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Mon Women's Conference calls for Mon Women to Participate in Burma's Transition to Democracy

March 14, 2014



At last week's inaugural Mon Women's Conference (MWC), Mon women encouraged each other to raise their voices and demand their right to participate in decision-making processes throughout Burma's civil and governmental sectors.

The first-ever MWC was held from March 8-12th, 2014, and welcomed 178 attendees to the 2500 Sarsana Monastery in Moulmein, Mon State. Included among the attendees were 139 women and 39 men from 42 organizations.

According MWC's facilitator, objectives for the meeting were twofold. First, the MWC aimed to increase Mon women's participation in seeking access to justice, as well as increasing participation in the peace process; secondly, the meeting aimed to increase the leadership skills of Mon women in order for them to better participate in Burma's transitional process.

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Publisher's Message

Over the past six months, the voices of Burma's women have never been louder in their call for equal participation in Burma's peace process. Women's groups throughout the country have been holding conferences to highlight and educate women and men alike as to the need for women's voices to be heard, and their rights respected.

As Burma forges its path to democracy, women are demanding their right to justice, as well as equal participation in Burma's future, while encouraging and inviting their brothers and sisters to stand-up and engage in the process as well. As Burma works to find true and sustainable transition towards democracy, women's groups advocate for their right to participate in leadership positions within Burma's civil and governmental sectors.

Human rights abuse and sexual violence continue to be committed by various armed groups throughout Burma, and effort is being made to highlight the large gap between protections provided by Burmese law, and those under international law.

This past year, a number of workshops have been held along the Thai-Burma border to highlight international law surrounding sexual violence during armed conflict, in efforts to educate both civilians and armed groups about preventing and responding appropriately to sexual violence and gender discrimination committed during armed conflict.

Members of the military continue to brutalize and attack ethnic women, creating often devastating consequences for victims and their families. Incidents of rape and sexual assault by military personnel have terrorized local women, causing them to fear for their lives. This past February, The Women's League of Burma held a landmark press conference in Rangoon to raise awareness of crimes of sexual violence systematically committed against ethnic women by the military.

In regards to minority communities, steady gains are being made in the protection and advancement of ethnic rights, tradition, and culture. Ethnic minority communities are finding success in the protection and integration of their culture and tradition for future generations. After decades of Mon language instruction being banned from government schools, the Mon community has finally received permission to teach their native language in government classrooms.

This moment in Burma's transition brings new challenges, as well as enduring difficulties, but the will and desire of the people shines as brightly as ever. Through education and encouragement, women are finding the confidence to demand their rights, and support fellow women to engage in peace talks and the political process, community development initiatives, and civil society movements.

We ask that local, national, regional, and international communities answer the call to support and encourage the ever-growing capacity of Burma's women.

New Mon State Party attends Geneva Call workshop for prevention of Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict

May 2, 2014

On April 25-26th, the New Mon State Party (NMSP) held a two-day sexual violence workshop on the Thai-Burmese border, conducted by the non-government organization Geneva Call. The objective of the workshop was to highlight international law surrounding sexual violence, and to have members of the NMSP sign Geneva Call's "Deed of Commitment", which prohibits sexual violence and gender discrimination in armed conflict. Twenty-five members of NMSP attended the workshop.

The workshop administrator notes that human rights abuse and sexual violence are still being committed by various armed groups involved in the conflict in Burma, and the head of NMSP's Foreign Affairs Department, Nai Hong Sa Boung Khine, notes that there is a large gap between the rule of law found in Burma, and that governing international law.

Nai Hong Sa Boung Khine added that there is some difference in Geneva Call's Deed of Commitment, and ideals of the NMSP, noting that if other NMSP members agree to the commitment, they will sign it.

The workshop administrator notes that the Karen National Union (KNU) and the Chin National Front (CNF) have already signed the Deed of Commitment.

The Mon Women's Organization (MWO) had previously facilitated a two-day workshop on Geneva Call's Deed of Commitment, which was held on February 19-20, 2014. The workshop was held on the Thai-Burma border, and focused on the importance of Armed Non-State Actors (ANSAs) in conflict zones to agree to a "Deed of Commitment", in order to prohibit sexual violence and gender discrimination. This workshop was attended by community-based organizations from the border, as well as organization from inside Burma.

Five Iranian Kurdish ANSAs were the first to sign Geneva Call's Deed of Commitment to prohibit sexual violence and discrimination. In 2012, the Karenni National Progressive Party/Karenni Army (KNPP/KA) and the New Mon State Party/Mon National Liberation Army (NMSP/MNLA) were the first ANSAs from Burma to sign the Deed of Commitment protecting children in areas of armed conflict.

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According to MWC organizing committee chairwoman, Mi Cherry Soe, topics discussed at the conference included health, education, society, protection, women's rights, children's rights, and cultural heritage. Mi Cherry Soe notes that, "Mon women were less invited to participate in working for politics and the peace process. We already raised our voice to [participate] long ago, but our request was not implemented. Now we asked again in this Mon Women's Conference".

The MWC released a statement stating their objectives, which include: (1) to open the Mon Women's Network, (2) work to include women in politics and other areas of civil and public sectors, as seen in the rules of QUOTA, (3) to include 1/3% of women as members and representatives in the upcoming Mon National Conference, (4) to include 30% of women in political and peace process decision-making, (5) to recruit responsible people to seek justice on behalf of Mon women who have been victims of sexual violence, (6) to eliminate widespread drug issues found in local areas, (7) to protect and restore women and child rights, (8) to have ethnic language curricula taught in primary school, and the government must provide for the teachers.

The MWC welcomed Mon women's group leaders from Rangoon Division, Tenasserim region, Mon State, and Karen State, as well as representatives from the New Mon State Party, the All Mon Regions Democracy Party, the Mon Democracy Party, the Shin Saw Pu Association, and representatives of youth groups such as the Mon Youth Progressive Organization, the Mon Youth Educator Organization and the Mon Social and Development Network.

Another Brutal Assault at the Hands of a Burmese Soldier



January 30, 2014

HURFOM: On January 26, Mi Cho, 43, was assaulted and beaten by Second Corporal Ye Min Tun, from Artillery Battalion No. 315, which is based west of Wae Ka Lee village, Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State. This marks the second sexual assault by a Burmese soldier in Thanbyuzayat in just four and a half weeks, and military authorities are trying to suppress any news of the attack.

Early on the morning of January 26th, Mi Cho was collecting rubber liquid in the rubber plantation nearby the Artillery Battalion No. 315, when she was hugged by Second Corporal Ye Min Tun. Ye Min Tun tried to rape her, but Mi Cho struggled and bit his arm, whereupon Ye Min Tun beat her severely. Mi Cho wrestled against Ye Min Tun's attack for almost a half an hour, until she finally managed to escape and run away from him.

Mi Cho ran to a nearby rubber plantation, where the workers found her and brought her to the hospital. She was brought to Wae Rat Clinic, but the clinic could not treat her so she was transported to Thanbyuzayat Hospital. Then, Mi Cho was sent to Moulmein Hospital, because Thanbyuzayat Hospital could not treat her either.

Burmese authorities not only failed to act upon the December 24, 2013 sexual assault committed by a soldier from Infantry Battalion No. 31, in Khaw Zar Sub-Township, Ye Township (<http://rehmonnya.org/archives/3030>), but authorities also tried to protect the soldier by concealing the case. Whilst the military is supposed to protect the public, they are, in fact, the ones assaulting and insulting the residents.

According to a source from the New Mon State Party (NMSP) liaison office in Thanbyuzayat, “[Mi Cho] was not spread, so they need to investigate further information to know whether or not she was raped”. The source alleges that the “Burmese military tried to conceal the sexual case, claiming there was just [an] attack. They will [not] take full responsibility for it. The police are also trying to investigate the case so this issue will not be silenced easily”.

Thanbyuzayat resident Nai Shew explains, “The Second Corporal was

not able to rape her, but beat her. The husband of the victim settled and did not want to sue the criminal because he has to work nearby the Artillery Battalion in the future. But I also heard that Mi Cho's husband asked [for] help from the NMSP's liaison office”.

According to the Thanbyuzayat liaison office, Mi Cho's husband reported the case to the NMSP liaison office not to sue the culprit, but to report it step by step, in order to record it.

The police station has requested NMSP's Thanbyuzayat liaison office not to report the case to the NMSP center or to the media, but NMSP's Moulmein District department has ordered the NMSP's liaison office in Moulmein to report detailed information.

According to a local source, the authorities are trying to suppress news of the attack by monitoring and observing people; and “people who work for human rights can't sit in the internet café for [a] long time”.

On January 29th, some NMSP members visited Mi Cho at the hospital in Moulmein to encourage her, but her condition is still in danger.

Rape Victim Attempts to Flee Burma as Infantry Battalion No. 31 Incites Fear

January 23, 2014

WCRP: On December 24, 2013, a thirteen year-old girl was abducted from her home and raped by local soldier Than Win, of Infantry Battalion No. 31 (IB No.31), based in KhawZar Sub-Township, Ye Township, Mon State. The military has offered the victim's family a settlement of 500,000 kyat compensation, and has told the victim's parents that if anyone asks about it, they must say that the soldier only touched the girl's hand and that Than Win was not able to rape their daughter. The military forced the girl's family to sign an agreement attesting to these conditions.

Recently a military officer has been making daily visits to the victim's house, inciting such fear, that the child's family is trying to migrate to Thailand. The victim told field reporters from the Local women that Than Win has not been punished, and she has seen him since the incident. Even though the girl's parents asked that, after signing the agreement, Than Win would not be able to see her, the girl said she "still saw Than Win around her". The child repeatedly told field reporters that soldiers come to check on her, at her home, almost every day.

Head monks from the local monastery, and people from the Local women have tried to meet with the child, but her step-father will not allow them access. The groups would like to get the child medical treatment, but the girl's step-father is inhibiting any chance of help.

As one Kyone Kanya Village resident reports, "the child does not want to migrate to Thailand because she is still in school. She is young, and needs to rely on her mother; if her mother will go [then she will go]".

Another Kyone Kanya resident said that, "No one can go to her house because [the girl's] step-father holds a knife, and if someone goes to his house about his daughter, he said he will kill [them]". The resident attests that the girl's step-father is saying that nothing happened to his daughter, and tells his neighbors not to return and ask about it again.

The neighbor notes that, "Mi Saw Dar, mi lawi han went to take [the] child, [but was] not successful because the step-father [did] not allow his daughter [to go]". The step-father will not allow the girl to seek medical treatment, counseling at a safe house, or rehabilitation. The resident continues, "It seems [the] military had discussed an agreement with [the] step-father. Soldiers are coming to check [on the] child all the time, almost every day".

MiSauhta Jo, coordinator of the Women and Children Rights Project (WCRP), states, "I fear that [the] military will say something to [the] child and [her] family. I think there [has been] some pressure and persuasion with money [between] the military and step-father, because the step-father just refuses the women's group, without listening [to] anything".

Nai Banyar Lai, from the New Mon State Party (NMSP) said that, "[NMSP] can inform [people of] the case, but cannot take the child under their [protection]".

Now, the WCRP is trying to inform the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Labor Organization (ILO) about the girl's situation, in hopes that UNHCR may help her find medical treatment, and the ILO will investigate the perpetrations of the soldier.

Children of Nearly Every Household in Three Pagoda Pass Suffer from Dengue Fever

Children under 15 years-old are suffering from dengue fever in nearly every household in Three Pagoda Pass (TPP), on the Thai-Burma border. Health workers from TPP report that children, in particular, are being brought in for treatment at overcrowded medical clinics on the Thai side of TPP. When children come to the clinic with dengue, health workers travel to the child's home and spray the house with anti-mosquito chemicals.



Children under 15 years-old are the most common victims of the disease, and there may be little relief from sickness until the end of the rainy season. Health workers suggest that children wear long pants when they go to bed, to prevent bites from mosquitos which carry the disease.

BHI health workers plan to go to TPP and Chaung Zone to provide a mobile clinic and education about dengue fever in the second week of July.

According to a health worker from Border Health Initiative (BHI) located in TPP, "The children [are] suffering [from] dengue fever a lot [this year] as last year; almost every household of one or two children is getting [the] fever. For poor families, who live in the farm and their house is not safe, the children from those families suffer more. But we [have] not heard that children [have] died due to dengue fever."

"My child is three years-old. He gets [a] fever the whole night, and I went to the clinic [on] Thai side this morning. A doctor found that he has dengue fever and told me to check [my son] into the Sangkhlaburi hospital. Then, [health workers] went to our house to do anti-mosquito spraying around our house. My child had to check his blood three times, and a doctor asked [us] to go to the hospital every four days. Now my child is getting better", said a woman from TPP.

Due to the increase of mosquitos in rainy season, food, and unclean environments, people are suffering from dengue fever. Symptoms of the disease include first a fever, followed by headaches, muscle pain, malaise, as well as a rash on the neck, face, chest, and limbs. Health workers instruct residents that if they see such symptoms with their children, they should go to the clinic or hospital quickly for treatment.

"In Mae Ka Thar Karen village, Three Pagoda Pass, 40 children in primary school suffer from dengue fever", according to a priest from Sangkhlaburi. Mae Ka Thar Village is home to 100 households, and the village primary school has 60 students.

With similar conditions to Three Pagoda Pass, the American Specialist Children's Hospital in Moulmein has been overflowing with children stricken with dengue fever. Last week in Wae Zin Village, which is located in a New Mon State Party controlled area, such high numbers of students and teachers were suffering from the disease that they had to close the school. In Yay Ngan Gyi Village, Yebyu Township, Tenasserim Region, nearly all residents of the village are suffering from dengue fever.

Last year, due to unseasonably warm and wet weather, cases of dengue fever increased in Mon State and other areas of Burma.

Women Attacked by Soldiers Wait for Justice

February 6, 2014

On January 26, 2014, Mi Cho, from Wae Ka Yat village, Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State, was brutally assaulted and beaten by Second Corporal Ye Lin Tun, from Artillery Battalion No 315. The assault, resulting in a severe head injury, among other bodily injury, has left Mi Cho struggling to find a way to support her family, as well as to finance her hospital bills and court expenses.



Early in the early morning of January 26th, Mi Cho was collecting rubber liquid in the rubber plantation located near the Artillery Battalion, when she was hugged by Second Corporal Ye Min Tun. Ye Min Tun tried to rape her, but Mi Cho struggled and bit his arm; whereupon Ye Min Tun continued to beat the woman severely.

As a result of Ye Min Tun's assault, Mi Cho sustained severe injuries to her eyes, face, chest, head, back, as well as a bite injury on her hand. She was initially brought to Wae Rat Clinic, but the clinic was not able to treat her, so she was transported to Thanbyuzayat Hospital. Unfortunately, Thanbyuzayat Hospital was not able to treat her either, so she was sent to Moulmein Hospital.

Currently, Mi Cho's head injury is very severe, and she is in need of help to pay her medical bills, as the military did not pay for her treatment, and she cannot finance the costs herself. Mi Cho also needs assistance with trial and court costs, as well as providing for her family.

A local woman, who lends Mi Cho some support, says that, "Now [Mi Cho] is in the Mawlamyine Hospital. She is still not well, and her condition is still in danger. She has no money for her treatment, and she needs it. One of her sons did not eat rice; he just went to see and stay beside his mother. Today we met with her son in the hospital and he is not happy; he is afraid". The woman explains that, "Some local people [give Mi Cho] a little bit [of] support, but it is not enough. [Mi Cho] can't talk too much, and she just says a few words that she wants to go back home, but she worries for her health. Now, [Mi Cho] has a big problem with her head, [which she sustained when she was] beaten by [the] soldier".

Another local source added that Mi Cho went to Yangon Hospital yesterday, as her head injury is getting worse, and was accompanied by a representative from the Mon Democratic Party (MDP). According to Mi Cho's family, Ye Lin Tun's wife came to the hospital and gave her family a small amount of money. Along with 50,000 kyat donated from the Mon Women's Organization (MWO), Mi Cho still does not have enough money to cover the costs.

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AMDP Voices Concern that Children in Mon State Will Lose Their Mother Language

May 28, 2014

The All Mon Region Democracy Party (AMDP) has raised concerns that Mon children throughout Burma's Mon State will lose their mother tongue because they are only allowed to be taught the Burmese language in their schools. The AMDP is concerned that Mon children will lose their ability to speak their native language if it is not taught in schools.

At the May 21st Mon Literature Talk held in Thanbyuzayat, AMDP Chairman Nai Ngwe Thein addressed the issue that children are only learning the Burmese language at school. As this is not the Mon children's mother tongue, the children may be forced to learn Burmese and children may be abused because it is not their native language.

Last year ethnic political parties requested the government to allow ethnic language in every Burmese school. According to Mon State government's news, the minority Mon ethnic group has been allowed to have one subject of Mon language taught in Burmese schools this year.

After decades of Mon language instruction banned from government schools, the Mon community has finally received permission to teach their mother tongue in the classroom again. However, challenges have arisen while implementing the plan, due to budget constraints.

"Teaching Mon curriculum in Burmese schools for the 2014-2015 school year has been approved by the government, but the plan can be delayed due to salary and [supplies] for teachers which have not been [assured] yet", said Nai Ngwe Thein.

Nai Ngwe Thein notes that it's not enough to allow the Mon language in Burmese schools, but that it should be the major language for Mon children, with Burmese and English taught as minor languages. Nai Ngwe Thein stresses that the rest of the subjects, such as mathematics, history, geography, and science should all be taught in the Mon language.

"In the past", explains Nai Ngwe Thein, "children in some ethnic areas could not understand or speak the Burmese language, but they had to learn it. That they have to learn a language that they don't know means that they are being forced and their rights are being abused."



Women League of Burma (WLB) Holds Press Conference, Call for the Elimination of Sexual Violence against Women

February 25, 2014

The Burmese military has continually attempted to suppress any information of sexual crime and assault committed by its soldiers, and has worked to instilled fear in the people from reporting, or even talking about these crimes. The Women's League of Burma (WLB) held a landmark press conference in Rangoon, to raise awareness of the crimes of sexual violence systematically committed by the military.



Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State,

Forty people from various Mon women organizations, media groups, and the Democracy and Peace Women Network attended the press conference held by WLB on February 23, 2014 in Rangoon, at the Ah Taw Ka Chapel, Pa Ra Ya Ti Historical Instructional Building. At the press conference, the WLB released a statement regarding the sexual assault of Mi Cho, 43, by a military soldier.

On January 26th 2014, Mi Cho, a 43 year-old mother of six, was assaulted and beaten by Second Corporal Ye Min Tun, from Artillery Battalion No. 315, which is based west of Wae Ka Lee village, according to Ye Min Tun's identity card.

At 2:00am, Mi Cho was attacked by Ye Min Tun while she was collecting rubber liquid in a rubber plantation two plantations down from the one her husband was working on. The victim wrestled against her attacker for half an hour, which resulted in severe injuries to Mi Cho's eyes and chest. The victim also lost her teeth and sustained a serious head injury.

Mi Cho was initially taken to Thanbyuzayat Hospital, and then transferred to Mawlamyine hospital. After receiving treatment at Mawlamyine hospital for one week, her head injury got worse and Mi Cho was brought to the Rangoon hospital on February 4th for further care.

Despite the horrendous details of this assault, Artillery Battalion No. 315 has not only refused to support the victim, but has intimidated the victim's uneducated husband, Nai Lwin, to sign an order to conceal the case.

After the attack, Nai Lwin, along with the Mon Democracy Party (MDP), New Mon State Party (NMSP) from Moulamein District, members from Mon women's groups, and three solicitors joined together at the Thanbyuzayat police station to charge Ye Min Tun with article No. 376/511 for attempted rape, and No. 325 for grievous hurt. While Mi Cho was at the Mawlamyine hospital, the police visited once to investigate, after MDP had called them numerous times. They have not visited since.

WLB claims the military has tried to suppress any news of the case, and condemns the military for its actions. WLB has vowed to follow and complete the victim's desires, whatever it takes, and calls for the Burmese government to take responsibility in punishing the perpetrator of this brutal crime and to take action to eliminate any sexual violence against women.

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Geneva Call comes to the Border; Sexual Violence Workshop introduced Community-based Organizations to the “Deed of Commitment”



February 24, 2014

The Mon Women’s Organization (MWO) recently facilitated a two-day workshop on the Thai-Burmese border, conducted by the non-government organization Geneva Call. The February 19-20th workshop focused on the importance for Armed Non-State Actors (ANSA) in conflict zones to agree to a “Deed of Commitment” in order to prohibit sexual violence and gender discrimination. The workshop was attended by community-based organizations from the border, as well as from inside Burma.

The Deed of Commitment is, according to Geneva Call’s website, “an innovative mechanism that allows ANSAs to pledge to respect humanitarian norms and be held publically accountable for their commitments.... The Deed of Commitment process gives ANSAs the opportunity to formally express their agreement to abide by humanitarian norms and take ownership of these rules”.

Twenty-eight community workers from MWO, Border Health Initiative (BHI), Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM), Mon Youth Progressive Organization (MYPO), Mon Relief and Development Council (MRDC), Mon Zay Tanar Foundation, Mon National Health Committee (MNHC), Mon Youth Educator Organization (MYEO), and other local

organizations attended the workshop.

The workshop administrator explained the issues surrounding sexual violence, gender discrimination, and the participation of women, and participants were asked to discuss each issue with the rest of the group. Attendees produced recommendations to the Geneva Call as to what the NMSP and Mon civil society groups should do in order to implement the Deed of Commitment.

This workshop was Geneva Call’s first step in engaging the NMSP with the Deed of Commitment prohibiting sexual violence and gender discrimination. The workshop administrator explains, “We have recorded what the attendees discussed and suggested in the workshop, [and] we will urge and give our encouragement to the NMSP in order to have the most effective way to implement [the] Deed of Commitment”.

This workshop also worked to highlight the issues surrounding gender rights. Mi Kao Son, from Mon Zay Tanar Foundation, explains that, “[Mon Zay Tanar Foundation] does not focus on gender issues, but after we joined this workshop conducted by the Geneva Call, we would like to participate [to] encourage and support [the] New Mon State Party and Mon civil society groups in the

future, in order to match with this Deed of Commitment. We are really [thankful] to the Geneva Call for offering this kind of opportunity to us”.

A young man who attended the workshop recalls, “Although we are men, we would like to be [a] part of who support the women to have their rights”. This young man, too, thanks the Geneva Call for holding this workshop for the Mon civil society.

Geneva Call is a humanitarian organization, established in 2000 and based in Geneva, Switzerland. Geneva Call engages with Armed Non-State Actors (ANSAs) to encourage them to comply with international humanitarian norms, which are enshrined in the Geneva Convention among other international treaties, improving the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

Notably, five Iranian Kurdish ANSAs were the first to sign Geneva Call’s Deed of Commitment prohibiting sexual violence and gender discrimination, while in 2012 the Karenni National Progressive Party/ Karenni Army (KNPP/NA) and the New Mon State Party/Mon National Liberation Army (NMSP/MNLA) from Burma/Myanmar were the first two groups to sign the Deed of Commitment protecting children in armed conflict.

The Civil Society for Peace and Development Holds a Forum in Mawlamyine



July 22, 2014

WCRP: A forum for The Civil Society for Peace and Development was held July 6-8, 2014, and welcomed around 100 attendees to the Shwe Myint Moe Tun Hotel in Moulmein, Mon State.

According to Mi Kun Chan Non, one of ten people nominated for the N-Peace Award Untold Story, “Peace can’t be sustained without women[’s] participation [in] decision making. [Currently] we need more women’s participation in the peace process.”



Specifically, Mi Kun Chan Non notes that women must feel confident to participate, opportunities must be created for their participation, and women must take responsibly for this work.

“Our peace work needs to be [done] with networking, accountability, [and] transparency,” she adds.

During the forum, attendees discussed issues surrounding peace and development, justice, drug problems, and women’s role in Mon State.

In the Women and Peace section of the workshop, participants discussed a variety of issues affecting women in Burma, including the need for gender awareness training for both men and women, amendments to the constitution, the importance of taking into account Burma’s commitment to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the need for the government to provide education about the law to its citizens, and to take action for the protection of women as well as protection against child sexual harassment and domestic violence.

During the Women and Peace section, focus was highlighted on the need for gender equality and the education of women about the law and their rights. Women should be able to gain the skills necessary to become involved in leadership, and men should help women in obtaining a secure life. Attendees talked about the need for a women’s peace center to advocate for women’s right to education, social and administrative leadership, as well as for women to attain 30% of the decision making in Burma’s peace-building process. The Myanmar’s Women’s Affairs Federation, for example, does not really include women’s involvement from the ground-level; it is essential for women to be involved from the ground level to be able to represent all women.

Mi Cherry Soe joined the forum and said, “People want development... [Myanmar] needs to first build peace with important civil society and women’s participation.”

In a statement released from the Civil Society for Peace and Development, the aim of the forum was get rid of the law that acts as a barrier to the peace building process, to raise issues surrounding health, drugs, gaming, land confiscation, corruption, and taxing, and to provide a chance for women to become involved in education and the security of their lives.

The forum was funded by the BNC, and organized by the Mon Youth Education Organization (MYEO).

Grade 5 Child Raped and Killed in Yebyu Township

On June 4, 2014, an eleven year-old child was raped and murdered as she walked home from school in Kalein-Aung Sub-Township, Yebyu Township, Tanintharyi Division. The victim's parents and residents from the village found her dead body along the road near the child's school in Yabhu Village, where she attended grade 5. Villagers say the girl had been raped before being murdered. The victim was from Paran Village, Yebyu Township, daughter of Nai Mine Phyu.

"[The] child went back from the school alone in the evening [of] June 4th, and did not arrive home", said a man from Paran Village, who found the child's body, "Her parents were worried for her and asked some villagers to help find her. We found her body near Thar Yar Mon Village at 9am on June 5th."

According to an administrator from Thar Yar Mon Village, "[The] child was [found] dead in a hole and her stuff, such as a bag, umbrella, and shoes were beside her. Her shirt was lacerated and her head had been hit with a stone. The authorities took her body to the hospital in Kan Bout [where] the doctor checked her body and found that she was raped before she was killed."

The administrator added that this is the first year the child has attended the school in Yabu. On the day of her murder, the victim's friend went home from school by motorbike, while the victim walked back home alone. The administrator explains that, "Other students who went home by motorbike saw [the victim] alone and told her parents that she was walking. Her parents [went] to the school to pick her up, but they did not see her and [asked] some villagers [to help] find her the whole night. Unfortunately, they found her dead body the next day, in the morning around 9am, in a hole at mile 61 village."

U Tin Win Aung, village resident who saw the victim's body, reports that the child's parents drop her off and pick her up every day from school. On this particular day, the parents were delayed in collecting their daughter due to work. U Tin Win Aung says that a perpetrator saw her as she walked home from school and took her, raped and killed her.

"When we found her, she was already dead in the hole," states U Tin Win Aung, "I saw [a] beer bottle near her body also. The villagers who found her body [said] that when they saw her body, there were no clothes on her body. Then the authorities arrived and [put clothes on] the child's body. I am so sad when I look [at] the child. Her head [was] also hit by [a] stone."

The identity of the perpetrator is still unknown. Police from Kalein-Aung Village are currently investigating the murder to identify the culprit as quickly as possible.

Brutally Attacked by Burmese Soldier, Victim's Future is Uncertain

February 11, 2014

Mi Cho, 43, faces continuing hardship after having survived a brutal attack by Second Corporal Ye Lin Tun. Along with a serious head injury resulting from the assault, Mi Cho must undergo surgery for a finger injury; a surgery necessary for her to ever be able to work again. Effects of the attack have not only created serious health risks, but have left Mi Cho and her family destitute, as she tries to cover hospital costs and her family's living expenses..



In the early morning of January 26, 2014, Mi Cho was assaulted and beaten by Second Corporal Ye Min Tun, from Artillery Battalion No. 315, located west of Wae Ka Lee village, Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State. Mi Cho was attacked while she was collecting rubber liquid in the rubber plantation located near the Artillery Battalion, whereupon she sustained severe injuries to her eyes, face, chest, head, back, as well as a bite injury to her hand.

Still unable to straighten her head, Mi Cho will be continuing her recovery from the brutal assault at Kyi Myin Dain Orthopedic Hospital in Rangoon, where she will undergo surgery for serious finger injuries. The victim and her family are in a dire situation, as they cannot afford the operation; if they do not find support, Mi Cho will lose the function of her finger, rendering her unable to work to support her family, and leaving the future of her family's welfare uncertain.

On February 9th, Captain Nai Aung Tun, of Artillery Battalion No. 315, along with two of his soldiers, visited Mi Cho at Rangoon Hospital where they met with the chairman of the Mon Democratic Party. Mi Cho was not able to talk properly, due to injuries withstood during the attack; she will be transferred to Kyi Myin Dain Orthopedic Hospital in Rangoon, on Tuesday, February 11, 2014.

Although the hospital in Rangoon deemed her well enough to be discharged three days ago, Mi Cho is still experiencing faintness and vomiting; her family has asked her doctor to re-admit her until she is able to be transferred to Kyi Myin Dain Orthopedic Hospital.

The victim and her family are desperately seeking support for Mi Cho's hospitalization. As one of Mi Cho's relatives recounts, "Mi Cho's head [does not need surgery], but [it needs serious care], according to the doctor from Yangon hospital. However, her finger [needs] to have [an] operation". The relative continues, "It will take a long time for her to be discharged from the hospital. We can't assume how much [it] will [cost] for hospitalization. [The chairman of the] Mon Democratic Party is currently helping us; we [have] some support from [the] Mon community and [the] Women League Burma (WLB), [but] Mi Cho's family needs a lot of support [right] now".

This marks the second sexual assault by a Burmese soldier in Thanbyuzayat Township in just four and a half weeks, between December 24, 2013 and January 26, 2014. Ethnic women are experiencing systemic and widespread sexual assault at the hands of the Burmese military. Military authorities are actively working to suppress any news of Mi Cho's assault, as well as the numerous attacks like it.

Trafficking Persists on Thai-Burma Border

February 15, 2014

WCRP: On Sunday, February 9th, 2014, a four year-old girl was abducted from the Thai-Burma border. The Mon Women's Network (MWN) has been working to raise awareness and charge offenders of human trafficking, but child abduction continues to persist in Three Pagodas Pass Township. The child was lucky to be found, thanks to the efforts of the MWN and local people.

The four year-old daughter of Mi Aye Moe Thet, 24, and Nai Ba Lai, 25, was abducted from her neighborhood at 12:00pm the afternoon of February 9th. Mi Aye Moe Thet and Nai Ba Lai informed the village administrator and MWN as soon as they learned that their daughter was abducted; news spread quickly and local villagers, along with the MWN began searching for the child.

According to local children who were playing with the girl before her abduction, the victim was playing near the monastery in Gu Boa Village, Three Pagodas Pass Township, when a bald man approached her with offers of a snack and a ball to play with. Villagers witnessed the man take the child and transfer her to a woman on a motorbike at the top of the village. The woman then brought the girl to the nearby Thai gate to enter Thai side.

The female culprit was not able to pass through the gate with the child, and left the child near a garbage can with a snack. It is assumed that if the woman did pass through the gate with the child, it would arouse suspicion from the Thai soldiers, and they would prevent her from entering Thai side.

The child was found by a garbage collector three hours after her initial abduction, at 3:00pm on the same day. The garbage collector noticed the child because she was alone, standing beside a garbage can. The child has no idea of her abduction; when her parents questioned her as to what she experienced, the girl knew nothing, only telling them that she was given snacks to eat and a ball to play with.

Some villagers believe that the woman involved in the abduction could be the child's aunt, Mi Aye Soe because, as a local woman from Gu Baw Village states, "Mi Aye Soe used to commit this kind of crime in the past. She has [previously] been charged 5,000 baht for trafficking [a] 4 month-old child". The woman explains that, "[local villagers suspect] it could be Mi Aye Soe's connection [who] tried to abduct the girl".

The child's parents work at a rubber plantation in Chonburi Province, Thailand. They returned to Gu Boa village to join the Buddhist ceremony. The girl has one older brother, and one younger sister.

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Daw Tin Tin Nyo from WLB says, "The purpose of holding [the] press conference is to raise public and foreign [awareness] about this kind of sexual violence happening in Myanmar. We want to have justice upon the issue as by the law [sic]. By holding this press conference, we want to stop the military's actions in trying to suppress news and intimidate victim[s] after [soldiers] commit crime. [The press conference] is kind of our protection to eliminate this sexual violence against women in Myanmar".

WLB was founded in 1999, and is an umbrella organization consisting of 13 women's organizations representing different ethnic groups from Burma. The organization's aims are "to work for the empowerment and advancement of the status of women, to work for the rights of women and gender equality, to work for the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women, to work for the increased participation of women in every level of decision making in all spheres of society, to participate effectively in the movement for peace, democracy and national reconciliation".

Mon Activist Mi Kun Chan Non Wins Asian Women's N- Peace Award

July 29, 2014

Mon activist Mi Kun Chan Non won the N-Peace Award last Friday, July 25th, awarded by the multi-country N-Peace Network, for her work in advancing the rights of ethnic minority women in Burma. Mi Kun Chan Non will receive her award at N-Peace's October 2014 award ceremony, to be held in Bangkok.



The N-Peace Award was awarded to five women's rights activists by N-Peace, an organization which focuses on advancing Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) issues. Five women were chosen to receive the award by the N-Peace Network, which counts more than 8,100 online votes to determine five winners from a candidate list of 37 women.

The Mon Women's Organization (MWO) held an evening of celebration in honor of Mi Kun Chan Non's accomplishment. At the event, Mi Kun Chan Non expressed her sincere gratitude.

"First of all, three thanks to [the] award provider, who trust my work, and those [who] voted for me, especially my parents," said Mi Kun Chan Non, "My parents [were] my first teacher[s] who taught me since I was young. Because of them, I became an activist and work for the community, especially for women. As [an] ethnic woman, this award gives me opportunities and space for my work in the future for women. In our society and culture, women have limited [access] to participation in leadership and decision-making role[s], and it is similar in [the] national and international [context]. [Our] tradition believes that women are not born as leaders, but they are followers. We need to change this belief."

During interviews, Mi Kun expressed how her award will allow her to further advocate for women in Burma.

"I am not sure what I will receive for this award. If I have money, I will use this fund for support stipends for Mon National School Teachers. I will save this money at [a] bank, and use the interest of the fund to provide for Mon National Education Committee teachers. All of the Mon National School Teachers have [a] lack of support for their teacher stipends, and they are taking duties [in] conflict-affected areas. They are working hard for the community, as they are the one[s] who preserve Mon literature and culture," said Mi Kun Chan Non.

She continues that, "This award also recognize[s] minority women, and as I am a Mon ethnic, I should support women who are struggling and sacrificing their life for the community. My hope is [that] gender curriculum will be created and taught in Mon school[s], and in the future, Mon communities [will] have gender equality in every sector of leading and decision-making roles."

Forty-eight year-old Mi Kun Chan Non, legally known as Mi Khin Khin Kyu, currently serves as director and deputy chairwoman of the MWO. Born in Ywalut Village, Chaungzone, Mon State to U Soe Myint Thein and Daw Tun Hlaing, Mi Kun graduated with a bachelor's degree in economics from the Institute of Economics, Yangon in 1999.

Mi Kun has studied Grassroots Leadership Training and Educational Movement, completed a series of TOT training (SEM) in 2000, studied Business Correspondence in British Council, Yangon, in 2003, Development Study SEASOLINE in the Philippines, completed a Rural Social Leadership Development Course in 2004, and received a Masters in Development Study from the Kimmage Development Study Center in Dublin, Ireland.

The N-Peace Network was founded in 2010, and works to support women's leadership in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and peace building. The group is active in Nepal, Sri Lanka, East Timor, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Afghanistan.

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Mi Cho's family initially reported the assault to the village administration and police in Thanbyuzayat Township on the morning that the assault occurred. According to her family, "the authority from Thanbyuzayat Township said that they [would] investigate the case, and on Wednesday (January 29, 2014) the authorities tackled the perpetrator, Ye Lin Tun".

On January 29th, Mi Cho allowed her husband and social group to file an official report of her assault with the authorities, reporting offences against section 376, 511(attempted rape) and section 325 (grievous hurt) to a woman.

The victim of a similar assault case, from December 24, 2013, is still waiting for her attacker to be brought up on any charges. In this case, a thirteen year-old girl was abducted from her home in Khaw Zar village and raped by local soldier Than Win, of Infantry Battalion No. 31 (IB No. 31), based in Khaw Zar Sub-Township, Ye Township, Mon State. The military has offered the victim's family a settlement of 500,000 kyat compensation, on the condition that if anyone asks the victim or her family about it, they say that the soldier only touched the girl's hand; that Than Win was not able to rape the girl. The military forced the girl's family to sign an agreement attesting to these conditions. The victim has seen Than Win since the attack, and he has yet to be brought to justice.

"We always appreciate feedback from our readers. Please feel free to contact our mailing or email address."

Woman and Child Rights Projects (WCRP)
P.O Box (35), Sangkhlaburi, Kanchanaburi 71240
Thailand
Email: wcrpcontact@yahoo.com
Website: <http://rehmonnya.org>



Woman and Child Rights Project