

THE VOICE 21P

THE NEWSLETTER FOCUSING ON CURRENT ISSUES OF EMPOWERMENT, COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION, AND ADVOCACY FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN FROM SOUTHERN MYANMAR.

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Woman and Child Rights Project

PARENTS ASKED TO SUPPLEMENT MON LANGUAGE TEACHER SALARIES IN MON STATE GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

June 19, 2015



Insufficient government funding for Mon language teacher salaries in Thanbyuzayat Township government Basic Education schools has led to pressure on parents to compensate for salary deficits. While Mon State Basic Education Primary Schools have been permitted to teach Mon language classes since the start of the 2014-15 school year, parents have reportedly been asked to contribute funds to facilitate the classes, bolstering low salaries on offer from the government. [Read more on page10>>](#)

WCRP RELEASES "INACCESSIBLE AND UNDER-RESOURCED: CONCERNS OVER EDUCATION IN RURAL MON COMMUNITIES"

June 2, 2015



Moulmein, Mon State: Today, at a presentation in Mon State capital Moulmein, the Women and Child Rights Project (WCRP), a project of the Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) released a report entitled "Inaccessible and Under-Resourced: Concerns Over Education in Rural Mon Communities".

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Publisher's Message

This edition of *Voice Up* represents key women and children's rights issues in Southern Burma over the last six months, as covered by the Women and Child Rights Project (WCRP). In many ways these articles reflect a nationwide climate of unfulfilled commitments and stalling reforms. Articles in this edition make clear that, at least in terms of women and children's rights, the country's reform, development and peace-building process has a long way to go; women and children in Southern Burma are not yet able to live in safety and dignity, and the rights accorded to them remain unprotected in many respects.

Education consists one key area in which children's rights in Southern Burma remain unfulfilled. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 28) states that all children have a right to education, including free and compulsory primary education, and universally accessible secondary education. A report released by WCRP in June, *Inaccessible and Under-Resourced: Concerns Over Education in Rural Mon Communities*, demonstrated how these rights remain unfulfilled in rural Mon areas, with education

inaccessible for children from poor families. The report also highlighted difficulties for teachers in rural areas, who work in challenging, under-resourced environments. These themes were reiterated by follow-up articles published by WCRP, also included in this edition.

Concerns over education in rural Mon areas interact with national-level debates on education reform, given that half of the schools WCRP surveyed for *Inaccessible and Under-Resourced* were chiefly under Burmese government administration. The government has a responsibility to more greatly fulfill children's rights to education in rural ethnic areas, ensuring that these areas are not left behind in broader processes of education reform. However, WCRP's report also pointed to similar responsibilities on the side of the Mon National Education Committee (MNEC), given that half of schools surveyed by WCRP were MNEC-run Mon National Schools.

Regarding women's rights, sexual violence is still a key area of concern for WCRP. This edition contains various reports of rape or attempted rape. While reported rape cases attest to women's growing bravery in speaking out against sexual violence, they also demonstrate a



persistent and damaging status quo. The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women states that violence against women "constitutes a violation of the rights and fundamental freedoms of women and "is an obstacle to the achievement of equality, development and peace". WCRP has for years advocated for greater protection of women in Southern Burma against sexual violence, and will continue to do so until women's rights to protection are more adequately fulfilled.

Finally, alongside areas of concern, this edition also presents and celebrates an important step forward for women's rights. In May, the Women's Party (Mon), led by Mi Than Shin and founded to represent the interests of Mon women in the political arena, was registered as a political party; the party's registration represents a powerful symbol of the growing movement championing women's rights in Southern Burma.

As Burma looks towards elections in November 2015, the country's future remains in the balance. Despite a climate of political uncertainty, WCRP continues to advocate for the full realization of women and children's rights in Southern Burma, and is committed to monitoring and reporting on rights violations until all such rights are afforded adequate and equal protection.



News

WCRP RELEASES “INACCESSIBLE AND UNDER-RESOURCED: CONCERNS OVER EDUCATION IN RURAL MON COMMUNITIES”

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June 2, 2015



WCRP concludes *Inaccessible and Under-Resourced* with a call for all parties concerned with education in Mon regions, including the Burmese government, MNEC and international aid organisations, to undertake all necessary measures to address the highlighted concerns. In particular, WCRP advocates that all parties must take comprehensive action to limit the effects of poverty on school attendance and to strengthen resources available to rural village schools. WCRP hopes that the data contained within this report may be used as a starting point for follow-up research and stepped-up engagement, facilitating measures that may slowly begin to improve education prospects for some of Burma’s most marginalised children.

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Moulmein, Mon State: Today, at a presentation in Mon State capital Moulmein, the Women and Child Rights Project (WCRP), a project of the Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) released a report entitled “Inaccessible and Under-Resourced: Concerns Over Education in Rural Mon Communities”.

The report draws on interviews conducted by WCRP field reporters with 146 individuals, largely in 17 rural villages of Ye Township (Mon State), Kyainnseiky Township (Karen State), and Yebyu Township (Tenasserim Region). Through the report WCRP presents the significant challenges faced by both students and teachers in government-led Basic Education and ‘Mixed’ Schools, and in non-state Mon National Education Committee (MNEC) operated Mon National Schools; first exploring the issue of education dropout, and second outlining resource constraints in rural village schools.

WCRP expresses concern that, despite some progress on national-level education reform, the benefits of reform have clearly yet to be seen in rural ethnic areas of the country. Overwhelmingly, WCRP’s main findings were that education in rural Mon regions remains inaccessible for children from poor families, and that rural village schools remain chronically under-resourced.

More specifically, WCRP’s research highlighted that, despite the Burmese government’s commitment to Millennium Development Goal No. 2 (Universal Completion of Primary Education), over a third of children who stated when they had left education dropped out before completing Primary School. Meanwhile, three quarters of students who gave reasons why they had dropped out from education cited problems connected to livelihood difficulties. In terms of resource shortages, 14 of 23 village schools surveyed indicated problems with insufficient material and human resources.



News

CHOLERA OUTBREAK IN THREE PAGODAS PASS VILLAGE

July 1, 2015

In recent weeks forty people have been treated for cholera in Ga Own Guu village, located in the Thai-Burma border area of Three Pagodas pass. The village, comprised of approximately eighty households in total, is located in territory under the control of the Mon armed group, the New Mon State Party (NMSP).

Reportedly, the cholera outbreak began when three patients from Htar Wal Su and Baho Chaung villages, also in the

Three Pagodas Pass area, were brought to Ga Own Guu village's NMSP clinic. Since neither of these villages have their own clinic, the patients, infected with Cholera, walked forty minutes to reach the clinic in Ga Own Guu. It is suspected that, after the patients arrived at the clinic, poor sanitation in Ga Own Guu meant that Cholera, which is transmitted through contaminated food and water, began to spread throughout the village.

On June 19, Border Health Initiative (BHI), a Mon community-based organisation whose mobile clinic visits

Ga Own Guu, sent a group to the village to administer Doxycycline treatment to those infected, while also raising awareness about Cholera. A BHI staff member commented, "We heard about [the Cholera cases] after they had suffered for five days. Fortunately, no one has died. [...] Now, the number of patients has decreased".

The BHI staff member discussed worries that poor sanitation and health education make villagers more susceptible to such outbreaks. She detailed, "The villagers lack knowledge on health issues. They don't know how to prevent disease. Also, the village is not very clean. The village doesn't have enough toilets. Sometimes, four houses share one toilet".

The cholera outbreak has compounded worries about rising ill health in the Three Pagodas Pass area in recent months. According to residents, in the last month many people in the town of Three Pagodas Pass have contracted chronic diarrhea, with four patients dying from the infection; the local Health Department has not yet determined the root cause of infection in this case.



14 YEAR-OLD GIRL RAPED IN MAWLAMYINE

March 23, 2015

A fourteen-year-old girl from Ngantay Quarter, Mawlamyine, Mon State has been raped by a 22 year-old male on March 13, 2015.

It has been reported that the girl was raped more than once, without her consent.

At 8 pm in the evening of March 13th, Ma , 14 years-old, left the house to buy something at a nearby shop when she came upon U Thein Myint's son Myint Zaw Oo, nickname Kalar who told her to "follow me a moment, I have something to talk [to you about]."

At that point, Myint Zaw Oo took the young girl to the View Point located on the hill in Mawlamyine, where he raped her for the first time. He then took her to a palm wine shop in Pain Nel Kone Village in Kyaikmayaw. The wine shop was deserted, and Myint Zaw Oo raped Ma a second time. The perpetrator then took the girl to an abandoned boat in Pain Nel Kone Village's boat haven, where he raped her on the boat. The victim reported that she was raped three times, consecutively.

Ma left her home to go to the corner shop on March 13th, and did not return home. Her parents went looking

for her and found her three days later, on March 16th, staying at a relative's house in Pain Nel Hone Village, in Kyaikmayaw.

Her mother brought the case to court on March 17th, whereupon the perpetrator, Myint Zaw Oo, was sentenced under penal code 363/376 in Mawlamyine's Zeya Thiri Police Station.

Just last year, a 16-year-old girl was raped by a 74-year-old man in Taung Sone Village, Chaungzone Township, Mon State. The perpetrator was sentenced under penal code 376 in Mawlamyine Court.

MON WOMEN'S PARTY TO COMPETE IN 2015 ELECTIONS



May 31, 2015

On 28 May, 2015 the Women's Party (Mon), a political party representing the interests of Mon women, received official registration. Formed in October 2014, the Women's Party was founded by Mi Than Shin, a former member of the *Shin Saw Pu Mon Women empowerment Association*. In an interview with HURFOM the day after receiving registration, Mi Than Shin spoke about the party's origins and hopes to win votes in this year's upcoming elections.

According to Mi Than Shin, the idea of creating the Women's Party was formed when a group of women went on a field trip to Tenasserim Region to collect population data from Mon communities. During their field trip the group found that Mon communities in Tenasserim Region displayed a Burmese identity and did not speak Mon. The group wanted to do something to help Mon communities in this region regain their ethnic identity. However, they felt that they could not achieve this through involvement with existing Mon political parties, given that they were considered to deny women an equal voice. Mi Shin Than detailed, "They don't like us because we always try to be equal with men. So we decided that we should form a party to get involved in politics".

The group were further motivated by worries that divisions between the two existing Mon political parties might jeopardise the chances of Mon parties in 2015's elections; Mi Than Shin explained that, in forming their own political party, the group of women hoped to create a neutral third force that would unite existing parties, while also giving primacy to women's concerns.

Mi Than Shin explained to HURFOM that the main goal of the Women's Party is to achieve equality, establishing equal rights between men and women, and amongst women of different ethnic backgrounds. According to Mi Than Shin, now that the Women's Party has received official registration it will compete in this year's

upcoming elections. It is hoped that if the party wins votes, Mon women's voices will be elevated and the party will be able to initiate progress. Mi Than Shin said, "We believe our women have capability too. We will work with women from all over the world. We want to strengthen the lives of Mon women; we will work for Mon people to be united and to win votes in the coming election".

However, Mi Than Shin emphasised that, despite gender equality playing a key role in the party's agenda, the Women's Party is also hoping to appeal to broader concerns. Detailing plans for the future, Mi Than Shin explained, "As most of [the party's members] come from the *Shin Saw Pu Mon Women empowerment Association*, there are many issues we are going to work on, such as social, economic, political, health and education issues. We will work on these issues as much as we can [...] Although this is a women's party, it does not just help to improve the situation of women, but also that of the Mon community as a whole. We would like to ask everyone to support us".

News

KOE-MILE VILLAGE NEEDS WOMEN'S GROUP AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT TRAINING

March 17, 2015

Women's rights groups are needed to empower women and help fight endemic prejudice and domestic violence against women in northern Ye Township's Koe-Mile Village.

"In our village, we would like to have a woman's group because they will be able to advocate for the rights of women," expressed Koe-Mile's village chairman, "Nowadays, we should protect the rights of women and youth, and then the lives of women will be able to improve. In every situation there is a belief that men are better than women. Although men are talking nonsense, women still lack the power to speak. During my term as chairman, we always welcomed the discussion regarding the formation of a women's group or training related to women's rights in the village; we always welcomed the plan. If it benefits everyone, we give permission to make it happen. I am willing to take responsibility and I am very interested to give full support and help. I have seen the eyes of our youth

opening for a long time now. There is no activity related to women's rights, which is why we really need to address this women's issue."

Koe-Mile's village youth group was formed ten years ago, but the village does not have any women's organizations or groups raising awareness regarding violence against women. The village chairman notes there is domestic violence amongst a number of couples in the village.

Drug use is currently rising in the village, bringing along with it a rise in domestic violence.

"There are four people that I have known [and tried to counsel]. When I can't handle them, I even did beat one of them. Due to this domestic violence, it affects their children. After I solved their cases, things are fine between them again. For the youth there are fewer problems because their group is strong. Those married with two, three or four kids are difficult to handle because they are old," said the chairman.

The chairman remarked, "I do not see when they use the drug, but I have to solve the problem when they are fighting. During the past two years there has been a lot of domestic violence in the village. People who sell the drugs are mostly from Ye, or other towns. Even though we want to arrest them, we don't have strong evidence to arrest. The people who are selling the drugs are not Mon, but the people who use the drugs are mostly Mon. I admonish my villagers [who take drugs] or threaten them as much as I can. This year's [rate of drug use] is better than last year; if we compare it to last year, only 30% of those who used drugs last year are still using."

Koe-Mile village is located in northern Ye Township. The village is home to 320 households and a population of 2,593, who are largely betel nut and rubber farmers, with a small number of the population having migrated to Thailand.

34 YEAR-OLD MAN ATTEMPTS TO RAPE A WOMEN IN WAE RAT

February 2, 2015

U Min Soe, 34, son of U Nyi Law and Daw Law Ma from Kwin Gyi Village, Yaydarshay Township attempted to rape Mi P, 45, a single woman, daughter of Nai Phaw Soi and Mi Law from Wae Rat Village multiple times, the most recent attempt occurring in mid-August 2014.

On the night of the incident, Mi Paw and U Min Soe were tapping rubber together when U Min Soe attempted to rape Mi P. Upon screaming for help people nearby heard her cries and freed her from U Min Soe, said Mi paw.

The victim stated that Min Soe, who is married to the victim's sister, has attempted to rape her on three separate occasions since 2010, the August assault being the third incident.

Although Min Soe has attempted to rape her multiple times, Mi P has never spoken out due to worry that such news will shock her mother, who is ill with heart-disease, and her sister Mi Thein, who has multiple health conditions.

During Min Soe's second attempt to rape Mi P, the victim reported the incident to Min Soe's parents and family members as well as the Wae Rat Village

Administrator. As a result, Min Soe admitted to his crime and signed a document promising not to continue such actions in the future.

Despite having signed this document, Min Soe again attempted to rape Mi P in mid-August of last year, upon which Mi P decided to tell her sister of her husband's continued assaults, as well as asking the New Mon State Party to detain Min Soe in Mawlamyine.

Currently, the court has recorded Mi P's case and are preparing to take legal action in accordance with the laws.

News

FINANCIAL WOES FOR MON STATE PARENTS DUE TO HIGH SCHOOL “TUITION” FEES

June 17, 2015

With the start of the new school year, parents have expressed concerns about costs surrounding extra “tuition” in Mon State’s High Schools.

“Tuition” is a common practice in Burma, where teachers, or sometimes others outside the school system, charge fees for extra lessons after school hours. Tuition has reportedly become the norm throughout Burma’s schools, with regular school classes considered insufficient to prepare students for exams without being supplemented by extra tuition.



Parents interviewed by HURFOM detailed worries about excessive financial burdens placed on families by the costs of extra tuition. Families of High School students described feeling pressure to pay for extra tuition, or else see their child put at a disadvantage and at risk of failing exams.

Nai Hla from Phae Doe village, Mudon Township, father of a Standard 10 student, explained, “If we have High School students in the house we feel really worried because, even if we don’t have enough money to buy food, we need to work hard to get money for our children’s school costs. If we can’t provide [costs for extra

tuition] our children will not pass their exams. If they don’t pass we need to spend more money next year [for them to repeat the year], so it is really difficult for us.”

Nai Hla detailed that last year he paid 50,000 Kyat per subject for his child to attend tuition. However, he explained that this year he plans to pay an annual fee of 1,000,000 Kyat for his child to live at his teacher’s house and access regular tuition there. Another parent interviewed by HURFOM explained that many families end up sending their children to live at their teacher’s house to access regular tuition, given that this is usually cheaper than them seeking tuition elsewhere.

These new reports about tuition fees in Mon State High Schools follow wider concerns regarding access to education in Mon communities, as articulated in *Inaccessible and Under-Resourced*, a report released this month by HURFOM’s Women and Child Right’s Project. One parent discussed how tuition fees play into wider concerns over the accessibility of education, connecting high tuition fees to education dropout at High School level. She explained, “My child dropped out from school at Standard 9 because of tuition [costs]. My child couldn’t have tuition because we didn’t have enough money. Even if our child studied really hard in lessons he would never pass his exams without tuition [...] He failed exams for two years because he couldn’t take tuition”.

As parents struggle with tuition fees, some have speculated that teachers are to blame for extra tuition becoming a necessity. Some parents allege that High School teachers intentionally fail to teach sufficient materials in the classroom, in order to personally benefit when students require extra classes.

News

10TH MON WOMEN DAY CELEBRATED ON MAWLAMYINE

March 4, 2015



Last week Mon women joined together in celebration of the 10th Mon Women's Day. The date of the annual celebration takes place on March 1st, honoring the birthday of famed Mon Queen Shin Saw Puu. This year's celebration event was held at the Mon Dhamma Hall, Mawlamyine, Mon State.

The event was organized by five Mon groups, including the Mon Women's Network, the Mon Women's Organizations, The Women's Empowerment Project, the Mon Youth Progressive Organization, and the Saytanar Foundation. Event activities included explanations on the history of Mon Women's Day and a role play about violence against women, performed by the Women's Empowerment Project (WEP).

"Our women have skills and are brave," said Mi Lwai Han, spokeswoman for the Mon Women's Day event, "We see women taking place in the women's sessions on education and health issues, but [women's participation] is still weak in the political sector. I want the women to work in the political sector, then women can participate in establishing peace."

The celebration was attended by around 40 organizations, including community-based organizations (CBOs), government groups, education and health department groups, social service groups, Mon State police, and about 200 civilian attendees. Presentations, handouts, and statements were presented to the crowd in Mon, Burmese and English languages.

A press statement for the event identifies a number of women's issues, especially the situation of violence that affects women in Myanmar, including Mon women,

and the weak response from authorities for ethnic women who have been victim to military rape.

Mi Than Htay, general secretary of the Tara Foundation, shared her experience of the event, "I received knowledge from the Mon Women's Day event and I can also give suggestions. I would like all of our women [to become] involved in the political issue. If we want to change something, we should work until we attain it; nothing will happen if we just talk and take no action."

Though this year marks the 10th anniversary of Mon Women's Day, celebrations have only been formally held in Mawlamyine for three years. In the past, Mon Women's Day events rotated every year between in Thaton District, Mawlamyine, and Htar wal District.

News

DROPOUT DUE TO POOR MNEC SECONDARY EDUCATION COVERAGE IN THANBYUZAYAT AND MUDON TOWNSHIPS, SAYS EDUCATION CHAIRWOMAN

June 16, 2015

A township-level education chairwoman has expressed concerns over Mon National Education Committee (MNEC) Secondary Education coverage in Thanbyuzayat and Mudon Townships, both located in Mon State.

Since the 1970s MNEC has operated a non-state education system, which today contains over 140 Mon National Schools. However, the vast majority of these schools extend only to the end of Primary School, with few MNEC Middle or High Schools in operation. According to Mi Seik Pone, education chairwoman for Thanbyuzayat Township, although there are over fifty Secondary-level MNEC students in Thanbyuzayat and Mudon townships together, neither township contains a MNEC Middle or High School. While she clarified that some MNEC Primary Schools in these townships do teach students past the end of Primary level on an informal basis, this is dependent on individual teachers and does not rely on any formal arrangement.

Mi Seik Pone expressed concern that poor MNEC Secondary Education coverage in these areas leads many students to leave education after completing Primary School. According to Mi Seik Pone, unless further education can be arranged in the village Primary School, students who wish to continue past Primary level are faced with the choice of either moving to another township to attend an MNEC Middle or High School, or leaving the MNEC school system altogether to transfer to a Burmese government Basic Education School closer to home. While Mi Seik Pone said that the latter option was more common in Mudon Township, she noted that in Thanbyuzayat Township many parents would rather see their children drop out from school than enroll them in their local government school

Mi Seik Pone explained, “We encourage [children] to continue to [MNEC] Middle School or High School in Wan Ka Poe Village [Kyainnseiky Township] or An Din Village [Ye Township] [...] But the schools are far and their parents don’t allow them to go because they worry about their child. We heard that some students join government Middle Schools, but mostly they drop out”.

While villagers in Thanbyuzayat and Mudon Township have expressed desires to open up Secondary Education coverage in their areas, with MNEC broadly supportive of these plans, Mi Seik Pone noted that lacking funds for teachers’ salaries has thus far precluded new schools from being established. “We planned to open Mon National Post-Primary and Middle Schools in [Thanbyuzayat] Township”, she explained. “We discussed this with the monks and they accepted it. But when we discussed teachers’ salaries no one wanted to take responsibility [...] In my view, it is difficult to open [Secondary Schools] in our Township due to salary problems.”

Illustrating this trend, requests for a Middle School from residents of A Nin Village, Thanbyuzayat Township and Ka Mar Wat Town, Mudon Township have both so far been met with silence from MNEC.

However, Mi Seik Pone highlighted how existing efforts to encourage children to continue in education would likely be unsuccessful unless the issue of poor MNEC secondary school coverage could be addressed in these townships. She noted, “We encourage [parents] a lot, but they do not let their children continue in school. Even though we encourage them we can’t set up Post-Primary or Middle Schools, so we can’t help the children to continue their education”.



News

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PARENTS ASKED TO SUPPLEMENT MON LANGUAGE TEACHER SALARIES IN MON STATE GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

June 19, 2015



Insufficient government funding for Mon language teacher salaries in Thanbyuzayat Township government Basic Education schools has led to pressure on parents to compensate for salary deficits. While Mon State Basic Education Primary Schools have been permitted to teach Mon language classes since the start of the 2014-15 school year, parents have reportedly been asked to contribute funds to facilitate the classes, bolstering low salaries on offer from the government.

According to MP Nai Naing Oo, the government provides a salary of just 500 Kyat per hour for Mon language teachers working in Basic Education schools. In comparison, other Basic Education school teachers receive salaries of approximately 100,000 Kyat per month. Nai Naing Oo explained, "It is a very small salary. We asked [the government] to increase it but they did not agree. Instead,

the villagers must take responsibility for [Mon teacher] salaries in their area".

Nai Tin Win, Chairman of Education for Thanbyuzayat Township, detailed that, while some villages were able to resolve the issue by asking existing teachers, already receiving a regular salary, to teach additional Mon language classes after school hours, in other villages there was no choice but to hire a dedicated Mon language teacher, due to a lack of teachers in the school sufficiently fluent in Mon language. In these cases, additional funds were required to supplement government funds available for new teachers' salaries. Nai Tin Win stated, "Every school has to find a way to solve the problem for their school".

In Wae Ka Lee Village, Thanbyuzayat Township, it was reported that the Principal of the village's school had decided to charge a 1,500 Kyat annual fee per student in order to cover a salary for the school's Mon language teacher. Wae Ka Lee resident Nai Tun explained, "The Principal invited the students' parents to a meeting, where they set up a group to find funds for the teacher's salary. But no one wanted to take responsibility. So, the principal decided that every student has to pay 1,500 Kyat per year. I think it is not fair that the government allows us to teach Mon in government schools but does not provide the funding for it".

Reports of problems with Mon language teacher salaries come alongside accounts of wider issues with the new government Mon language curriculum. In particular, reports have been received that government Mon language modules are too difficult for young students to cope with. Questions have also been raised over reports that government schools have not been given permission to conduct exams for Mon language modules.

16 YEAR-OLD STUDENT RAPED BY 74 YEAR-OLD MAN IN CHAUNG ZONE TOWNSHIP

February 2, 2015

A 16 year-old girl from Quarter 4 was raped by 74 year-old U Kyaw Myint on December 6, 2014 in Taung Sone Village, Chaung Zone Township, Mon State.

U Kyaw Myint, who has not had a wife for 10 years, works as a money transfer, transferring foreign currency to Myanmar.

U Kyaw Myint has a Thai phone in his house which, on the day of the incident, Mi H H used to talk to her parents who are currently working in Thailand.

Around 1 pm on December 6th, Mi H H went to buy snacks at the market when she met U Kyaw Myint. The man asked to buy Mi H H a tonic, and the young girl went into his house. Upon entering the house, U Kyaw Myint closed the door and

held a knife to the child, threatening that if she shouted he would rape and kill her; he further threatened to kill the girl's parents.

Following the incident, Mi H H continued to attend school, but her grandmother knew something was wrong as the young girl looked very sad and was always brooding. Mi H H's grandmother believed the child was upset because she did not understand her lessons in school, but when she asked the girl about it, Mi H H said nothing was wrong. Nine days later Mi H H's grandmother asked her again what was wrong, and the girl told her that she had been raped by an old man, U Kyaw Myint.

Mi H H's parents have two children and are currently working in Thailand. The victim lives with her grandmother, but her

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News

THREE PAGODAS PASS STUDENTS FACE OUTBREAKS OF FOOD POISONING AND DENGUE FEVER

June 19, 2015



WCRP: High School students in the Thai-Burma border town of Three Pagodas Pass are reportedly experiencing simultaneous outbreaks of suspected food poisoning and dengue fever.

Many students have been hospitalized after experiencing dizziness, vomiting and diarrhea, which students and parents suggest may be the result of eating unclean food at the school market. Daw Nan Hla Oo, mother of a student at Three Pagodas Pass High School, explained, "My son ate salad

from the school market, then when he arrived home he vomited and got sick. I didn't know he was so sick until he came home from school the next day. Then I had a fever too and we went to hospital".

Meanwhile, many Three Pagodas students have also begun showing symptoms of mosquito-borne dengue fever: a high fever, severe headaches, pain behind the eyes, severe joint and muscle pain, and vomiting. New cases of dengue fever recall severe outbreaks last June and July, which affected large numbers of children in Mon State and Tenasserim Division.

With two simultaneous outbreaks of chronic diseases, insufficient health education at Three Pagodas Pass High School has come into focus. According to a former Mon medic, there have been no health education talks at Three Pagodas Pass' government Basic Education school this year. A Standard 5 student confirmed, "In our school we never see anyone come to check health or give talks to educate about health issues". While a Burmese government

health group has reportedly given talks about health issues in other locations in the town, they were unable to distribute any medicine.

To prevent future cases of dengue fever, reports suggest plans to spray the town of Three Pagodas Pass for mosquitos, using spray donated by a health clinic located across the border in Thailand. In the meantime, medics advise residents of Three Pagodas Pass showing symptoms of either condition to visit a hospital immediately.



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parents have returned to the village because of their daughter's case. Mi H H attends grade 8 in Ka Lawi high school, but fearing for her safety and well-being, Mi H H's parents want to remove her from school.

"Our daughter is really young. We have a lot of hope for her future. Her father does not want her to leave school, but because of this incident, we feel really shy and cannot go out. We really pity our daughter because she is so young and is facing this kind of problem. We asked her to stop going to school for the rest of the year because all the people from the village know about the incident and we don't want the other people asking our daughter about it. We are worried for her. We also worry that she may feel uncomfortable among her friends in school. We don't want her to feel sad, so we asked her to stop

going to school for a while. We don't want the other children to experience what my daughter has, so we want the perpetrator to be punished for what he has done to our daughter," said H H's mother.

U Kyaw Myint's daughter and sister offered compensation to the child, but her grandmother refused to accept it. They went to the child's house again to ask how much the family wanted in compensation, demanding once compensation was paid that the family leave the village and migrate to Thailand. The child's grandmother refused once again, and on December 16th reported the assault to the village administrator. Police arrested U Kyaw Myint around 9pm on December 16th and brought him to the Chaung Zone police station. Committee members from the Maternal and Child Care

Organization and the Women's Team lent support for this case.

According to Maternal and Child Care Organization Administrator Daw Kyin Than, "If we allow someone to pay compensation after raping someone, later on other people will also do it [commit rape]. They abuse people and children and pay compensation, so other people will [commit crimes of] abuse too. This is unreliable for the young girls in the village."

Mi H H and her family have visited the Chaung police station three times, and the trial was set for the end of December. On January 15, 2015, Chaung Zone police transferred the perpetrator to Mawlamyine.

This is the first rape case to be reported in Taung Sone in the history of the village.

MON YOUTH PROGRESSIVE ORGANIZATION BEGINS TWO-MONTH WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT TRAINING IN SANGKHLABURI

July 16, 2015



WCRP: On June 29, 2015, the Mon Youth Progressive Organization (MYPO), a youth organization affiliated with the predominant Mon armed group, the New Mon State Party, began a two-month-long Women's Empowerment Training in Sangkhlaburi, Thailand. Fifteen women, aged 15 to 35 years old and from various areas of Mon State, are attending the training, which aims to empower women by strengthening both their knowledge and leadership skills.

During the training MYPO will focus on eight target issues, which will include human rights, women's rights and gender. According to MYPO, a unique element of the training is that participants are required to hold weekly debates on issues they have studied.

MYPO staff explained that they have made conscious efforts to recruit a diverse group of participants for the training. The 15 trainees come from a large range of townships, including Ye, Mudon, Thanbyuzayat, Pha An, Paung and Balu Kyine. In particular, MYPO attempted to recruit participants from areas that have been poorly served by such trainings in the past. Participants are also of a variety of ages, ranging from Grade 4 of school to Year One of university.

MYPO training organizer Mi Pakao Mrok Son explained, "We tried to choose participants from different areas and from areas where we haven't given trainings before. The students are very new [to the issues in the trainings] and it is a little bit difficult for them to understand the issues. We don't have any qualification requirements for the Women's Empowerment Training. We mainly just want to support women who can help the community and who are interested in the training. After [the participants] finish the two months of training they have to go back to their village and give a day-long training on issues they are interested in. We will do follow-ups after they give these trainings".

Mi Moe Chan, a trainee from Kyar Kan quarter, Thanbyuzayat Township, shared her experiences, "I am interested in the empowerment training because I am developing knowledge from it. We have attended the training for two weeks now and we have learned about three issues: human rights, women's rights and gender. The Women and Child Rights Project gave us trainings on women's rights and gender issues. I am interested in all of these issues. Because I had the chance to join this program, I know about rights that I never knew about before".

MYPO was founded on 18 November, 2001, with the aim of endorsing democracy and supporting activities related to Mon national liberation. In particular, MYPO works to empower future leaders, to build a strong community, to preserve Mon literature and culture, and to create unity among Mon youth. MYPO usually runs around 2 or 3 months of trainings per year.



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