I. Background of Burma’s economy and population migration

It is estimated that Burma has a population of 54 million that is comprised of a majority of Burman people and other non-Burman ethnic nationalities. Burma is one of the poorest nations in the world, suffering from decades of stagnation, mismanagement, and isolation. Myanmar’s GDP grows only 2.9% annually - the lowest rate of economic growth in the Greater Mekong Sub-region. As a result of such poor economic growth and widespread poverty, thousands of people travel from their country into neighboring countries as migrant workers to seek work there.

When Burma was under control of British administration, it was one of the wealthiest countries in Southeast Asia. In 1948 Burma gained independence and it was supposed to become the first Asian super-power in the region. However, in 1962, General Ne Win seized power and Burma became completely under the rule of a military regime.
Message From
Woman And Child Rights Project (Southern Part of Burma)

Woman and Child Right Project (WCRP) is an cooperative activity with Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) and it has main activity in collecting the information related to the human rights violations of women and children in southern part of Burma (Myanmar). It also aims to get world community’s awareness for the protection of the rights of women and children.

The Burma’s military regime, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), ratified the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1997 to guarantee the rights to women in Burma. Similarly the regime also ratified Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1991 to guarantee the rights to children in Burma. However, the regime has failed in their implementation of the conventional rights and the human rights violations against women and children systematically.

WCRP is dedicated to inform the world community what happens to general women and children in Burma and plans to educate them to know about their rights as the following objectives.

1. To monitor and protect the woman and child rights, by collecting information about their real situation by referencing the CEDAW and CRC, and distribute information to world community.

2. To strengthen women and children community, by providing on their rights accordingly to CEDAW and CRC ratified by regime and encourage them to participate in the struggle in the protection of their own rights.

As a result of socialist rule, Burma was recognized as Least Developed Country (LCD) by the UN in 1987. Following the regime's demonetization of Burmese currency the people in Burma came onto the streets and demanded an end to single party rule in 1988. This was the explosion of the 1988 Pro-democracy uprising. However, the Gen. Saw Maung-led Burmese military seized power from the demonstrators and refused to hand over power to the people.

In 1989, the Burmese government began decentralizing economic control. It has since liberalized certain sectors of the economy. From 1989-1999, the military government tried to revitalize the economy after their decades of tight central planning, however, the regime has recently canceled its reforms. Despite this, the private sector continues to grow, albeit slowly, and the regime could open the country to international trade through selling its natural resources such as gas, oil, logs, gems, fishes and other valuable resources.

The SPDC’s (and the previous State Law and Order Restoration Council – SLORC’s) human rights record is one of the worst in the world. A lot of abuses of human rights, from the use of forced labor to sexual violation against women, have been inflicted upon the people of Burma under the rule of the regime since 1988. Pro-democracy activists (mostly located in cities) have been arrested and imprisoned. In 1997, the regime changed its name from SLORC to SPDC (State Peace and Development Council). Regardless of the regime’s change of title, the people still do not feel there is development and prosperity in their country.

In May 2003, the United States placed economic sanctions on Burma which continue to this day. The European Union has placed embargoes on arms, non humanitarian aid, visa bans on military regime leaders and limited investment bans. Both the E.U. and U.S. have placed sanctions on the grounds of the human rights violations committed in the country.

II. Migration to Thailand and Malaysia from Southern Burma

In southern parts of Burma - Mon State, Karen State and Tenasserim Division - hundreds of thousands of people have migrated into neighboring countries such as Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore over the past decade to find jobs and seek security and safety because of militarization, persecution of minority groups and severe economic hardship in their own country. In their home towns when the military regime increased the military battalions to launch the military offensive, the regime confiscated farmland, rubber plantations, fruit plantations and home buildings. Consequently, citizens had no land to grow

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3 Genocide and Politicide Watch: Burma, By K. Kelley and J. Margolis, Genocide Watch Researchers, 12 March 2006
4 Economy of Myanmar - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
5 Migrant Domestic Workers: From Burma to Thailand: Sureepom Punpuing, Therese Cassier, Awatsaya Panam and Khaing Mar Kyaw Zaw
crops and no place to take shelter. They not only encountered confiscation of their property, they also faced forced labor, forced relocation, rape, forced portering and different kinds of brutal abuse by the military soldiers. In spite of creating jobs for the citizens, the SPDC also took different kinds of civilians’ property without compensation. Some people, although they do not experience any human rights violations from the military, face livelihood problems because there are fewer jobs in Burma and although there is employment, there are very low rates of pay in Burma. People do not have enough income for their family, so they leave Burma to seek employment. Eighty percent of migrant workers are working in Thailand because it is very close and easier than other neighboring countries to cross the border.

The SPDC military cannot provide adequate or appropriate employment for the citizens of Burma. As a result, citizens face livelihood problems and they relocate from their own country to Thailand and Malaysia to find suitable jobs to earn money for their livelihood. Especially in Thailand, Burmese citizens work in the agricultural sector, fishery-related activities (cleaning seafood, working at piers and shrimp farms), construction, domestic work, salt fields, timber mills, brick making and production (fish sauce, shrimp paste, squid drying, filleting fish, tobacco and salty fish production, drying tapioca,). They earn at most 100 baht to 300 baht as a daily wage in Thailand. In Malaysia they earn at most 30 MYR to 50 MYR (1 ringgit = 0.299 USD).

In 2005 there were 900,000 Burmese workers registered in Thailand (Burmanet), but tens of thousands more are believed to be working in Thailand without work permits (Bangkok Post). Among them, many women have migrated into this country and other nations to earn income for their families. Many unmarried women have migrated into Thailand and many of them are employed in fishing industries in Samut Prakan, Samut Sakhon and Ranong Provinces. Many young women from Burma are also working as helpers in homes or as domestic workers. A large number of them are also engaged in various types of factory work such as dress-making, plastic products production and other work.

Generally, these women encounter sexual discrimination in their workplaces, such as lower wages than male laborers, difficulty in seeking work and unequal treatment in the work place. More seriously, many women face sexual violations from employers or gangs.

III. Circle of Trafficking from Burma

Currently, the living standard in Burma is very low because of the military’s poor management policies, an economic crisis and a large amount of human rights violations; these are the root causes creating more human trafficking from Burma. Many people try to work abroad to earn a higher income than in their native country. Working outside their country, they can earn higher incomes and they can enjoy a higher living standard than in their home country. Consequently, people are interested in relocating to neighboring countries very much and the people traffickers see the chance to persuade people to work abroad. The traffickers are especially interested in persuading women and children. While the people do not earn any money in their homes to cover travel costs, the brokers or traffickers can loan the money to them. When the immigrants get employment, they have to pay the loan back from their salary per month to the brokers.

Most brokers build up their network with employers and amongst themselves. Brokers from Thailand, Malaysia and China even go to the village communities, where the young people face a hard livelihood and persuade them to work in other countries. They also explain about factories, workplaces, daily wages and living standards in other countries and inform those interested how to get there. Many women and girls who are already disappointed with a lack of employment and low wages (less than 2500 kyat or 2 U.S. dollars per day) are trapped into brokers’ plans.

Since many brokers are not very sincere about the conditions of the journey, many migrant workers, including women and girls, face many unexpected difficulties in traveling into Thailand or Malaysia. They have to use dangerous routes – jungle roads or water ways - with a lack of food and medicines, fear of arrest by police and soldiers, sexual violations by guides and other terrible situations along the way. People from Burma have migrated for many years and they have also experienced these difficulties. Additionally, bribes are often paid to the authorities or law enforcement officials in their country of origin and migrated country; these help migrant workers to walk and ride cars safely in some areas.

According to a resident of Three Pagoda Pass, a border town within Thailand, when the migrant workers travel to Thailand with the brokers, the brokers treat them very cruelly such as threatening them in various ways, including threats of rape, not feeding
them enough food, and for security reasons making them walk in the forest and making them stay in the forest for a long time. This is especially a concern for the women and girls as they can face trouble at any time. However, they have no choice as they have already agreed to brokers illegally and left from their homes. They are helpless on the way to any country.

There are many ways to cross the Burma border to enter into Thailand illegally. Currently, payment for one person to enter into Thailand is around 12,000 baht (US 387 $) to 16,000 baht (US 516 $ approximation). From Burma to Malaysia it is 8 million kyat (US 645 $) (illegally) – and to Singapore it is 32 million kyat (2580 $) (legally). These costs involve payment for bribes to law enforcement authorities.

People who are from low socio-economic societies can easily face the risks of human trafficking more than other societies because they need help and they can easily trust what the brokers say. Before they leave from the country, the brokers always promise them: “I already found a job for you there and you don’t have to be worried”, but they usually break their promise when the migrants arrive at their destination.

IV. Burma’s Law on Trafficking and Willingness of SPDC to Combat

Burma issued the Anti Trafficking in Person Law in September 2005 to discourage people trafficking. According to the definition of Burma Anti Trafficking in Person Law, trafficking means “recruitment, transportation, transfer, sale-purchase, lending...for the purpose of exploitation of a person with or without his consent.”

The SPDC also formed organizations such as Myanmar Women’s Affairs Federation, Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association, and Pyithu Swan Arr Shin (a paramilitary group) which include protection for victims from human trafficking. Even though they have the law and created the organizations to protect from human trafficking, they have assumed that by merely arresting some traffickers this will prove to the international community that Burma is doing a great job from protecting against human trafficking.

Corruption encourages human trafficking:

According to a resident from Thanphyuzayut Township, when the SPDC started to form the Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association in Mon State, that organization arrested only some traffickers but they did not continuously protect from trafficking. Actually some brokers are members of SPDC organizations and some brokers are linked closely with the military authority.

One way or another, the brokers always try to be friends or to be familiar with the local authorities in order to get their protection. In Burma, under the rule of the military regime, there has been widespread corruption, because the administrative authorities, law enforcement officers and community leaders have a very limited income in their family. They try to find extra money than their permitted salaries through many different ways. On the other hand, they also believe that since Burma has no employment, they sympathize that the people should have employment in a neighboring country.

This is a good opportunity for brokers, and they pay money to the authorities in order to get migrant workers from village communities. Some authorities even set the prices per head from brokers. When migrant workers pass the border check-points, they also have to pay money (a fee ranging from 200-500 baht) to border security authorities - soldiers and police officers - in order to gain access through a border. These authorities are all overseen by the SPDC and have been named as the following: Ministry of Immigration and Population; Village Peace and Development Council; and Township Peace and Development Council. These SPDC branches claim this is a taxation fee, yet there are numerous reports of them claiming this money for themselves.
According to migrant workers interviewed by our field reporter, they have to pay at many check-points in Three Pagoda Pass area in order to get into areas closer to Thailand. They explained that they have to pay some Karen splinter ceasefire groups like DKBA (Democratic Karen Buddhist Army), KPF (Karen Peace Front), the Burmese Army troops and Burmese police. They said they have to pay nearly 1,000 baht in order to get through all these check-points. Like in Three Pagoda Pass area, the migrant workers similarly bribed the armed groups and law enforcement authorities in other border points in Tenasserim Division, Mon State, Karen State, Shan State and Kachin State bordering Thailand and China.

Sometimes, if the migrants come in a group, the brokers collect money from them and he/she arranges for all payments. Migrant workers have said they always observed that the brokers and different authorities always have good relations.

Failure of law enforcement:

As the authorities have not much interest in combating trafficking because they benefit from it, although the SPDC adopted The Anti Trafficking in Person Law, there has not been much change. SPDC supporting civilian groups or Government Organized NGOs (GONGOs) cannot effectively work to combat the trafficking, but they can give education.

In order to combat trafficking or implement law enforcement against the perpetrators, the SPDC also formed the Central Body for Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and the Working Group on Prevention of Trafficking in Persons and Protection of Trafficked Victims. However, many cases of trafficking remain hidden because of serious corruption at all levels of authority; as mentioned previously, SPDC branches located at and around border checkpoints regularly demand payment from those crossing the border. This failure of law enforcement agencies to act against trafficking ensures that the practice continues, as does a lack of cooperation from vulnerable communities (as they believe that it is better to live in other countries). Members of ethnic communities who are seriously suffering from gross human rights violations prefer to work in other countries as it is better than living in their native country. Additionally, they can send back money to their families to assist them financially. Moreover, no serious action against traffickers or brokers means that trafficking of persons in Burma remains the same.

V. Harmful workplaces in border areas and neighboring countries

Brothels:

There has been a lot of news that has come out of Thailand that whenever crackdowns on brothels by Thai police have happened, many women and girls from Burma have been working there. Most of the women and girls were sold by brokers or traffickers to those brothels to work in sex service. In some cases, the selling of women and girls in sex service also relates to debt-bondage, as the women and girls took money from brokers when they come into Thailand. In order to pay back debts to brokers, the women and girls were forced to work in sex service. In most case, the brothel owners paid a very low wages and prolonged their time to work longer in that cruel service.

In brothels, the women and girls are provided a room with limited facilities and most of them locked up so they cannot get out from their rooms or homes. Because they are afraid of being arrested by police they remain there. Then, they are forced to work every day, because the brothel owners told them to pay back their debts as quickly as possible. When they refuse clients’ demands, they are always slapped and beaten by the brothel owners. They have very limited opportunity to receive medical care, and if they went to clinics or met with doctors, the treatment costs would be added to their debts.

Domestic Work:

Many women and girls have to work in a secret situation when they are employed at a home for house keeping work, as cooks or as nannies caring for children. Depending on the employers, some migrant workers are treated well but some are mistreated as slaves.

Many women and girls stated in a report, "Migrant Domestics Workers: From Burma to Thailand", that there are variety of sexual harassment and rapes committed by men in homes where migrant workers are employed. Some of these situations were described in the report. In some cases, the women and girls were similarly sold to employers by brokers or traffickers and they also had to work to repay debts.
News:

500 Burmese illegal migrants including children were arrested

On 18th July, 2007, Thai Immigration raided the Rom Sam Raim seafood factory in Kaw Samut area in Samut Sakhon District. They arrested more than 500 Burmese illegal migrant employees including 23 children, according to an activist who works for labor rights based in Samut Sakhon District.

The Thai government had a strategy to arrest illegal migrant employees. Consequently police officers from Bangkok came to Samut Sakhon District with buses to arrest migrant workers who did not have work permits. They were detained at Wat Dit Prison, Samut Sakhon District. One child was released as her parents had work permits; authorities warned the child's parents not to allow the child to work. However, about 22 children were put in prison for the reason that their parents did not have any work permit. During the investigation, they also sent 22 children to under-aged child detention. Twenty one children were of Mon nationality and one was Burman.

The NGOs based in Samut Sakhon District requested that Thai authorities release the children, arguing that if the Thai authorities sent them back to Mae Sot - which is near the Thai-Burma border - they would face many problems because their relatives were in Thailand, and they might return to Thailand in illegal ways. It would be highly likely that they would make contact with brokers and they would be brought back to Thailand.

There is a migration and trafficking circle between Thailand and Burma. Due to poor economic management and enormous unemployment in Burma, thousands of migrant workers are relying on brokers, human traffickers and border authorities to migrate into Thailand.

(Burma) Women’s Affairs Committee ordered restaurants to cease employing female workers

In the first week of July 2007, Myanmar Women’s Affairs Committee - which was formed by the Burmese military - ordered restaurants with karaoke entertainment program to cease their operations and employment of female workers for 15 days in Mon State.

After 15 days, MWAC stated they would come to check businesses again, to see if there were still women workers at the restaurants. If women were still employed there, MWA would punish the restaurant owners; however MWA didn’t say what kind of punishment they would implement, according to a local source.

In most domestic work, while they face sexual harassment by sons or husbands of their employers, Burmese migrant workers also have to work for many hours a day. Work hours are always over 8 hours in duration, and they also have to fulfill various types of tasks from cooking to taking care of children. Their situation is similar to that of women in brothels: they are afraid of being arrested by police and are locked up in their employer’s homes.

VI. Case Studies

When the political and economic situations have deteriorated, many women and girls migrate to Thailand to seek employment and to earn better incomes for their survival. However, many of them suffer from exploitation. The Woman and Child Rights Project collected information on some cases, and two cases are presented here.

Case (1)

Name: Tin Tin (not her real name)
Age: 19 years old
Ethnicity: Burman
Native Place: Thiri-myaing Suburb, Moulmein, Mon State
The restaurants were not only selling food, they also had sex workers employed there. Therefore, the men were interested in going to the restaurants. If the men wanted to hire the women only for sitting beside them and pouring the beer during their time at the restaurant, they had to pay around 2,000 kyat to 3,000 kyat per hour to the owner. If the men wanted to rent a room and sleep with the woman, they had to pay more than 10,000 kyat per hour, said a resident of Thanbyuzayat town.

Because of the MWA order there were very few customers going to the restaurants; more than 8 restaurants in Moulmein (Mawlamyaing) were closed, including Myinethanwin Restaurant, Kungkinbun Restaurant, Kabarchar Restaurant, Myantsumon Restaurant and Aungkabar Restaurant in Thanbyuzayat Town.

According to the source, who is close to one restaurant owner, the restaurant owner will have discussions with the Burmese authorities to create an understanding, or informal agreement, between the authorities and the restaurants so the restaurants can reopen and change the name of the restaurant. In place of ‘restaurant’ this owner will put the name “Karaoke Siningita”, meaning “karaoke state concert” and will reopen the restaurant. They will continue to employ female workers (some of whom will be sex workers).

At least 10 children die of dengue fever per day

During the second week of July 2007, there were at least 10 children dying from dengue fever disease per day in Moulmein Children’s Hospital, according to a medic on duty.

In July, there were heavy rains in Mon State and children under 12 years old suffered dengue fever in large proportions in every rural and urban area. A relative of a patient reported that there was not enough space for the patients at the Moulmein Children’s Hospital: “Before we came to this hospital, we had already gone to Yartamon Clinic, but they were full of child patients and we had to come to this hospital.” On July 20, there were still 51 new patients on the list of Moulmein Children’s Hospital.

According to Myanmar Times newspaper, there were 3,000 children suffering from dengue fever and about 30 children had died from the disease in Burma. According to Yangon Health Minister’s list, dengue fever disease occurred in many places, such as Yangon Division, Magui Division, Mon State and Tenasserim Division. However, Mon State experienced more incidents of the disease than other places.

She explained her story as below:

I was recruited by a broker, U Soe Thein from Three Pagoda Pass (PTT) to travel to Bangkok on May 18, 2007. I agreed to pay 15,000 baht for transportation costs from PTT to Bangkok. The broker said to me that he had three women to travel together with me. In the early morning at about 4am, the broker came to pick me up at U Htaw Aung and Daw Cho’s house where I dwelled for a short time in Three Pagoda Pass. I then saw the group who was going to travel with me were all men. We traveled for two days on the bus but still did not arrive at Bangkok. Two days later, the broker said the situation wasn’t good and the broker made us wait in the forest to see how the situation was going. The broker let us stay in one hut in the forest on the way to Kanchanaburi. When we were waiting there, he said to me that he would send me to join the migrant women group who were also travelling to Bangkok. Although I was afraid I had to follow what he said, and we started to walk to them. We had walked for about an hour and he stopped me and made me wait in a place in the forest. Then he went somewhere and when he came back to me he was drunk. He spoke rudely to me and than he forced me to entertain him. When I refused, he pointed at me with his knife. I could not do anything, I had to do whatever he liked me to do for him. He forced me to have sex with him. Even though I tried to escape from him I couldn’t. He raped me three times. After he raped me at about 5pm, one of his friend’s motorbike drivers came to pick me up and took me to Thong Pha Phoom town.
After I was raped I was very upset and wanted to die on the spot. But I was worried about my family: my father has a protracted illness and my mother is a daily worker; she washes cloth to earn a small income. In our family we face a livelihood problem and I decided to leave school and migrate to Thailand to work and support my family. I’m from Thiri-myaing Suburb, Moulmein (Mawlamyiang) City (the capital of M on State) and I have two younger brothers and one younger sister. The trafficker, U Soe Thein, is married and he lives in Three Pagoda Pass. He is about 35 years old.

One of my friends, Ma Cho*(18 years old), from Hlae-tan Suburb, Moulmein (Mawlamyaing) City was also trafficked, by Daw Than. Daw Than’s husband, Ko Tin Win, about 50 years old, sold Ma Cho to an old former Thai policeman as a wife. Daw Than took 20,000 baht and gold weighing 3 baht from the Thai policeman for selling Ma Cho. Ma Cho had to serve as a wife of the policeman. He rented a house for her to live in with him and later she gave birth to a daughter. After the birth of their daughter, he didn’t come to her and he left her alone, as he had wanted a son. As a result, she didn’t have any money and had to work outside to earn money; she had to work as a hard laborer to pay the house rental fee and for foodstuffs.

*(not her real name)

Case (2)

Name: Ma Aye (not her real name)
Age: 17 years old
Ethnicity: Burman
Native Place: Naung Khar Shay Village, Waw Township, Patu Division

She explained her story as below:

In January 2007, I was recruited by Ko Lay for work in Thailand. I agreed to pay 13,000 baht to go to Thailand. I would pay back the money when I got a job. But when I arrived in Thailand, Ko Lay didn’t find a job for me as he had promised. Ko Lay transferred me to another trafficker, Ma Khin Saw, and took money (25,000 baht) from Ma Khin Saw. Ma Khin Saw found a job for me at the Kawsamut Seafood industry. I had to work there until I repaid my entire loan. I lived with Ma Khin Saw’s sister Ma Khin Hla. Ma Khin Hla kept all my salary except for 400 baht which she paid me per month. It was an uncomfortable condition to stay there and I also didn’t have enough food. Ko Lay is from No.5 Yusana Street, Bokong Block, Mawlamyine town, Mon State.

On August 16, 2007 Thai immigration officers came to check the seafood industry where I worked. I didn’t have any documents and I was arrested by the Thai police. When I was in prison, one of my friends paid money to the police and I was released from prison. After I was released, Ma Khin Hla still asked me to repay the loan to her. My friend made an agreement to pay half of the loan to her, but she disagreed with that and she wanted me to pay the entire loan back urgently. If I didn’t pay it back immediately she and her relatives would make problem to me.

Case (3)

Name: Ma Aye (not her real name), Ma Hla (not her real name)
Age: 22 and 17 years old
Ethnicity: Karen
Native Place: Belin Town, Tahton township, Mon State

She explained her story as below:

We worked at the seafood factory in Maharchai and we wanted to change jobs to work as domestic workers in Bangkok. Consequently we got in touch with a Karen broker, U Shwe Mi, who was in Tak Province and we asked for some help from him to find jobs for us. However, he asked his friend, a Thai broker, to find jobs for us. A Thai broker sent the taxi driver
to pick us up and drove us to the building which was in an isolated area. The Thai brokers and taxi drivers had formed a collaborative group. When we arrived there, it was a very silent area and no one was there except for their group. The group gang raped us. Albeit I (Ma Hla) tried to escape from them, I could not and they also hit me. After they raped us, we said to the broker we had relatives in Bangkok and we wanted to contact to them. Although he allowed us to contact our relatives, the broker said to us that if we wanted to leave from there, we must pay 5,000 baht each.

Ma Hla’s relatives made an appointment with a Thai broker at Talat Thai in Bangkok and had to exchange 5,000 baht to get Ma Hla back. Ma Hla did not speak out about herself as she was so afraid. In particular, she had intense pain in, and a lot of bruising to, her neck. However, no one would pay to get Ma Aye back, not even her husband. After Ma Hla was released, one of Ma Hla’s relatives informed an NGO (which wishes to remain unnamed) that is working in Maharchai for labor rights, and that organization contacted the broker to get Ma Aye back. They pretended that they were a relative of Ma Aye. That organization informed the Thai police to arrest the broker. However, when the broker was away from the building where they kept Ma Aye, Ma Aye ran away and arrived at her own place. Ma Aye’s husband disowned her because she was raped. As a result, the NGO kept her in a safe house and gave treatment (counseling, support, medical checks, etc) to her. After Ma Aye was released she did not want to speak to anyone else. After she received treatment in the safe house, she became better and she requested to leave the safe house to work because she had debts to pay back.

Case (4)

Name: Ma Hla (not her real name)
Age: 18 years old
Ethnicity: Pa.O
Native Place: ThanHlae village, Kawkarait Township, Karen State

She explained her story as below:

I was trafficked by the trafficker Ma Daw from Khayar village, Pa.An township, Karen State when I was 15 years old. Now I am 18 years old. At that time, she agreed to send me to my older sister, who was working in Thailand. However, she didn’t send me to my sister; she sent me to a wealthy Thai individual’s house to be employed as a domestic worker. The house owner agreed to pay 3,000 baht for my monthly salary. Ma Daw took 2,000 baht per month for two years and she left me there. I could not speak Thai and I could not communicate with any people. The Thai boss didn’t allow me to use the phone or to communicate with my sister. Later, when I could speak Thai a little, and the Thai boss allowed me to buy the household’s food and I got the chance to go to the market. I went to the market many times and one day I met a member of an NGO (which has requested to remain anonymous). I explained everything about my situation and they assisted me in going to my sister’s place of employment. However, they could not help me to repay my debt, and the boss would not allow me to leave until the total of my debt was paid.

(Interview date: On September 8, 2007)

VII. How NGOs and the International Community combat human trafficking

There is little information widely available about international efforts to combat trafficking in Burma. It appears that the government of Burma has affiliated itself with various regional and international projects that have produced few changes to the situation. Four of the principal agencies have been United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), Francois-Xavier Bagnoud Myanmar (FXBM), World Vision (WV) and the United Nations Inter-Agency Project (UNIAP), which have offered advertising materials, collaboration with military regime’s women organizations, and have conducted activities in combating human trafficking according to their reports.

The activities of UNIAP in Burma are in four core areas: building the knowledge base on human trafficking; supporting action in high priority areas; targeted interventions that respond to identified gaps; and strengthening advocacy on the issue of human trafficking.⁶

⁶ http://www.no.humantrafficking.org/content/country/_Page_ Myanmar/work
The stated activities of UNICEF in Burma are:

- “Raising awareness among community members and community-based organizations about means of preventing abuse, exploitation, trafficking and neglect;
- Providing education, vocational training and recreation activities for vulnerable children and youth, including street children and working children;
- Providing technical assistance to further improve the juvenile justice system and protect children in conflict with the law pursuant to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international standards;
- Strengthening communities’ and institutional caregivers’ capacity to assist children deprived of parental care; and
- Working with partners and communities to facilitate the return, protection and reintegration of displaced, trafficked and exploited children and women”

World Vision Myanmar (WVM) is another organization that is working on trafficking issues in Burma since 2001. WVM’s goal is to reduce the number of women and children trafficked within and from Burma, and its activities focus on increasing collaboration between government and non-government agencies, providing educational materials for communities, providing support and assistance to survivors of trafficking and researching and analyzing factors that contribute to trafficking.

The activities of WVM in Burma are outlined as:

- “Inter-agencies collaboration activities to share information and lessons learned for use by WVM and others in developing collaborative initiatives on combating trafficking
- Develop capacity building initiatives to address trafficking among staff and local partners
- Identify, form and train suitable community-based groups and then community based groups conduct awareness raising activities in their communities
- Conduct situational analysis annually to keep on top of trends and patterns of trafficking in order to develop effective trafficking prevention strategies
- Develop and disseminate communication materials and educational materials that engage communities and partners in combating trafficking in their sphere of influence
- Provide return and reintegration support to trafficked survivors and assistance to trafficked victims involved in prosecution procedures
- Sensitize community members on the causes and consequences of trafficking as a result of demand factors in order to reduce the stigma placed upon trafficked victims
- Identify trafficking vulnerability factors and root causes of trafficking and develop action to address them
- Different vulnerability reduction activities to benefit vulnerable groups and individuals who choose to remain in their home locations
- Develop and implement migrant focused initiatives that aim to prevent migrants from being trafficked”.

The goal of FXBM is to support/offer “alternative” opportunities for ex-sex workers and returnees or trafficked victims. Its stated activities for women are life-skills training, informal education, vocational training, rehabilitation and reintegration, counseling, awareness raising, supportive community initiatives and advocacy.

VIII. Conclusion and suggestion

Due to the situation of human rights violations and a deteriorated economy in Burma, thousands of women and girls will flee from Burma to migrate into the neighbouring countries of Thailand, Malaysia and China. Human traffickers behave inhumanely
Invitation for Feedback to Our Publication
“The Plight”
of Women and Children in Southern Burma

Dear Readers,

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

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

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

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With regards,
Project Coordinator
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Towards these marginalized women and girls and will exploit them continuously if the law enforcement in Burma and neighbouring countries is not strong enough.

Since there has been no political willingness to combat human trafficking among the authorities of the ruling SPDC and border area authorities, there is no expectation that SPDC’s Central Body for Suppression of Trafficking in Persons can effectively monitor or enforce the laws to punish traffickers. Lack of regional cooperation among the regional countries to combat trafficking provides the brokers or traffickers with more opportunities to exploit their victims.

Hence, WCRP would like to suggest the following:

- There is an urgent need for UN Agencies like UNICEF to collaborate with SPDC’s Central Body for Suppression of Trafficking in Persons to educate law enforcement authorities, including the border area authorities, on human trafficking issues. They also need accountability from these law enforcement authorities when they become involved in actions combating people traffickers.

- Trafficking education must be provided at the community level, including the ethnic nationalities' areas in different languages and in different measures.

- There is a need for a framework for combating trafficking in persons among the regional countries close to Burma like China, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore, where thousands of women and girls are trafficked into sexual industries and other exploited workplaces.
In this “The Plight Newsletter”:

A room in which trafficked Karen women were kept

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Burmese migrant women who are working in fishing industries of Thailand. Many of them suffer from bond-debt labour in factories

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Acronyms

CEDAW - Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRC - Convention on the Rights of the Child
FXBM - Francois-Xavier Bagnoud Myanmar
GDP - Gross Domestic Product
LDC - Least Developed Country
NGOs - Non Government Organization
SLORC - State Law and Order Restoration Council
SPDC - State Peace and Development Council
UNIAP - United Nations Inter-Agency Project
UNICEF - United Nations Children's Emergency Fund

Address Correction Required

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