

Eastward Bound

An update on migration and trafficking of Kachin women on the China-Burma border



Kachin Women's Association Thailand

Background of KWAT

Owing to the deteriorating political, economic and social situation in Kachin State, many Kachin people, mainly young men and women, have left their homeland and scattered to foreign countries. The number of Kachin people coming to Thailand for various purposes is increasing year by year. Problems in the Kachin community have also increased accordingly. Recognizing the urgent need for women to organize themselves to solve their own problems, the Kachin Women's Association Thailand (KWAT) was formed in Chiang Mai on September 9, 1999.

KWAT liaises closely with the Kachin Women's Association. KWAT is a founding member of the umbrella organisation, the Women's League of Burma, comprising 12 women's groups from Burma.

Goal

The empowerment and advancement of women in order to improve the lives of women and children

Objectives

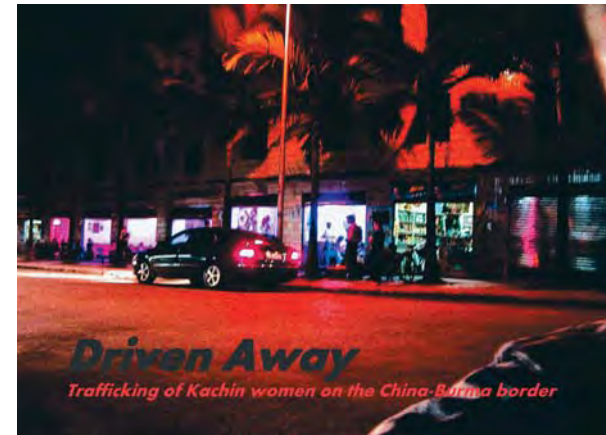
- 1) Promoting women rights, children rights and gender equality
- 2) Promoting women's participation in politics and in peace and reconciliation processes
- 3) Opposing all forms of violence against women including human trafficking
- 4) Providing health education and health services
- 5) Promoting women awareness of how to manage and protect the environment
- 6) Rescuing a trafficked women in China

Contact address

P.O.Box 415
Amphur Muang
Chiang Mai 50000 Thailand
Tel: 053 248 797
E-mail: kwat@loxinfo.co.th

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Driven Away, released by KWAT in 2005, first exposed the alarming trend of trafficking Kachin women and girls from Burma to China. The report can be viewed in full at http://www.womenofburma.org/Report/Driven_Away.pdf

Spiraling costs are forcing young women to migrate to seek work, making them vulnerable to trafficking



A village market in Marnsi, Kachin State

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Introduction from KWAT

After publishing our 2005 report *Driven Away* on trafficking of Kachin women, we set up a crisis support service for women on the China-Kachin border. We began providing assistance to women and girls who had been trafficked, and were contacted for help by many families whose daughters had disappeared. We have therefore encountered many more trafficking cases than in the past, and have identified some clearer trends, which we would like to share in this brief report.

The main causes of migration from Kachin areas of Burma, which are described in our earlier report, have only intensified over the past few years. The Burmese military regime has continued to authorize and profit from large-scale extraction of our natural resources, mainly timber, jade and gold. On top of this, they are now planning to dam our rivers, for sale of electricity to China. Seven large dams on the Irrawaddy and its source rivers in Kachin State will displace tens of thousands of people, and lead to further migration.

Despite earning huge revenues from the sale of hydropower and natural gas, the regime has continued to mismanage the economy and prioritize military expenditure over public service spending. Spiraling prices of basic commodities, as well as costs of schooling and medical care, are making it harder and harder for people to survive.

Communities are also increasingly being

driven off their lands by military confiscation of farms for large-scale plantations of crops such as rubber, sugar-cane and cassava. At the same time, people are being forced to grow quotas of jatropha as part of a nationwide bio-fuel scheme. Such policies are driving people further into poverty, and forcing them to migrate for work in order to support their families.

We are now seeing a huge drop in population in towns in Kachin State and northern Shan State, as most people of working age are leaving their homes to look for a job. Township officials in Bhamo, Kachin State's second biggest town, report that 65% of the town's population of 160,000 have migrated to other parts of Burma and neighbouring countries in recent years.

While the factors pushing people to migrate intensify, the state's failure to issue ID cards to many ethnic peoples, including Kachin, is continuing to make women and girls vulnerable to trafficking. Earlier this year, people's hopes were raised when temporary ID cards were issued to many Kachin to enable them to vote in the May 2008 constitutional referendum. However, not only was the referendum a sham, but so were the ID cards, which were withdrawn afterwards. Once again, the regime showed its unwillingness to seriously address the root causes of trafficking in Burma.

Given the continuing systematic violation of human rights in Burma, we urge

international agencies seeking to address the trafficking problem to look holistically at the issue, and not be complicit in any efforts by the regime to further abuse people's rights under the guise of preventing trafficking.

For example, international agencies working in Burma have recently raised alerts about the likelihood of increased trafficking from areas affected by Cyclone Nargis in May 2008. And indeed, we have already encountered cases of women from cyclone-affected areas travelling to the China border and being trafficked as forced brides. However, the answer to this problem is not to restrict migration from the delta to border areas, as the regime has been attempting. There have been recent worrying reports of Burmese authorities arresting "traffickers" sending women and children from the delta to border areas. Those migrating are clearly simply seeking a means to survival, and this process must not be criminalized.

We hope this update from the Kachin-China border will help inform efforts of all stakeholders seeking to address the trafficking problem in Burma.

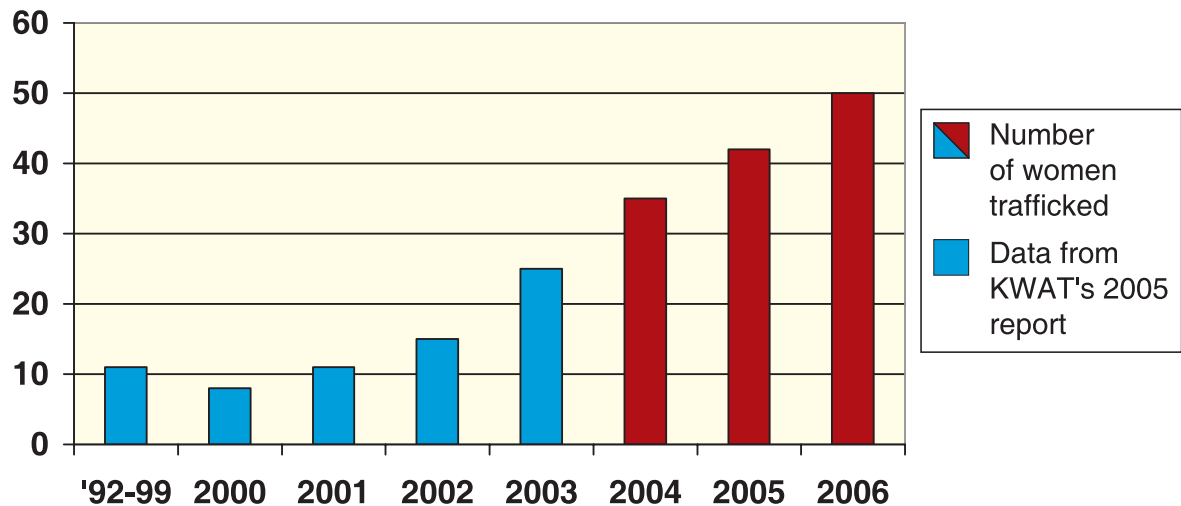
We urge international agencies to look holistically at the issue, and not be complicit in any efforts by the regime to further abuse people's rights under the guise of preventing trafficking.

Summary of key findings

- The report documents 133 verified and suspected trafficking cases, involving 163 women and girls, which occurred between 2004 and mid-2007
- As political and economic conditions inside Burma continue to deteriorate, more and more Kachin women are migrating to China in search of work, and are ending up as forced brides of Chinese men.
- Most of the forced brides were transported across China to marry men in the eastern provinces, particularly Shandong Province. Women described being shown to many men, sometimes in marketplaces, before being chosen. The husbands, predominantly farmers, paid an average of US\$1,900 for their brides.
- About a quarter of those trafficked were under 18, with girls as young as 14 forced to be brides. Several cases involved traffickers attempting to buy babies.
- The continuing high incidence of trafficking indicates that the regime's new anti-trafficking law, passed in September 2005, is failing to have any impact in curbing the problem. Provisions in the regime's new law to protect the rights of trafficking victims are not being adhered to. Women are also being falsely accused of trafficking under the new law.
- Women report that Chinese police have been helpful in assisting them to return to Burma, but have sometimes demanded compensation from Burma border officials for repatriating trafficking victims.

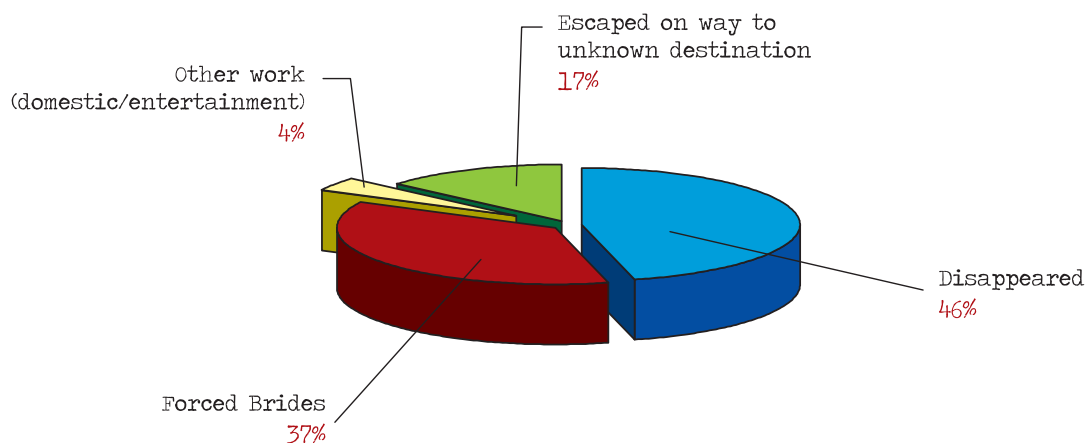
More and more trafficking cases

KWAT has documented a total of 133 cases of trafficking, involving 163 women and girls, which took place between 2004 and 2007. These include suspected cases of trafficking, where women and girls have simply disappeared and their families have asked for our help to trace them.



Note: Data from 2007 was not included because it has yet to be compiled for the full year

Trafficking cases to China by type



Women, girls and babies trafficked

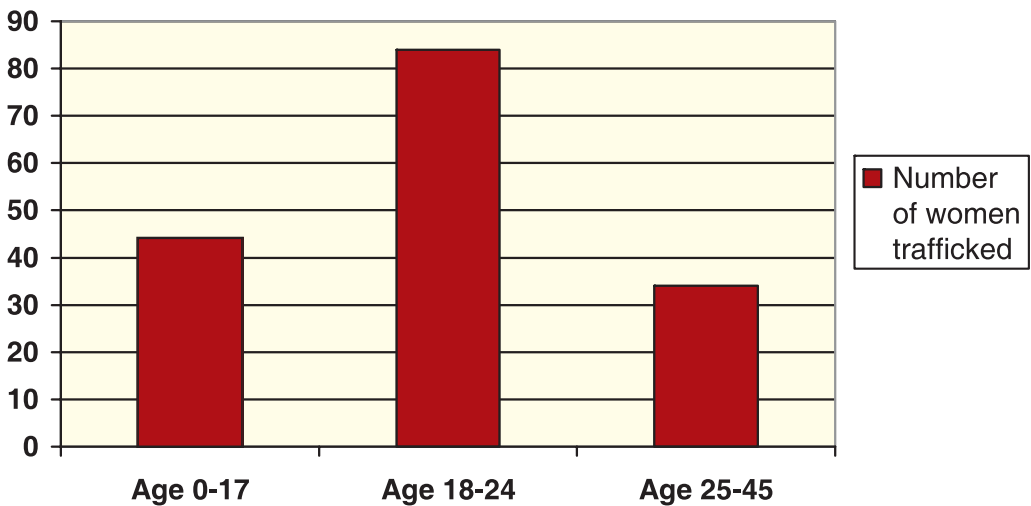
About 25% of those trafficked were under 18. Most of these girls, as young as 14, were forced to be brides.

Two incidents involved traffickers attempting to buy new-born babies. In one incident, a young woman who was 5 months pregnant was taken by an old friend to Shenyang in northeastern China. The friend kept her locked up till she gave birth, informing her she was going to sell the baby for 30,000 yuan (US\$4,370). Fortunately a neighbour alerted the police, who arrested the friend and arranged for the woman and her baby to be sent back to the Kachin border.

Another woman was forced to sell her two-month-old daughter in Yin Jang. The baby was sold for 5,000 yuan (US\$730), but she received only 200,000 kyat (US\$160).

One difference from several years ago is that more married women are being trafficked. Over 10% of the women trafficked were already married, and had sought work in China to try and support their children.

Trafficking cases by age



Destination China

The vast majority (94%) of women and girls were trafficked to a destination in China. There were only a few cases of trafficking within Burma, and only one case of trafficking to Thailand. The map shows destinations within China to which women are known to have been trafficked. The province of Yunnan, which borders on Burma, shows the highest number of cases, but there are many more cases of women being trafficked to China's eastern provinces than in our earlier report.



Townships of Origin of Trafficked Women and Girls

- Over 20 cases
- 10-20 cases
- 1-10 cases



A spreading problem:

Spiraling costs forcing women and girls to migrate

About two-thirds of the women and children trafficked were originally from Kachin State, and about one-third from northern Shan State. The majority of the women and girls are coming from poor quarters of larger towns such as Myitkyina, Wai Maw, Bhamo in Kachin State, and Kutkai in Shan State.

The number of townships from which we are receiving reports of trafficking has increased over the past few years, now including more remote townships such as Putao, Sumprabum and Tanai, in Kachin State, as well as areas in central Burma, such as Rangoon, Mandalay and Pyinmana.

In almost all the cases documented, the reason why women and girls travelled to China was to find work to support their

families. They were offered jobs in towns close to the Burmese border as maids, restaurant employees, sellers or factory workers, with salaries ranging from 250–700 yuan a month (US\$36–100). However, on crossing the border, they were then handed over to other brokers and ended up being transported by buses, cars or trains to other locations deeper inside China.

About 15% of the women were specifically hoping to earn money to pay for school fees, either for themselves or their siblings. Some of the women needed to earn money to pay for medical costs of their family members. About 7% of the women were seeking work because their husband or their father was addicted to drugs and was unable to provide any support to their family.

Spiraling costs

Costs	2005	2007
Petrol 1 liter	750	1,520
Rice 50 kg (low quality)	22,000	54,000
School fees 1 year (10 th standard)	300,000	800,000
Medical fees Caesarian delivery	30,000	50,000

All prices are in kyat

The daily labour wage is currently 2,000 kyat

In 2007 the exchange rate was about 1,250 kyat to US\$1

Snapshots of migration



Official crossing at Jegaung, northern Shan State border



Navigating the bus station in Kunming, capital of Yunnan Province



A family from Burma begging on the street in Jangpong, southern Yunnan Province



A strip of massage parlours by day in Ruili, southern Yunnan Province

Forced brides



A woman who escaped shared her “wedding” photo with KWAT

Our data shows that the most common purpose of trafficking of women and girls from Burma in China is to provide wives for Chinese men.

Out of the confirmed trafficking cases, about 90% of the cases were forced to be brides. The rest were forced into entertainment or unpaid domestic work.

The amount of money paid by Chinese men for their brides ranged from 5,000 yuan (US\$730) to 24,000 yuan (US\$3,500), the average cost being about 13,000 yuan (US\$1,900).

One third of the women were forced to marry men living in Yunnan province. The remaining two thirds of the women were forced to become brides in other

provinces, mostly in eastern China, with Shandong province having a higher number of cases than other eastern provinces.

In some cases men would come to Chinese villages or towns close to the Burma border to choose and buy their brides. Sometimes the women were transported to destinations distant from the border, as far as the eastern provinces, before being chosen and sold.

Women forced to become brides described being shown to “many” men before being chosen, sometimes tied up so they would not run away, or actually taken to a market to be chosen by prospective buyers.

Young, healthy-looking women who will be able to have children are chosen more quickly. One woman who was 5 months pregnant was forced by a trafficker to have an abortion before being sold as a bride. Another woman who had formerly given birth by caesarian section was rejected as a bride by one man when he saw her scar, and then forced to undergo medical tests at a hospital by another man to ensure she could still have children.

The men who bought brides from Burma did not appear to be well-off. They were mainly farmers; only one was a shop-owner. It is therefore likely that they had to save up money to be able to afford to buy their wives. The wives were usually

made to work on their husbands' farms. A few of the women were allowed to work outside their homes (one in a noodle shop and one in a fruit factory), which enabled them to save money and escape home.

Women forced to become brides described being shown to "many" men before being chosen, sometimes tied up so they would not run away, or actually taken to a market to be chosen by prospective buyers.



A woman forced to marry in Jilin shared this photo album wedding portrait after she escaped

Concerns over Burma's new anti-trafficking law

In September 2005, Burma's military regime enacted its new "Anti Trafficking in Persons Law," under which a Central Body for Suppression of Trafficking in Persons was formed, with wide-ranging authority, including communicating and coordinating with foreign governments and international organizations, and obtaining assistance for anti-trafficking projects. The law aimed to address trafficking in "a more substantive way," and "ensure that the rights of trafficked victims were protected and that traffickers were severely punished."

According to our data, however, the new law is not achieving these aims and is having little impact in reducing the problem. Worse yet, women are being falsely charged as traffickers under the new law.

Preserving the Pedigree

The new anti-trafficking law states as its first aim: "To prevent and suppress the trafficking in persons as a national duty, *as it damages the pride and pedigree of Myanmar nationality* that should be valued and safeguarded by Myanmar race." This disturbing language echoes the crude attacks by the regime against democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who is repeatedly vilified in the state-run media for having married a foreigner. The regime's new constitution prohibits anyone who has been married to a foreigner from holding government office.

Failure to protect rights of trafficked women

The new law contains specific provisions to safeguard the rights of trafficked victims and to provide special protection to trafficked victims, women, children and youth. However, women have described how law-enforcers are failing to act according to these provisions on the ground.

This is in direct contravention of Chapter V 13 c of the new law, which states that the "Central Body (for Suppression of Trafficking in Persons)... shall, if the trafficked person who re-entered the country has a right of permanent residence, protect his right to get permanent residence, security and relevant status." For example, trafficked women handed back by Chinese police to Burmese police at the border are not only refused assistance, but are treated with contempt.

"Ms. N escaped and was sent back to the Burmese border (at Ruili-Muse) by Chinese police. However, the Burmese border police verbally assaulted her and refused to accept her. So the Chinese police took her back to the Ruili side and left her at the park."

Ironically, after the same woman was able to return home to Myitkyina, she pressed charges against her traffickers, and was then chosen to be a "showcase" trafficking victim who received generous assistance from the authorities.

"The police came to her house two or three times and took many photos. She

was asked by the police what she wanted to do and she replied that she wanted to open a small shop. Therefore, in January 2008, she received 1.5 million kyat (US\$1,200) from the police and they told her the money was paid 'from Naypyidaw' (the new capital)."

False trafficking charges

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In one incident, the woman accused, a 38-year-old farmer, had simply introduced a fellow villager to one of her friends, a merchant from Myitkyina. When the villager's daughter subsequently disappeared, the villager accused the farmer of trafficking his daughter. In a nightmare scenario, the woman was detained, raped by a local official, and finally had to pay a bribe of 2 million kyat to escape prosecution. This case epitomizes the prevailing lack of rule of law in Burma, and the complete failure of the legal system to protect women against violence. (see Selected stories).

"I was guarded and while I was sleeping at 3 in the morning the Chairman came and raped me. I shouted out but those nearby didn't come to help."

Documents of the official court testimony of a woman falsely accused of trafficking who was raped while in detention

In the other incident, a woman who herself had been trafficked found herself falsely accused of trafficking. Ms N., 32, and 20-year-old Ms D. had been persuaded to travel to Yin Jang in China to work as chefs. They ended up being taken to Shandong, where both were sold to be wives of Chinese men. Both escaped separately, but when Ms N. returned to Myitkyina, she found she was accused of trafficking Ms D. Ms N. was imprisoned for two months, and had to spend one million kyat (US\$ 800) in bribes in order to be released. She described her stay in Myitkyina Prison as follows:

“I had to stay in the detention centre at the main prison in Myitkyina while awaiting my sentence. I stayed in prison for two months. Every morning from 5 to 7 am we had to sit in position without moving. At 9 am, we were given rice soup. We were only given two meals a day. We could only go to the toilet twice a day too. If we wanted to go an extra time, we had to pay 100 kyat per time. There was no curry provided, so my family had to cook and bring curry to me. I had to provide a blanket, pillow, clothes, shampoo, soap, toothpaste, toothbrush, etc. I even had to buy a space on the floor to sleep. It cost 100 kyat each night.”

Corruption in the legal system

Spiraling costs and low wages* mean that bribery is required at every level within the justice system.

- Police must be bribed to investigate a case
- At least 3 witnesses must be bribed to give evidence in your favour
- The lawyer must be bribed in addition to his/her fees to represent you effectively
- The judge must be bribed to either find you innocent or give a light sentence if you are guilty

* The current average monthly salary for state lawyers, judges and police commanders is just US\$96 per month.

Treatment by Chinese authorities



Chinese border checkpoint

In about 30% of the cases we documented, the women and girls were able to escape from situations to which they had been trafficked in China. In about half of these cases, particularly in areas closer to the Kachin border, the women were able to escape on their own or with the help of friends or relatives. In most of the other cases, they were assisted by the Chinese police to escape and/or to return home to Burma.

Sometimes, the Kachin authorities alerted the Chinese police to help women escape. This was usually in areas closer to the China border. However, in one instance, the Chinese police were able to trace a missing woman who had been sold as a bride in Shanghai.

In two cases, both involving girls under 18, the Chinese were able to arrest traffickers as they were transporting the girls, both times on trains travelling east from Kunming. This appears to indicate that Chinese authorities are on the alert for traffickers of children on frequently used transport routes.

Sometimes women who had been forced to be brides ran away to police stations and asked for help. In one such case in Shandong, the woman described the Chinese police as being helpful and sympathetic, despite the language barriers.

"In the police station, I explained to the police what had happened to me by using body language. So the police gave

me the world map to point out where I came from. But I couldn't point anything out because I didn't know how to read the map. They were very patient and did not threaten me when they asked me."

More commonly, women described how Chinese police came to arrest them as illegal migrants at the homes of their Chinese "husbands." This appears to be the result of neighbours feeling sorry for the forced brides and reporting the presence of the women to the police.

Once in the hands of the Chinese police, women were usually detained in jail for about a month before being sent back to the Burmese border. One 16-year-old girl complained about being made to clean the toilets and the prison compound during her detention. However, another woman who was jailed both in China and Burma compared Chinese jails favourably to Burmese jails: *"The prison conditions from China are better than Burma because everything there was provided for me for free."*

After being jailed, the women were escorted by Chinese police (always including one policewoman) to the Burmese border. They were transported by train or plane back to Kunming, then by car or plane to Mangshi, and finally by police car to the border. Several women described being handcuffed the entire way.

In the majority of cases we have documented the women were handed

back to the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) authorities* on the Kachin border. This is probably because most of the women trafficked were Kachin. However, another reason may be that the Chinese police sometimes ask for money to cover costs of repatriating women to Burma, and it appears that the KIO is more willing to pay for these costs than the Burmese border authorities.

The fact that the Chinese police sometimes ask for money when repatriating women to the Burmese border may have been one reason that the Burmese authorities have refused to accept back women at the border (see previous section). What is certain is that this practice of demanding money is a disincentive for cooperation by Burma border authorities in facilitating the return of women and girls, and is therefore undermining efforts to protect their rights.

Recommendations to authorities in Yunnan Province

1. Signposts along roads should be written in English phonetics (pinyin), so people from Burma can read where they are going, and not be tricked into travelling to places they do not want to go to.
2. Police repatriating people from Burma should not demand money from Burmese border authorities.

* The KIO signed a ceasefire agreement with the Burmese military regime in 1994, and administers some border areas of Kachin State

Selected Stories

Sold as a bride in eastern China

I was offered a job as a maid in Ying Jang by a friend. I was told that my employer was very rich and would give me jewelry as well as a salary. So I agreed to go, and in February, 2004 I travelled to Laiza. The friend was waiting for me at Laiza and then took me to Ying Jang. When we got there, my friend bought some clothes for me. The next morning she told me she was taking me to visit some friends and then left me with a woman who could speak Kachin.

Then I was taken to Jilin (in eastern China) by train. In Jilin I discovered that I was being sold as a bride for 24,000 yuan (US\$3,500). My husband seemed to be mentally retarded. His family were farmers and I had to work on their farm. I was never allowed out alone, and even when I went shopping someone would always accompany me.

I think one of our neighbours must have reported me to the police, because in June, 2006, the police came to arrest me as an illegal immigrant, even though I was married to a Chinese man.

I was put in jail for two months. Then the police took me to Mang Shi by plane. The next day, I was taken in a police car to Laiza. In the same car, there were two other Burmese women who had been trafficked to China. When we arrived in Laiza, we were handed over to the KIO.

Tricked into unpaid domestic work

M. was left by her "friend" in a small village in China close to Laiza. She stayed in that house as a house-keeper and she hoped that her friend would negotiate for her salary when she came back. She could not speak Chinese so they used body language to communicate.

At that house there was a widower and the families of his two sons. They had a restaurant and a big farm which was a bit far from their home. She helped at the restaurant and sometimes she had to help in the farm when it was harvest time.

A whole year passed and her friend didn't come back. Therefore, she went to ask her salary from the Chinese widower in order to go back home. He wrote 25,000 yuan on a piece of paper and explained that he had given it to her friend to buy her. Only then did she realize her situation and cried all night. She then began planning to find a way to escape and was able to run away to Ying Jang.

"I was never allowed out alone, and even when I went shopping someone would always accompany me."

The lure of the Olympics

Four women were tricked into travelling to eastern Burma by being promised they would perform Kachin traditional dances at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. In fact, they were taken to Hang Zhou, and forced to work as “hostesses” there.

Four women (aged 17–22) were told by a friend they could join the Kachin Culture Group in Mang Shi (De Hong), which would perform at the Olympic Games in Beijing in 2008. They were promised 600 yuan per month as well as food, clothes and accommodation. They practiced many Kachin traditional dances for almost one month in Mang Shi and until that time, they still had contact with their families. In September 2007, a Chinese woman took them to Kunming, and from there they travelled by train for two or three days. Then they were taken to Hang Zhou, close to Shang Hai.

Once in Hang Zhou, the woman ordered them to work in different places. Two of them were made to work at the Leng Chyim restaurant. They were forced to drink beer every night. It was a shock for them because their parents are religious leaders so they had never tried alcohol before. If they did not drink beer, the owner scolded them and cut their salary.

One of them had to work at the Hei Hua (Black Flower) bar. At the bar she had to wear sexy, skimpy clothes and go on a cat-walk. When girls got bouquets from customers, they received 100 yuan as a bonus. The rule was that half of their bonus had to be given to the bar owner. But actually, the girls didn't see the money because they were told the owner was saving it for them and would give to them when they left the job and returned home. One of them also had to work at another bar and dance sexily. At the bars,



The women practiced their dance routines for one month in hopes of performing at the Olympics



A bar in Hang Zhou where girls were forced to work

women were sexually harassed by the customers every night.

In Hang Zhou they had to stay together in an apartment and were controlled by the woman who had brought them from Mang Shi. There were also many Chinese girls who were working like them. The Chinese seemed to enjoy their work and never tried to escape.

They had to work from 5 pm to dawn, sometimes even until 8 am, and they slept during the day. They could have one meal per day at the places where they worked. Sometimes they felt very hungry but there was no food to eat. Even though they had a little money, the woman in charge of them did not allow them to go out, and did not let them have any medical treatment even when they got sick. There was no phone to contact other people. They also had to pay a

living allowance to the woman who controlled them (including food and water).

One day, they tried to escape and went around Hang Zhou town, but did not know where they should go. They phoned to the police station but they couldn't explain their situation because of their lack of Chinese. Finally, they returned to their shelter. When they arrived, it was very late and they were questioned by the woman. They just lied that they were looking for the Church. Finally they were able to make contact with their families. Their family members were able to send a man to Hang Zhou to help them. In October 2007, they took the train from Hang Zhou to Mang Shi (De Hong), and then the bus to Ruili. Finally they were able to arrive back at their homes safely.

Burmese Embassy in Beijing refuses to assist victim

A., aged 23, was born in Wai Maw, Kachin State. She was married and had one child. She also had to support other members of her large family, so in June 2006, she traveled to Htin Chyung (in Yunnan) to find a job, taking just 300 yuan with her.

After renting a room in Htin Chyung, she met a local Chinese woman who told her that in Hubei town (in eastern China) there were many more jobs, which would pay 6–700 yuan (about US\$95) per month. She told the Chinese woman that she did not have enough money to travel to Hubei, as she had spent all her money on rent. The Chinese woman then gave 140 yuan to her for food, and offered to cover the cost of traveling to Ho Be, on condition she paid it back after she began earning money. A. agreed, and after one week they set off to Hubei. They took a car from Hting Chyung to Pau Shan and then took a train for 3 days and 3 nights until they arrived at Hubei.

When they arrived at Hubei, she was passed on to another Chinese woman who took her home and many Chinese men came and looked at her. After a day, a Chinese man, about 30 years old, came with five of his relatives and took her to his home. At that time, she realised that she was being forced to become his wife, but she was too afraid of his family to protest. The Chinese woman who had made the arrangement said that the man was a good man and very kind so she should go with that Chinese family.

She stayed about 20 days at that house, while the family was arranging a marriage party. One night she tried to run away, but on the way she met an old Chinese man, from whom she asked the way to Htin Chyung. The old Chinese man recognized her and told the family, who came after her and brought her back to their house. They were very angry with her and said that if she did not want to marry their son, she would have to pay back the money they had paid for her. But she did not have any money so she had to stay.

She had to work at their wheat farm and cook for the whole family. Finally, she told them that she had a family in Burma and had a child. So the family sent her to the police station.

In September 2006, she was arrested and imprisoned at the police station. The police asked her many questions and she told them the truth. One policeman named Mr. Chyang Chyin Hpung took her picture and asked for all her personal information, so she wrote it all down for him. He said that he would refer the matter to the Burmese Embassy in Beijing.

After a month, Mr. Chyang Chyin Hpung informed her that the Burmese Embassy did not recognize her as a Burmese citizen. They had been unable to find any record of her family listed in her hometown. (In fact, her parents were both legally registered as Burmese citizens, and had national identity cards.) She had to stay in the jail nearly one year.

Finally, in June 2007, the police gave her permission to phone her family from jail. She phoned her husband and begged him to come and fetch her, but he said he did not have enough money to fetch her. She then phoned her mother-in-law but she too said she did not have enough money. She also said that her son had a plan to marry another woman. At that time A. was very sad and wanted to die.

In September 2007, a policewoman and two policemen escorted her back to the Burma border at Laiza. They took her in handcuffs the whole way. Mr. Chyang Chyin Hpung told her that the Burmese Embassy had refused to give a recommendation letter for her. So they had contacted the KIO Foreign Affairs office.

Falsely accused of trafficking and raped in detention

Ms S. had been married for 14 years and had six children. One day Mr. L., who was from the same village, came and asked her if she knew where his 20-year-old daughter could find a job. She suggested that he talk to her friend Ms J., an orange merchant from Myitkyina. One month later, she saw her friend at the market so she introduced her to Mr. L.. After that she didn't have any contact with her friend and also she didn't know whether her friend took his daughter to get a job.

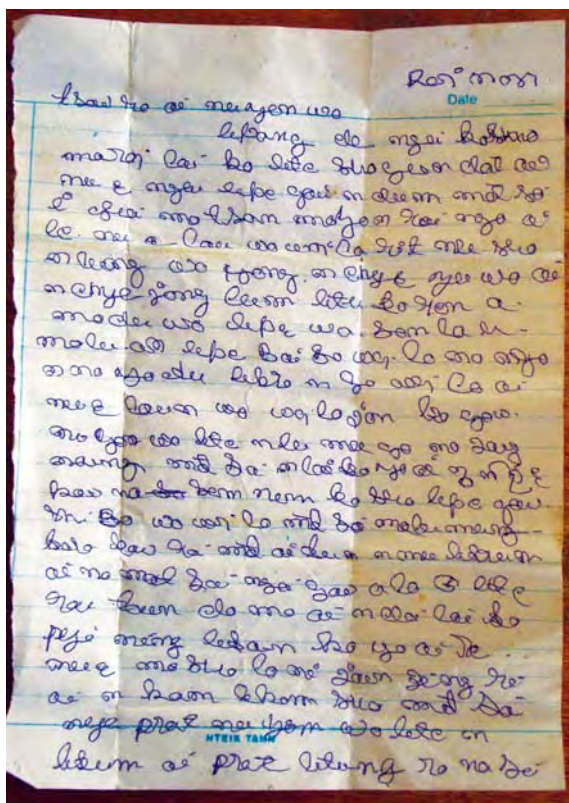
Then after 6 months, Mr. L. came to her and asked about her friend. She explained that she hadn't had any contact with her friend since she introduced her to him. He said his

daughter had gone missing, and asked her to find her. She refused because she was breast-feeding and had no money to travel. Also she didn't feel it was her responsibility to find his daughter. Twenty days afterwards, she was accused of being a trafficker by Mr L. and taken to the Ward Peace and Development Council office. She went there with her 8-month-old daughter. At the office, there were no police but there were 7 or 8 people from the Fire Brigade. The Ward Council Chairman Mr. M. said that the investigation would start in two days, so she had to sleep at the office. She put together two long benches and slept there with her daughter. While she was sleeping at 3 in the morning, the Chairman came and raped her. The complainant Mr. L. was nearby, as were the other people from the Fire Brigade, but even though she shouted for help, nobody came to help her. The rapist then put his hand over her mouth to stop her from shouting.

She wanted to complain about this incident to the court, so the Chairman offered her 400,000 kyat (US\$320) to hush up the case. When she refused to accept the money, she was taken to the police station and charged as being a trafficker who had sold the daughter of the complainant.

Because of the rape incident, she was abandoned by her husband. She was put in jail until her court appearance. Ms S. had to pay the judge, the lawyer and witnesses in order to escape prosecution. She spent a total of 2 million kyat.

Letter from daughter who disappeared



My dearest Mom and Dad,

I'm sending my regards with this letter. Mom, are you missing me? I am in trouble. Come and save me. I can't come back without you. If you don't know the way, just ask Mr. N. (Ms. H's husband). He left us and said that he would come and take back the two of us but he has disappeared since then. The Shan girl who is taking this letter to you was helped by her brother to escape. I have to stay with six men and this letter was written by a friend. Mom, I can't stand anymore to be tortured by strange men. I think my life will end without seeing you again.

Hopelessly,
Your daughter M.