

KAREN REFUGEE COMMITTEE

MONTHLY REPORT

JANUARY, 2005

Karen Refugee Committee
January, 2005

With this January, We have entered the New Year 2005. But saying Good-bye to 2004 and welcoming 2005, can never be a happy occasion. The Devastation wrought on by the December 26 – 2004, Tsunami, will still affect and haunt millions of people for years into the future. The scary thing is that the world may see such catastrophic events anytime, anyplace.

This January, especially for Peoples of Burma, there need to be remembrance of the Day in 1948, January 4th to be precise, when the country achieved Independence from Britain.

On Independence, the Chief Architect, General Aung Sann was not around anymore. He was assassinated, together with many other able Leaders, just a few months before Independence was achieved. Even before Independence, General Aung Sann warned the People to mend their ways if they were to catch up with the world. What he said was, they will have to change their unacceptable habits and work until their “ Bottom Split”.

With Independence, Power Rule was vested in the AFPFL Government of Prime Minister U Nu. Even in the beginning, there were ominous signs of Dissent and Distrust, especially from the Ethnic Groups. Sincerity seemed to be lacking. Equality, sharing, Balancing seem to be neglected. Even in the Governing Party, itself, there were hints of friction and division. Authoritarian features were discernable in the Government that was supposed to be Democratic and Civilian. Prime Minister U Nu was especially adamant on not yielding to Ethnic aspirations. One very little incident need to be cited. A few years after Independence, there was the UNION DAY CELEBRATION in RANGOON when many Elders from different Ethnic Groups were invited to join in. One Ethnic Elder, who was called on to make a statement to Honour the UNION DAY said that UNION DAY, in Essence was Good for him. But there was one little issue, which he would like to be addressed. The Burma Broadcasting Service gave news only in Burmese and English. As most LAHU people cannot understand Burmese or English, it would help greatly with LAHU transmissions for the sake of sincerity, unity, transparency and balance. Continuing with such transmissions can only be a “Nuisance to the Ears”. He was speaking for his people, but it seemed to be a message sent by all Ethnic Groups in Burma. However, the message simply was neglected. Taken lightly. Some people take it as somewhat of a Joke. There was the Burmese Saying “ A Hmike Ka Sa, Pyat That Mee Laung”- which would mean “ From Dirt, the Palace Top can be Burnt Down”.

After 10 years of Independence, Ethnic activity seemed to have intensified. To prevent its expansion, P.M. U Nu handed over Temporary Power to the Care- taker Government of General Ne Win. It was “Kyar Kyauk lo Shin Jee Koe, Shin Jee, Kyar Htet Hsoe. “Worship the great spirit- the Great Spirit more dangerous than the Tiger”. General Ne Win seemed to like the Taste of Power. Thus the 1962 Coup by the Military, headed by Ne Win.

To day, Ne Win is no more. But his Legacy of total Military Control is still continuing unto this day. The fact is that, people will be more than happy, if living conditions today were to be on a par with that prevailing on Independence. What we are seeing is that, the decline of the country as a whole is due largely to mismanagement, mis-rule. The country was blessed with people, space and resources that were the envy of foreign countries. The Sufferings in the country, together with refugees, migrants and people resettling in foreign countries, in droves, are testimony to this mis-rule by the Military.

Now, we are seeing cracks in that Ruling Establishment with the disposal of Khin Nyunt and Co. We are hearing of rumblings of dissent within and attempts at balancing. It is surprising that this difficult living-together has been going on for quite a long time.

To Err is “Human”, but then to Right the wrong can also be considered “Human”.

All things considered, in this age of Knowledge, Technology and Advancements, Tight Unrelenting Control by any Person or for that matter, by any group will never be tolerated by any people-anywhere.

K.R.C - Refugee Camps. Activities - January – 2005

Last month, the Right to play activity Group visited Tham Hin and Ban Don Yang Camps. Theoretical as well as Practical Sporting Clinics were held in both camps. RTP coaches , Trainers, Camps Elders and Young Camps residents participated.

►. 3 – 1 – 05. Tham Hin Camp – (100) Elderly Refugees offered Food / Nutrition on this New Year Occasion.

►. 4 – 1 – 05. (93) Elderly Camp Refugees in Tham Hin Camp, provided with Veneration Gifts from Karenaid – UK- and the Anglican Church of Brussels.

► 5-1- 05 – K.R.C Education Co-ordinator met with the K.E.D, ZOA and Consortium where matters related to Refugee Camps Education were discussed. Discussion made on

♦. Camps School Teachers.

♦. Social Studies.

The feature among School Teachers in Camps is that many would opt for resettlement in a third country if there is an opportunity. Social Study subjects- There is plan to initiate Social Study subjects in Camps, with the view to maintaining Cultural Values among Students and young people. The plan calls for teaching the subject, beginning with the primary level and which will be taught along with Health Care Subjects.

►. 6 –1- 05 – M.S.F will discontinue with their Medical/ Health Support work in Mae La and Tham Hin Camps. The Support works will be taken over by another Support Group. The MSF Chief of mission notified KRC of this Change in Support works.

►. 10- 1- 05 – On the occasion of the Karen New Year Day . There were Ceremonies in all Refugee Camps where the K.R.C Chairman sent a message to all the Camps People, stressing on Unity, Discipline and to abide by regulations and restrictions imposed by the Authorities. There was also expression of Gratitude and Appreciation to all – the Thai People and Government, The UNHCR , The Supporting NGOs , Sympathetics Groups and Individuals.

► 10 – 1 – 05 Led by the KRC, the Camp Committee, KEAB, KYO, KWO, there was Celebration of the Karen New Year day in all Refugee Camps. There was also the Elderly Veneration ceremonies where Elderly Refugees were provided with Gifts from the Karenaid U.K and the Anglican Church of Brussels.

► 11-1-05 to 12-1-05 – Discussion related to Camps Education at Rujira – organised by ZOA , where KRC attended. Mid – term review of the weaknesses in Camps Education, Detailed discussions on Education and the need for assessments together with efforts to implement change where necessary were made.

► 12-1-05 – During the Karen New Year Period, there was fighting between KNU and SPDC- in the Border Region of Um Phang District near Hto Per Poo. Over 300 Karen Villagers, crossed over into Thailand to seek safety. KRC , UNGCR, NGOs and Thai Authorities participated to find ways to support these refuge seekers.

► 13-1-05 – US Fact Finding Group visit KRC as well as Um Phiem Meetings were held at which Camps Situations / Conditions, Information on New Arrivals recent developments, repatriation and resettlement were discussed. There was in depth talks on support for students whose education stop at the 10th standard Level.

► 13-1-05 – at Thai Village of Mae Taw La. –22-1-2005 at Thai village of Mae Sa Roe, Mae La Oo Camp Committee meet with Village Elders and Authorities to discuss Relations, Communications, Environmental Protection and maintenance.

► 17-1-05 to 19-1-05 -

K.R.C together with I.C.S Director visited Um Phiem and Mae La Refugee Camps. There was distribution of T. Shirts to students and Teachers – Detailed discussion were made on distribution of Material for Students together with co-ordinating in renovation of School Buildings and other Educational Structures. Vocational Training workshop held at KED office, Mae Pa Educational representatives from Mae Ra Ma Luang, Mae La Oo, Mae La , Um Phiem and Noh Poe participated. Discussed in depth were Vocational Training – Structural, Policy and budget funding.

► 18-1-05 – K.R.C – NGOs – UNHCR, meeting.

It was Just an informal meeting where there was open discussions concerning the Roles of each Group, related to Camps and Refugees.

One issue brought up by the KRC was that some group/ some people – unknown at present- are known to be exploiting unwary refugees and displaced people with the lure of resettlement in a third country. Some people became victims of these unscrupulous people, having to pay quite large sums of money. UNHCR, KRC and NGOs together will look into the matter, in the hope of preventing such exploitation.

► 21-1-05 – KRC and all the Camps Committee Organized the Camps people to help with donations for the Tsunami Victims in Southern Thailand. Altogether- Bt 102,100 were collected and which was donated to the Thai Red Cross, through the Tha Song Yang District officer.

► 21-1-05, - 23-1-05, - 26-1-05.

TBBC, KRC and Camp Management Program Team – Combined visit to KRC Branch offices at Ratchaburi and Sangklaburi, and to Don Yang, Um Phiem and Noh Poe Refugee Camps. Meetings held with KRC Branch members, Camps Leaders, where matters related to Management, Monthly

Reports, Financial Reports, Population / Statistics Reports, Food Distribution, Building Structures / Renovations were discussed .

► . 22-1-05 – 31 –1 –05 - K.R.C and K. E.D co-ordinated in planning for the Final Examinations for the 4th and 7th Standards in all (7) Refugee Camps.

► . 22- 1 –05 – at Thai Village of Mae Sa Roh.

There was meeting between these village Elders and Mae La Oo Refugee Camp Committee, where Thai Border Security officials also participated – Matters related to Environmental protection/ promotion, relations promotion between Camps and Local people, together with security, problems were discussed.

► . 26 – 1 – 05, K.E.A. B – K.R.C - provided Guidelines for Camp Committee Elections to be held in the latter days of February 2005 in Mae La Oo Camp.

NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN THE CAMPS JANUARY, 2005.

MAE SOT AREA	CAMP	No. of families	Over - 13 Yrs		6 - 12 Yrs		Under 5 Yrs		Total
			M	F	M	F	M	F	
	Mae La	5,407	10,739	10,518	4,076	3,791	2,227	2,117	33,468
	Um Pheim Mai	3,348	6,315	6,001	2,135	2,060	1,196	1,083	18,790
	Total	8,755	17,054	16,519	6,211	5,851	3,423	3,200	52,258
NORT H	Mae Ra Mu Luang	2030	4,435	3,995	1,355	1,197	928	910	12,820
	Mae La Oo	2,576	5,300	4,621	1,674	1,542	866	748	14,751
	Total	4,606	9,735	8,616	3,029	2,739	1,794	1,658	27,571
SOUT H	Noh Poe	2,184	3,899	3,939	1,258	1,145	804	856	11,901
	Ban Dong Yang	799	1,236	1,343	519	527	186	174	3,985
	Htam Him	1,601	2,644	2,785	1,035	1,003	699	676	8,842
Total		4,584	7,779	8,067	2,812	2,675	1,689	1,706	24,728
Grand Total		17,945	34,568	33,202	12,052	11,265	6,906	6,564	104,557

RICE AND OTHER ITEMS RECEIVED DURING THE MONTH.

FRO M	CAMP	Rice 100 kg Sack	Salt Kilos	F- paste 15 - Kg Tins	Yellow Bean 60 Kilo/sa cks	Chili es Kilos	Cookin g Oil 200 ltr	B. Food.	Charc oal 25 Kg Sacks	Charc oal 20 Kg Sacks	Fire- woo d m3
B.B. C	Umphiem Mai	5,527	7,353	-	288	2,298	86	1,030		7,260	244
	Mae La	13,418	17,762	-	699	5,565	209	2,476		17,562	
	Nu Poe	1,191	4,638	-	186	1,481	56	664		3,651	
COE RR	Um Phiem	250									

We shall always be grateful to the Thai people and Government for their sympathy and understanding in Allowing us safe refuge.

We are also indebted to the NGOs for their Supports and Services.

BBC- Support in Food and Shelter Material. BBC is also supporting with warm clothing for all the camps.

MSF- Support in Medical and Health facilities.

AMI- "	"	"	"	"
ARC- "	"	"	"	"
MHD- "	"	"	"	"

ZOA(ABWaid)- Support in Educational facilities Teachers' Training.

Consortium - Support in Educational facilities, Teachers' Training and Education for Deaf/Mute/Blinds.

TOPS- Support in Educational facilities.

ICS- Asia- Support in Educational facilities and school buildings.

COERR- Rice and Educational support. EVI- to be involved with Extremely Vulnerable people.

H.I- Support for Refugee Handicaps with Prosthesis and rehabilitation and also year-end sporting events for Handicaps.

NCA- (Norway Church Aid) has been providing KRC with administrative & organizational Support.

It has also supported with remuneration for KRC members and workers.

UNHCR- For Registration Process Protection and Ultimate Safe Repatriation.

SMRU- Support with Malaria Control, Prevention and Treatment.

SVA- to support with Libraries in the camps.

PPAT- Parenthood Planning Association Thailand - Supporting with Family Planning and Preventive/

Education in Refugee Camps.

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