lookout or on the run. Entire communities live in constant fear.

7.2.2 Internally Displaced Persons in Ceasefire Areas

“
The Burmese army classifies IDPs as combatants or enemies of the state and employs a “shoot on sight” policy.
”

There are 66,200 IDPs living in chronic poverty in ceasefire areas. Previously ceasefire areas offered a level of protection for IDPs. However, as these ceasefire groups’ autonomy has decreased, so too has their ability to protect vulnerable people. In the past year the SPDC’s expansion into the KNPLF’s ceasefire area has seen the IDP population in this area decrease.⁶³ One must note that in ceasefire areas there is less active conflict, which reduces some risks for IDPs.

However this is not a solution to the chronic displacement problem in Karenni State. Most ceasefire areas have limited agricultural land, leading to food shortages and IDP movements’ are heavily restricted preventing them from traveling to fields outside designated areas. IDPs are not compensated for lost materials, supplies, land or crops during displacement.

7.2.3 Internationally Displaced Persons in Forced Relocation Sites

Currently there are 4,800 IDPs in eight forced relocation sites throughout Karenni State. These relocation sites are a result of the Burmese military regimes mass relocation programme in Karenni State in 1996. Following the collapse of the ceasefire between SLORC and the KNPP, tens of thousands of people were forcibly evicted from their homes during this programme.

Most relocation sites are located close to military camps, army bases and along main roads. This increases the vulnerability of exploitation and abuse. IDPs are subjected to force labour demands from the soldiers and arbitrary taxation (essentially theft). IDPs are also vulnerable to torture; murder and rape by soldiers and their movements are heavily restricted.

The relocation sites are also inadequate to sustain a healthy and economically viable livelihood. The majority of relocation sites do not have sanitation facilities, electricity or access to safe drinking water. The land surrounding the sites is often barren and over populated. As productive land has usually been claimed by the original inhabitants or confiscated by the soldiers, opportunities to farm are limited. There are also very few employment opportunities in forced relocation sites.

Many IDPs continue to live in forced relocation sites because the threat of human rights abuses is greater if they leave and return to their communities, than if they were to remain in the sites. However, many people have left these sites seeking

⁶³ “Internal Displacement in Eastern Burma: 2007 Survey”, Thailand Burma Border Consortium, October 2007

asylum in Thailand or have moved to other areas in Karenni State because of the continuing harassment and violence. In 2007 IDPs the number of IDPs living in forced relocation sites has decreased from 6,000 in 2006.⁶⁴

7.3 Reasons for Displacement

There are two main reasons for displacement: conflict and development.

7.3.1 Conflict Induced Displacement

Under the guise of counter insurgency, the Burmese army carries out military attacks targeting unarmed villagers. Decades of low intensity conflict have seen men; women and children flee their homes, taking to hiding in jungle, in ceasefire areas or being forced to live in relocation sites.

Since 1996, at least 273 villages have been destroyed, relocated or abandoned in Karenni State.⁶⁵ Military attacks continue, as the Burmese army launches offensives and the armed resistance movement makes counter strikes. Villages are often shelled with mortars and artillery and as troops approach they fire automatic and semi-automatic weapons into the communities with no regard for human life.

IDPs cite human rights abuses, such as land confiscation, forced labour, arbitrary taxation and fines, destruction of property, food stores and crops, which are a by-product of the conflict as a main reason for displacement.

From 2002, 34, 9000 men, women and children have been displaced because of human rights abuses and conflict in Karenni State.⁶⁶ Given that the population of Karenni State is 300,000, over 10 per cent of the population has been displaced in the past five years due to conflict and human rights abuses.



7.3.2 Development Induced Displacement

The majority of Burma's national budget is derived from income generated by foreign investment in so-called development projects. In the 2004/2005 fiscal year, for example, only 40 per cent of the junta's spending was covered by ordinary tax revenue. The remaining 60 per cent was covered by income from other

⁶⁴ "Internal Displacement in Eastern Burma: 2006 Survey", Thailand Burma Border Consortium, November 2006

⁶⁵ "Internal Displacement in Eastern Burma: 2007 Survey", Thailand Burma Border Consortium, October 2007

⁶⁶ "Internal Displacement in Eastern Burma: 2007 Survey", Thailand Burma Border Consortium, October 2007

⁶⁷ "Inflation in Burma: When the State budget deficits are financed by the money printing machine", Burma Issues Newsletter, August 2007

areas such as loans from the Central Bank and foreign governments and investments from development projects.⁶⁷ In Karenni State a number of different development projects are being undertaken by the military junta including, mining, logging, hydro-electricity, industrial development and agriculture projects. The SPDC prohibits investors full foreign ownership in the projects and most foreign investment are made in joint ventures with the regime. The SPDC therefore dictates terms and conditions for the projects with little or no regard to the populations these projects are affecting.

Development Projects

Development projects in Karenni State are undertaken by the SPDC without the permission of the local population. Villagers are not consulted or involved when development projects are planned and implemented. They receive very few, if any, benefits from these projects, and are often displaced because of these so-called “development”. The increased militarisation of development sites and surrounding areas also result in the escalation of human rights violations against the villagers.

None of the profits from the exploitation of Karenni State’s natural resources reaches the people. Instead they go to junta, enabling the Burmese military to further tighten their stranglehold of oppression on the people of Karenni State.

Prior to commencing a development project, the site needs stability. In order to secure complete control villagers are often forcibly relocated to areas close to military bases where they will be easily controlled and monitored by the SPDC. Burmese soldiers will patrol areas that have been depopulated searching for villagers who are resisting relocation orders by remaining in their villages or hiding in the jungle. Villagers are never compensated for their loss of land, property or crops during relocation.



7.4 Karenni IDPs compared to other IDPs in eastern Burma

States and Divisions	IDPs in Hilling	IDPs in Re-creation Sites	IDPs in Ceasefire areas	Total
Karenni	10,000	4,800	66,200	81,000
Southern Shan	13,700	24,100	123,000	163,000
EastPegu	18,700	12,200	0	30,900
Karen	51,600	9,700	55,600	116,900
Mon	600	7,200	41,600	49,400
Tenasserim	4,400	51,000	5,600	61,000
Total	99,000	109,000	295,000	503,000

Karenni State has the third highest number of IDPs in eastern Burma following Southern Shan State (163,000) and Karen State (116,900). IDPs in Karenni State represent 16 per cent of eastern Burma's displaced population. However, if the number of IDPs is compared to the total Karenni population, Karenni State has the most severe level at 27 per cent. This is significantly higher than the 2 per cent of the population in Karen State that is displaced⁶⁹ and 8 per cent in Southern Shan State.⁷⁰

7.5 Displacement in Karenni State compared to other level of displacement in other countries

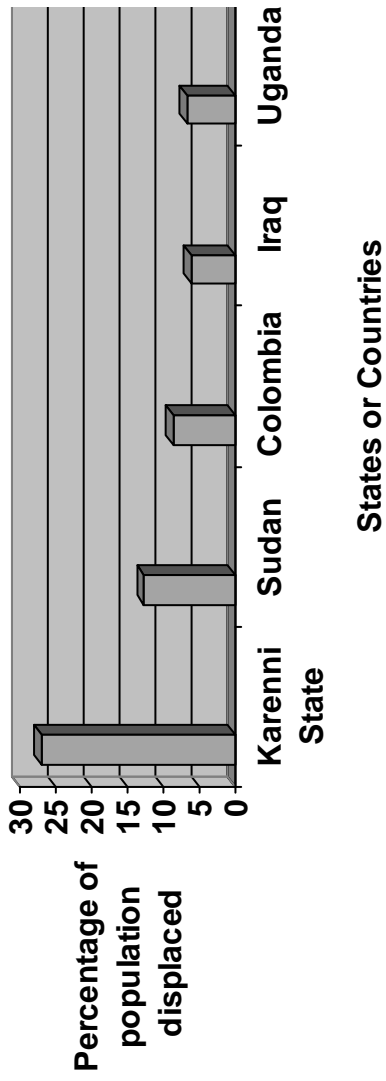
Globally there are 24.5 million internally displaced persons in 52 countries.⁷¹ Sudan, Colombia, Iraq, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo have the five largest displaced populations in the world. These five nations have more than half of the world's IDP population. As far as a percentage of displaced persons against total population is concerned, the level of displacement in Karenni State is significantly higher than any percentage in any of these five countries.

⁶⁹ This figure was calculated by dividing the number of IDPs in Karen State by the population of 6 million (Shoot on Sight: The ongoing SPDC offensive against villagers in northern Karen State, Burma Issues, December 2006) and multiplying by 100 ($116,900/6,000,000 \times 100 = 1.9$ per cent of the population in Karen State is displaced)

⁷⁰ This figure was calculated by dividing the number of IDPs in Southern Shan State by the population of 1,978,234 (2003 Statistics from the Myanmar National Planning Department) and multiplying by 100 ($163,000/1,978,234 \times 100 = 8.24$ per cent of the population of Southern Shan State is displaced)

⁷¹ "Internal Displacement Global Overview of Trends and Development in 2006", The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, April 2007

Karenni IDPs compared to international IDP situation:



	No. of people Displaced ⁷²	Total Population	Percentage of population displaced
Karenni	81,000	300,000	27 percent
Burma	503,000	52,000,000	0.97 percent
Bangladesh	500,000	150,448,339	0.33 percent
Indonesia	150,000 – 250,000 ⁷³	234,693,997	0.085 percent
Philippines	120,000	91,077,287	0.13 percent
Sudan	5,000,000	39,470,000	12.67 percent
Colombia	3,800,000	44,380,000	8.56 percent
Iraq	1,700,000	27,500,000	6.18 percent
Uganda	1,700,000	25,827,000	6.58 percent
Democratic Republic of Congo	1,100,000	63,655,000	1.73 percent

7.6 Responsibility to Protect

As IDPs have not crossed a recognised international border, the responsibility to protect displaced population lies with the sovereign nation. The UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement state that international humanitarian agencies should be given access to displaced populations and that delivering aid should occur without hindrance. National authorities are also obliged to help the IDP population reintegrate into society, without discrimination, so that they are able to fully participate in public affairs and can access public services.

An end to displacement occurs when IDPs can return home or be resettled, safely and with dignity.

Of course for the Karenni and other ethnic IDPs in border regions of Burma, this is a profound irony considering it is the sovereign nation that is causing the displacement. The military regime in Burma is responsible for displacing the population and their willingness to assist IDPs is very limited. The regime places heavy restrictions on international humanitarian aid agencies restricting their access to IDP populations.

⁷² The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, <http://www.internal-displacement.org>, accessed November 13th, 2007

⁷³ An average of 200,000 is used for the calculation

When the sovereign nation is unwilling to assist the country's displaced population, the responsibility to protect falls to the international community. Previously members of the international community have been reluctant to intervene because of state sovereignty, leading to the failure to adequately protect innocent people. Nowadays the international community is starting to recognise their responsibility to protect vulnerable populations. This change was reaffirmed by state leaders at the UN's 60th Anniversary Summit in 2005 and by the UN Security Council in 2006. In cases where the sovereign nation is unable or unwilling to protect vulnerable populations, the international community then has a responsibility to use diplomatic, humanitarian and enforcement action to protect.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ *"Internal Displacement in Eastern Burma: 2007 Survey", Thailand Burma Border Consortium, October 2007*

8. Threat to Regional and International Stability

Chapter Overview

The situation in Karenni State is not isolated to the geographical boundaries of Karenni territory. The impacts of the situation in Karenni State spill over into, not just neighbouring states and divisions, but to other sovereign states as well. These spill over effects are not small, rather they are substantial transnational effects, which threaten to destabilise regional and international peace and security.

In this chapter:

- What is a Threat to Security?
- How is the Situation in Karenni State a Threat to Security?

8.1 What is a Threat to Security?

When examining threats to security, it is necessary to look beyond the traditional threats, such as an external hostile threat, to more non-traditional threats, for example health issues. As the global community continues to develop and as countries become more interdependent, the non-traditional threats to peace and security are more likely to have an increased destabilising impact. ASEAN has recognised this and is currently in the process of developing a comprehensive regional security plan, which will look at traditional and non-traditional threats to peace and attempt to address these issues.⁷⁵

The United Nations Security Council has the power to determine a threat to peace, under Chapter VII, Article 39 of the UN Charter. Threats to peace and security are determined on a case-by-case basis – there are no set criteria. Situations within a country's national boundaries that were previously deemed as a threat to international peace and security by the UNSC can serve as a guide. These include:

- Overthrow of a democratically elected government
- Conflict between the central government and ethnic factions
- Widespread humanitarian crisis and human rights violations
- Overflow of refugees
- Drug Productions and trafficking

It must be noted that for some of these factors the situation in Burma is worse than in other countries where the UNSC passed a resolution.

Country	Resolution	Overthrow of a Democratic Government	Conflict among Factions	Humanitarian Crisis or Human Rights Abuses	Refugee Outflow	Other (Drugs)	Other (HIV /- AIDS)
Serra Leone	SC 1132 (1997)	X	X	X	X		
Afghanistan	SC 1076 (1996)		X	X	X		
Yemen	SC 924 (1994)		X	X			
Haiti	SC 841 (1993)	X		X	X		
Rwanda	SC 812 (1993)		X	X	X		
Liberia	SC 788 (1992)		X	X			
Cambodia	SC 668 (1990)		X				
Burma	-	X	X	X	X	X	X

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⁷⁵ ASEAN Security Community Plan of Action, signed in 2003

⁷⁶ "Threat to Peace Report", DLA Piper Rudnick Gary Cary, September 2005

8.2 How is the Situation in Karenni State a Threat to Security?

8.2.1 Exodus of People (refugees and migrants)

“In March 2006 about one hundred Karenni villagers from the Shan-Karenni border and Loikaw Township fled to the Thailand because of increased militarisation near their villages. There were more human rights abuses following the military’s increased presence in the area” – T-- M-- said.

There are estimated 700,000-registered refugees from Burma living in Thailand, India, Bangladesh and Malaysia.⁷⁷ In addition to the registered refugees there are also millions of Burmese migrants who are living either legally or illegally outside of their nation. The vast majority of these migrant workers can be classed as refugees under the 1951 Refugee Convention. However, as none of Burma’s neighbours are a signatory to this international convention, they are not obliged to provide protection for those seeking asylum. Refugees within these countries are there at the discretion of the national government.

Of the 155,802 registered refugees living in Thailand, people from Karenni are the second largest group with an approximately 13 per cent of all refugees coming from the geographically small state. Most of the refugees from Karenni State reside in two camps near Mae Hong Son in northern Thailand. The two camps house nearly 23,000 refugees.⁷⁸



The exodus of people from Karenni State is a result of the protracted civil war, human rights violations and humanitarian crisis caused by the actions of the SPDC and their predecessors. People fleeing Karenni State for Thailand puts pressure on the Thai authorities to provide them with shelter, food, clothing, health care (including clean drinking water and sanitation) and access to education. For a country that faces severe poverty issues taking on the burden of thousands of additional people is a big commitment.

⁷⁷“The Security Dimension”, *Burma Issues and Concerns Vol 4*, Altsean, April 2007

⁷⁸ TBBC Website, August 29th, 2007, figures from the end of July

As these populations cross international boundaries they bring with them diseases and illness that can be transferred to the local people. Populations along Burma's borders with Bangladesh, India, China, Laos and Thailand are susceptible to HIV/AIDS, drug resistant malaria and drug resistant tuberculosis that are coming from Burma, along with the people. Additionally, sick populations that have migrated to a new country add stress on the national health care system and non-governmental organisations that provide medical services – stretching their already thin resources further.

8.2.2 Ongoing Civil War

The protracted conflict in Karenni State has been ongoing for over fifty years. Communities have been caught in the crossfire between State and Non-State actors for half a century. Entire generations have grown up without ever knowing peace. The increased militarisation of the area has led to an increase prevalence of injuries from landmines, bullet wounds and soldier violence (beatings, etc.). Entire communities have been destroyed with over 3,000 villages being destroyed between 1996 and 2006 in eastern Burma – nearly one village per day for a decade.⁷⁹

8.2.3 Human Rights Violations

“Human rights violations cause people from Burma to constantly flee to borderline areas and many stories we hear from grassroots people reveal how hard it is to survive in a country where there is no justice or rule of law,” – T--- M-- said.

Human rights violations have a huge impact on regional security. The systematic and continual violation of rights is often a significant contributing factor to people crossing the border and seeking asylum in another country. Human rights abuses are not infrequent occurrences. Over the past six years, there has been an increase in the incidence of abuses and their severity, particularly forced labour, land confiscation, arbitrary taxation and destruction of property (including food supplies and/or crops). As villagers try to continue living in their communities, it becomes increasingly more difficult, as they slip further into poverty, until they are simply unable to survive. Some will then choose to cross the border and seek asylum, while others may turn to alternative income sources such as growing poppies and a portion of the population will continue to stay where they are hoping that the situation will change becoming one of the millions of people living under the control of the SPDC.

⁷⁹ Reports from community based organisations regarding the large-scale destruction of villages has been recently collaborated by the Science and Human Rights Program “High Resolution Satellite Imagery of the Conflict in Burma”, American Association for the Advancement of Science.

⁸⁰ “World Drug Report 2005”, UNODC, 2006, “ATS: A Need for Speed”, *Altsean Burma*, July 2006

⁸¹ “ATS: A Need for Speed”, *Altsean Burma*, July 2006

8.2.4 Drugs

The impact of drug production in Karenni State cannot be isolated from the impact of Burma's drug problem. In 2003 26 million people use amphetamines, methamphetamines or related substances and there were 16 million opiate users worldwide.⁸⁰ The majority of the global production and trafficking of ATS occurs in southeast Asia and Burma is a primary supplier for this market.⁸¹ Burma and Afghanistan vie for the top position each year as the world's leading opium and heroin producers. This ranking has resulted in much criticism from the international community, and the SPDC has begun working with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on a drug eradication programme, which includes a crop-substitution project.

“At present the Sino-Myanmar border area is being flooded with drugs, posing a huge danger to the society and people,” – Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao⁸⁵

The majority of drugs produced in Burma, be it opium, heroin or ATS are exported through a number of land routes to Thailand, India and China, and other nations via sea. Among youth in Thailand there is a very serious ATS problem with one third of drug users in the kingdom being under the age of 16,⁸² in 2004 more than half of registered addicts in China used drugs produced in Burma⁸³ and in India's northeast Burma is this region's primary drug source, as drugs can be transported from Burma into Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland easily.⁸⁴

The trafficking of drugs from Burma has contributed to the spread of HIV/AIDS in the region, which can be seen in China and India (covered in more detail in the next section). Most drug users admit to part taking in crimes, including extremely violent acts, while under the influence or in order to support their drug habit. Additionally the hospital costs for addicts who have injured themselves or are suffering from drug-induced psychoses take a toll on the public health care systems of their States. Furthermore, the costs associated with drug eradication programmes, police efforts to combat drug related crimes, cleaning up methamphetamine labs, and on a more human side rehabilitation projects, and looking after families, especially children, affected by drug abuses also impacts on regional stability.

⁸² *Taipei Times*, *Asian States run out of patience with Myanmar*, October 11, 2005

⁸³ *Mizzima*, *Opium production decreases but amphetamines increase in Burma*, March 3rd, 2004

⁸⁴ *Mizzima*, *Burma the main source of drugs for India's northeast*, May 30, 2006

⁸⁵ *China urges Myanmar to step up anti-drug efforts*, AFT, Feb 15, 2006

⁸⁶ “*The Silent Dismantling of a Nation: The impacts of HIV/AIDS in Burma*”, *Burma Issues Newsletter*, October 2005

⁸⁷ “*Responding to AIDS, TB, Malaria and Emerging Infectious Diseases in Burma*”, *John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health*, March 2006

⁸⁸ “*The Security Dimension*”, *Burma Issues and Concerns Vol 4*, Altsean, April 2007

⁸⁹ “*Threat to the Peace Report*”, *DLA Piper Rudnick Gray Cary*, September 2005

8.2.5 HIV/AIDS

“Now we find more soldiers dying to HIV/AIDS than to bullets fired by militants,” Lieutenant General Bhopinder Singh, Director General of Assam Rifles statement on HIV/AIDS problems encountered by soldiers engaged in anti-insurgency operations in India’s northeastern States

Similarly, with the drug trade in Karenni State, the risk to security that HIV/AIDS poses is linked with that of the entire country. Burma itself is facing a widespread HIV/AIDS epidemic, with approximately 1.3 per cent of the population,⁸⁶ aged 15 to 49, having the disease – one of the highest rates in Asia. Despite this the SPDC budgeted only US \$22,000 for their national HIV/AIDS programme in 2004.⁸⁷

Burma’s HIV/AIDS epidemic transcends national borders and direct links can be made between Burma’s drug trade and the spread of HIV/AIDS. Surmountable evidence supports that China’s HIV/AIDS epidemic originated in Yunnan cities along the Sino-Burma border. The evidence also shows that HIV was introduced through sharing needles while consuming intravenous drugs from Burma.⁸⁸ Furthermore, 80 per cent of China’s HIV/AIDS

incidents occur along drug routes from Burma.⁸⁹

Similar information is being collected in India. A joint report from UNODC and the Indian government said, “Northeastern states which are distant from the Myanmar border have generally fewer episodes of heroin injecting compared to the states which are closer to the border. Thus, there is a direct correlation between proximity to the border and drug abuse. Injecting drug users represent a significant incubus for the indirect spread of HIV to people who have never used drugs”.⁹

In 2000 the United Nations Security Council, in an attempt to bring international attention to the HIV/AIDS crisis, passed a resolution seeking to raise awareness of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. This resolution, Security Council Resolution 1308, considered the threat that the HIV/AIDS pandemic poses to international stability and security.⁹¹

⁹⁰ “Drugs flow from Myanmar fuels northeast HIV epidemic: UN”, *Indo-Asian News Service*, May 30th, 2006

⁹¹ *UN Security Council Resolution 1308, S/RES/1308, July 17th, 2000*

Recommendations

International Community

UN

- We **encourage UNSC members to pass a resolution on Burma** under Chapter 6 of the UNSC Charter. In particular we urge the UNSC members to impose a universal arms embargo against the Burmese military junta and all non-state actors.
- We **strongly urge Mr Gambari to start engaging with ethnic communities** in a meaningful way, as well as continuing his dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi and the SPDC.
- We encourage the **United Nations Human Rights Council** to continue closely monitoring the situation in Burma, including ethnic areas and **urge them to continue having a country specific rapporteur on human rights in Burma/Myanmar.**

Donors

- We **urge donor countries to increase support to organisations working with communities from Burma**, whether they are based inside the country or outside.
- We also encourage funders to ensure that their funding can reach all people in need.



Regional

Association of South East Asian Nations

- We **urge ASEAN to publicly acknowledge that the situation in Burma is threatening regional stability and take a stronger stance against the regime**
- We **implore ASEAN to lead the way in ascertaining a binding UNSC resolution.**

India and China

- We **encourage India and China to pressure the SPDC to lift restrictions on humanitarian aid**, especially to remote and rural areas.
- We **urge India and China to support a UNSC resolution on Burma.**



United Nations, Non-governmental organisations and community based organisations

- We recommend that the **UN, NGOs and CBOs continue advocating with the SPDC to be able to access all areas in Burma**, especially remote and rural communities.
- We **also encourage organisations working inside Burma to continue closely monitoring their projects**, ensuring that aid is reaching and benefiting the target communities and where there is evidence of theft to take appropriate action.
- We **urge organisations working inside Burma and Karenni State to develop a comprehensive humanitarian assistance plan in collaboration with groups working cross border.**

Armed Groups

SPDC

- We **urge the SPDC to explore and employ non-violent conflict resolution methods**, in particular engaging in tripartite dialogue between themselves, the pro-democracy movement and ethnic nationalities.
- We **implore the SPDC to lift restrictions on humanitarian organisations so that they can deliver aid without hindrance**. This includes widening the fields of work that aid agencies can operate in, such as empowering marginalised communities and assisting communities, and allowing aid agencies unrestricted access to all populations.
- We **call for an end to all human rights abuses against all people in Burma**, especially arbitrary taxation and fines, land and crop confiscation, arbitrary arrests and detention and the theft and destruction of property.

Ceasefire groups

- We implore the ceasefire groups ensure that the interests of Karenni State and the population are their top priority. **We encourage the ceasefire groups to increase efforts to shape their policies and activities around ideas and views from the grassroots communities.**
- We urge the ceasefire groups to understand the economic difficulties villagers face and to recognise and acknowledge the taxation demands that other state and non-state actors make on people.
- We **encourage ceasefire groups to look at ways to genuinely improve living standards and access to public services** for the Karenni population.

KNPP

- We **encourage the KNPP to explore and employ non-violent conflict resolution methods.**
- We urge the KNPP to keep in regular contact troops while they are on active duty and ensure that they are maintaining a high standard. We also **encourage the KNPP to address complaints about the soldiers' behaviour from the grassroots communities in a transparent and fair manner.**
- We encourage the KNPP to be mindful of the hardships the villagers face, re-examine their taxation policies and work with villagers to improve their living standards.

Appendices

Ceasefire Groups

Karenni National Defense Army (KNDA)

In 1995 approximately 150 former KNPP soldiers formed the Karenni National Defense Army (KNDA). This group, led by an ex-KNPP soldier Lee Reh, agreed to a ceasefire with the Burmese authorities in 1996. Currently the KNDA is a proxy army of the SPDC and holds very anti-KNPP sentiments.

Karenni National People's Liberation Front (KNPLF)

In 1978 there was a split in the KNPP led by Thein Hun, which led to the formation of the KNPLF under the leadership of Than Nyunt. This split had a significant impact on the KNPP as it weakened the KNPP's position and strength within Karenni State. After its formation, the KNPLF developed close ties with KNLP and the SSNLO. They also built a relationship with the Communist Party of Burma (CPB), receiving training, supplies and, on occasion, armed support from the CPB. The KNPLF made a ceasefire agreement with the Burmese regime in 1994, and has since then operated as a proxy army for the *Tatmadaw*. Members of the KNPLF have received economic concessions from the military junta and poppies are being produced in their territories.

Karenni National Solidarity Organisation (KNSO)

In 2002, three leaders from the KNPP, Mu Dee, Den Way and Richard split from the group, citing ideological differences for the split. The area that the KNSO controlled had a large displaced population and following the split they made a ceasefire agreement with the SPDC. This agreement allowed the population living in KNSO's area some respite.

Shan State Nationalities Liberation Organisation (SSNLO)

The SSNLO was formed in 1966 and whilst it is based in Shan State, its close ties with the KNPLF and the KNLP means that it also operates in Karenni State. Similar to the KNLP and the KNPLF the SSNLO received training and support from the Communist Party of Burma. In 1974 some members split and formed the Shan Nationalities Liberation Front. The SSNLO is involved in poppy production in Karenni State. As with the KNPLF and KNLP the SSNLO entered into a ceasefire agreement with the Burmese military junta in 1994.

Karenni National Peace and Development Party (KNPDP)

The KNPDP is also known as the KNPP-99. In 1999 there was another split in the KNPP and 100 soldiers left to form the KNPDP. The KNPDP cited ideological differences for the split and subsequently entered into a ceasefire agreement with the SPDC.

Kayan New Land Party (KNLP)

The KNLP was formed in 1964 in Pekon Township and today its power-base is still in the area. The formation of the party was similar to a peasant style uprising, and gained strength in the 1970s due to an increase in membership of Kayan students and with the establishment of a relationship with the Communist Party of Burma. The KNLP sided with the KNPLF when it split with the KNPP, and formed a close relationship with the KNPLF and the SSNLO. The KNLP was weakened by the demise of the Communist Party of Burma, and this led to an internal split and the formation of the Kayan Home Guard (KHG). The KNLP made a ceasefire agreement with SLORC in 1994 and has benefited from economic concessions since then, especially in relation to logging and mineral extraction. This group also has a small presence in Shan State.

Kayan Home Guard (KHG)

In the years following the collapse of the Communist Party of Burma there was a split in the Kayan New Land Party, and a new faction emerged called the Kayan Home Guard. This group of approximately 60 entered into a ceasefire agreement with the Burmese authorities. However, they are a small party with little impact on the political environment in Karenni State. Similarly with the KNLP, the KHG also has troops in Shan State.

Shan Nationalities People's Liberation Organisation (SNPLO)

The SNPLO signed a ceasefire agreement with the Burmese junta in 1994. Following the signing of the ceasefire agreement, approximately two-thirds of the groups 1,000 members left. Since the 1994 the SNPLO has fought against the Shan State Army-South, and their troops have been stationed in northern Karenni State along the Karenni-Shan border. In 2007 the SNPLO broke their ceasefire with the junta, citing their refusal to surrender or disarm.