Since 1962, Burma was ruled by military regime led by General Ne Win under the name of Burmese Socialist Program Party (BSPP) till 1988. The military rule has been continued after 1988 pro-democracy uprising and bloody by the Burmese Army (the so-called Burmese Army) until today. From 1992, another military junta led by General Than Shwe has continued to control the country. This junta is called itself “State Peace and Development Council (SPDC)”, but has ruled the country with much suppression against the people. Burma is divided into 7 Ethnic States and 7 majority Burman Divisions. In the geographical area of southern part of Burma, there are Pegu Division, Karen State, Mon State and Tenassrim Division. There are different ethnic groups live in this area are Burman, Mon, Karen, Tavoyan and Pa.oh. Mon State has ten townships, which are Moulmein (Mawlamyaing), Kyaikmayaw, Mudon, Thanbyuzaya, Paung, Ye, Chaung Zone, Tadon, Kyai-hto and Belin.

In Burma, the regime adapted the education system from BSPP era and it has the categories of the following school system. In the basic level of SPDC education, the system consisted of: (1) Primary School (Kindergarten to Grade IV); (2) Middle School (Grade V to Grade VIII) and (3) High School (Grade IX to X). The majority of students with aged 5 to 10 years is attending the Primary School; with aged 10 to 14 years are attending at Middle School; and with aged 14 years to 16/17 years old are attending High School. After the students pass the High School, they can attend vocational...
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.

In June 2007, at the beginning of the school 2007-2008 academic year, the State school took a lot of enrollment fees than last year. After 4 or 5 days the SPDC Mon State authorities having announced free education for ‘free admission’ at the primary school level but the students' parents said they still have to pay various types of fees such as expenses for ‘Parents and Teachers Association, Teachers Worshipping Ceremony, Sport Cost, Information and Communication (Computer) Technology Cost’ and other costs.

Since 1993 Burma military regulated a “Child Law” on the protection of the child and promote the rights of the children, but there has been no dramatically change for school children. According to Article 20 of Burma’s 1993 Child Law, “Every child shall have the right to free basic primary education in State schools and that the Ministry of Education shall implement a system of free and compulsory primary education.” But there is still no free education in Burma.

In Burma military also sign Universal Declaration of Human Rights. “Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.” (Article 26)

Burma regime also ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in August 14 1991, to protect and promote the rights of the children in term of their education. In the Article 28 of CRC, it clearly describes for the rights of children to get access to basic education as below:

States Parties recognize the right of the child to education and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:

(a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;

(b) Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need.

Even though SPDC military have a law on Children and ratified UDHR and CRC they have still failed to implement the rights of the children in Burma. There are many evidence of ‘high rate of drop-outs’ and many poor parents are suffered from paying various type of fees under SPDC’s ‘free education system’. Why these happened? It is very clear that the ruling regime in Burma SPDC has a very less attention on education and health but more on defense issue. Therefore, in a report of regional NGO, it described:

“In the ADB’s latest assessment of regional progress on the Millennium Development Goals, Burma is regressing along with Laos, Indonesia and Philippines. Burma rates in the bottom 10 worldwide for spending on education and health, with 0.5% of GDP allocated to healthcare, the lowest percentage in the Asia-Pacific. The report noted that Burma receives less aid than others –
less than 5% of total foreign investment. "The countries that make less effort than others overall are also those that spend relatively small shares of GDP on both education and health," the report said. - moderately/severely underweight children under-5 dropped 0.6% since 1990 - undernourished population halved to 5% since 1990. - primary school enrollment figures are high but regressing from 96.3% in 1991 to 91% in 2005. - 1/4 of children that enroll in primary school fail to go on to secondary education. - literacy remains high at 95.7 percent - gender equality is good, except in university education where there are 1.76 men for every woman". (ALTSEAN-BURMA 2006-10-17)

II : Mon Ethnic Education

In June 29, 1995 the New Mon State Party (NMSP) reached cease-fire agreement with State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). During ceasefire negotiation, the Mon leaders have requested the ruling regime to preserving and promoting the old Mon literature role in the modern education system in order to keep the survival of Mon language in Mon communities. The main points in the proposal are:

(1) To allow the teaching of Mon language in government schools in Mon State as a minor subject.

(2) To build more government schools in Mon State and promote the levels of the schools in various Mon villages and provide more education assistance to those schools,

(3) To assist for a building of Mon National High School in undeveloped area inside Mon State,

(4) To officially recognize the teaching of Buddhist scripture in Mon language and final examinations in Mon monasteries of the whole Mon State.

In order to operate Mon national education, the New Mon State Party (NMSP) has established many Mon national schools in many Mon rural communities since 1980s with the supports by the community people. During that time, the civil war in Burma was intensive. Along with military operations, some Mon national schools were converted to government schools by force and military governments also brought their teachers to teach in schools. Currently after NMSP-SPDC ceasefire, there are three types of Mon National schools. They are categorized as below,

(1) Mon National Vernacular schools,
(2) Joint Mon and Burmese teaching schools,
(3) Mixed schools teaching in Mon and Burmese Languages.

In Mon vernacular schools, NMSP teachers teach students mainly with Mon language in all subjects except Burmese. Mon language and literature is the main subject of the schools and other subjects such as basic mathematics, geography, history and science are taught in Mon language. These schools are situating along Thailand-Burma border in NMSP controlled areas and in 12 ceasefire zones, and they are completely operated by Mon National Education Committee (MNEC) and NMSP’s Mon National Education Department.

In joint Mon and Burmese teaching schools, students are taught in two languages, Mon and Burmese. They separated the time to teach, if the Mon teachers teach in the morning, the Burmese teachers teach in the evening. In this type of school, besides language subjects, other subjects can be taught either in Mon or Burmese. In this case, Mon and government teachers have to agree each other and they might have some understanding.

In Mixed schools, the government or NMSP Education Department tried to put only one teacher in their unrecognized schools to teach only one subject in Mon or Burmese as a minor language. One Mon or Burmese teacher slip into this type of schools and try to teach their priority language.
Presently, MNEC has set up about 318 Mon schools that include Primary, Middle and High Levels of Mon National Schools in the whole Mon area under the Mon National Education Department.

The three high school are based in (1) Nyi Tar High School, which is near by New Mon State Party based area, (2) Weang-ha-poe High School in Kya-inn-seikyi Township and Aung-din in Ye township. For the primary school and middle school, MNEC provide salary for the teachers, school text books, exercise books and other equipments such as pen, pencils, and ruler. For the accommodation of Mon teachers, MNEC has cooperation with the local communities. The local Mon communities give some assistance such as housing and rice for the teachers. But for the 3 High School, MNEC set up students’ and teachers’ hotels and they take all responsibilities, explained by a MNEC authority said.

For high school students, they study at the MNEC operated schools and take exams at the SPDC State schools. The SPDC acknowledges these students similar as State school students. For the Primary and Middle levels of Mon schools, they just take exams at the Mon National School.

Before for 9th Grade students at the Mon National School who did not enter in exams at the SPDC State school in the last two years are forced them to sit exam at the SPDC State school, because SPDC Township Education Departments informed to MNEC that they want to test the quality of these students in order to allow them to take part in 10th Grade or High School Exam. The 9th Grade students have to sit exams for 2 times both in Mon National School and in SPDC State school.

Even though the MNEC provides supplies and school materials for Mon schools, but it still have to raise fund from the communities for school fund, to operate the schools. They face insufficient fund or budget to run the schools. So the Mon teachers in each school have to take some entrance fees from the students. According to MNEC’ 2nd Grade student from War-zin village Primary school in Ye township “I have to pay 2,000 Kyat for the entrance fee including for 5 exercise (writing) books. If there are two students from a family, the teachers reduce the entrance fees. They ask only 3,000 Kyat for both” said Min Aung Kyaw Oo, on June 8, 2007, when the school started opening. This school is in NMSP’s ceasefire zone

According to 2nd Grade student from Phalan Damapala village Primary school, Ye township said “I have to pay 2,000 Kyat for the school entrance fee including 5 exercise book”, said Min Soe Lwin Oo, on June 8, 2007.

According to a teacher from Htee-pauk-lo village Middle School, Kya-inn-seikyi Township, he explained there are about 75 students in Middle level and 240 students at the Primary level in his school. Primary school is operated as joint Mon and Burmese teaching schools and Middle level are operated as Mon vernacular schools. There are 5 Mon teachers at the Middle level and 2 teachers at the Primary level school. The MNEC provides the salaries for the teachers and some assistance for school such as text books, exercise books, pencils, pen, begs and rulers. Last year MNEC provide 15,000 Kyat for the teachers’ salary and the local community provide adequate rice and housing for the teacher.

The school enrollment fees in this village are as below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue No. 2/2007</th>
<th>June 2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**BOX 1: School Enrollment Expenses**

**Ye township the school enrollment fee:**
- Primary school fee: 16000 Kyat
- 5th Grade fee: 18000 Kyat
- 6th Grade fee: 19200 Kyat

**Ayu-taung village the school enrollment fee:**
- Primary school fee: 3500 Kyat
- Middle school fee: 6800 Kyat

**Ye town the school enrollment fee:**
- No.1 Primary school fee: 3100 Kyat
- No.1 Middle school fee: 4500 Kyat
- High school fee: 2000 Kyat

**Jue-ka-lar village the school enrollment fees:**
- 2nd Grade school fee: 2260 Kyat
- 3rd Grade school fee: 4600 Kyat

**Mudon Township the school enrollment fee:**
- Young-doung village the school enrollment fee:
  - Kindergarten school fee: 2500 Kyat
  - 1st Grade school fee: 2700 Kyat
  - 2nd Grade school fee: 2900 Kyat
  - 3rd Grade school fee: 3100 Kyat
  - 4th Grade school fee: 3500 Kyat

- Kalaw-thut village the school enrollment fee:
  - Kindergarten school fee: 1200 Kyat
  - 1st to 4th Grade school fee: 1500 Kyat
  - 5th to 6th Grade school fee: 2200 Kyat
  - 7th to 8th Grade school fee: 3300 Kyat
  - 9th to 10th Grade school fee: 3500 Kyat

Even though the MNEC provides supplies and school materials for Mon schools, but it still have to raise fund from the communities for school fund, to operate the schools. They face insufficient fund or budget to run the schools. So the Mon teachers in each school have to take some entrance fees from the students. According to MNEC’ 2nd Grade student from War-zin village Primary school in Ye township “I have to pay 2,000 Kyat for the entrance fee including for 5 exercise (writing) books. If there are two students from a family, the teachers reduce the entrance fees. They ask only 3,000 Kyat for both” said Min Aung Kyaw Oo, on June 8, 2007, when the school started opening. This school is in NMSP’s ceasefire zone

According to 2nd Grade student from Phalan Damapala village Primary school, Ye township said “I have to pay 2,000 Kyat for the school entrance fee including 5 exercise book”, said Min Soe Lwin Oo, on June 8, 2007.
• Kindergarten school fees: 1,000 Kyat
• Grad 1st, 2nd, 3rd school fees: 1,500 Kyat
• Grad 5th, 6th, 7th 8th school fees: 3,000 Kyat

a: Monastic Education System

In Mon State, since the school costs for both government schools and Mon national schools have been gradually high and the people could not afford to pay. The parents have founded other alternative way of obtaining education for their children. As the Mon communities believe in Buddhism and many Buddhist monasteries are reliable spaces for all of them not only for studying but also to have foods. Since many poor families have been sending their children to monasteries, the Buddhist monks have taken more responsibilities to provide education for children.

Although there is no consistent education system in monasteries, but the Buddhist monks can teach children how to read and write an ethnic language like Mon, Karen, Shan or Burmese. They mainly focused on the teaching of Buddhism to children and they can understand more or less on the ideology of Buddhism.

The following case is an example of a ‘Buddhist Monastery School’ in a village where Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are taking refuge under NMSP area.

b: Monastery School in Ta-dein Village

This monastery school is operated by the Mon monk who is the Abbot of this monastery for several years. In Ta-dain village the numbers of young students study at the monastery school more than study at the Mon National School because there families are very poor and they face a survival problem for them so they can’t afford for their children such as school uniform, textbooks, school materials and food. So they let their children to join the monastery school to save the money.

According to Mi Ha Dune, the mother of a student Mi Aie Non said,

“I let my 6 year old daughter to attend the monastery school because we don’t have extra money to send the Mon National School. Even in our daily life we sometimes face a problem to survive. Currently we still face a problem for food. Over four days we only have rice in our lunch and dinner without curry. We have been here over 3 years and we don’t have any land to grow the paddies and we don’t have enough food to survive. We don’t have regular job to earn the money. We work as a daily worker and earn 100 Baht for man and 80 Baht for woman. Sometimes we are also face a problem for health care too. To join the monastery school, my daughter can have regular lunch and dinner and she is also got a chance to study and sometimes the Abbot also gives some cloths to the students.”

According to Mi Khin Than the mother of the student Mi Thi Dar said,

“I have five children and I have been here over 8 years. We don’t have any land to grow the paddies and we work as a daily worker to earn the little money. We don’t have regular job. To work as a daily worker we get 100 Baht for man and 80 Baht for woman. Sometimes we are also face a problem for health care. To join the monastery school, my daughter can have regular lunch and dinner and she is also got a chance to study and sometimes the Abbot also gives some cloths to the students.”
By the coordination of all women’s organizations from Thai, Mon and Karen communities in Sangkhlaburi, the Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s 62nd Years Birthday Ceremony was completely which was held in the border town Sangkhlaburi, Kanchanaburi Province of Thailand on June 19, 2007.

According to the statement of Women League of Burma (WLB), SPDC authorities are ignoring these public criminal acts by its cronies and letting them commit attacks and harassment with impunity against the pro-democracy activists. It also puts evidence of SPDC is thereby fuelling divisions between the people of Burma, and directly eroding national unity and derailing the process of national reconciliation. They must therefore bear full responsibility for the current climate of instability, which may degenerate into anarchy in Burma.

On the occasion of her 62nd birthday ceremony, women groups along the Thailand-Burma border and exile communities call for the immediate release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Khun Htun Oo and other political prisoners, and for the initiation of the process of tripartite dialogue for genuine peace and democracy in Burma.

A representative from Mon Unity League and Human Rights Foundation of Monland, Nai Kasauh Mon, gave a speech. In his speech ‘we prayed for Daw Aung San Suu, as she is still under house arrest, to be healthy and long life and we are also hope that she is continuing to struggle in the movement until Burma become a democratic country. She is our soul and our leader. She is the light of for all ethnic people and struggle for all people in Burma to gain democracy and justice in Burma. She is a woman who is against the military dictatorship. The military afraid her and therefore they put her under house arrest’.

Daw Paw Lu Lu, from ‘Safe House’, a displaced patients center in Sangkhlaburi District gave a speech that “Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is not only struggle for her nationality, she is the woman who is standing for all people in Burma. So we are proud of her. For some people may thought she is the woman and she can’t struggle but we can see that she have been struggling for a long time. Especially we the women proud of her very much and she is the role model of for all women in Burma”.

A former student from 88 uprising generation U Aung Thu Nyein gave a speech that “Daw Aung San Suu Kyi came back to Burma to treat her mother because her mother was sick. She didn't hope she will involve in Burma politics. At that time, there was a situation for her to involve in politics. She commitment started with struggle of 88 pro-democracy uprising and later she is totally involved in politics. Most people in Burma love her very much. She lost opportunity even to meet her family in her life is enormous for the people in Burma. Today, many places in abroad are cerebrating her birthday and we showed love and solidarity to her.”

Currently, there is no sign of the Burmese military regime’s release to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. They want her to get older and they will continuously put under house arrest until they complete the National Convention and drafting of constitution.

In the ceremony, the woman representatives also read the history of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the statement of WLB and read the names of several prizes that she has been received. As tradition of birthday, the participants sang the song for her and cut the birthday cake. The ceremony ends with questions to participants related to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.
According to Mi Thin Myint the mother of the student Mi Kyint Aye and Mi Myint San said,

"We have 4 children and we have been here over 6 year. I send two of my children to the monastery school because I don’t have any money to send her children to the Mon National School. At the monastery school, they can access regular food and also have a chance to study. If the Abbot allows, I also would like to send another two of my children to the monastery school to study and to eat there because we are so poor. We can’t afford the food for everyone in our family. Currently we have debt and we can’t pay it back."

According to a woman leader from Mon Women Organization at that village said,

"In this village even they go to work they just earn small money and they can’t provide for their children. It is difficult to get the job and they go to pick some vegetable at the forest to earn a little bit income but when they go to the forest they don’t have security because KNU banned the forest and if they saw the villagers will face some kind of punishment. Even they caught the fish; they don’t allow catching the fish. Although we find the bamboo shoots and sell it to the market nobody buy it. They have no land to grow the crop and they have to buy it very expensive."

According to the teacher at the Mon National School said that many students from this school moved to the monastery school.

At the Mon National School they teach Mon, Burmese, English, Mathematic, History and Geography but at the monastery school they just teach Mon language and religion subject – Buddhist Culture. At the monastery they don’t use exercise books, they just use black-board and they don’t need to wear school uniform and feed their children. She also added that even in June on the time of admission to the school but nobody come to admission their children, their parents are busy with plantation and other works. She said, if compare with last year at that time there were some students’ admission to the school but there is increase of drop-out. After that they left from the school some of them joined to the monastery school.

According to the Abbot at that school said there are less students come to join the school because their parents are so busy with plantation and they have to take care of their younger sisters and brothers, and also help their parents to clean the grass at the plantation. Currently there are 22 students including 6 girls attending the monastery school. He said he would not like to allow more students early this year because the monastery can not provide sufficient food for many students. He has to ask the rice from the village at least 2 to 3 baskets per month. So he explained that he stopped to accept 5 or 6 students. After a few months he will accept them there are about 45 students joined the monastery school. Sometimes I have to ask the clothes for them to wear because some children do not have enough clothes because they can not afford to buy many clothes and it looks not suitable for the girls. He has accepted the students from 4 years old to 13 years. But some are already adult. It is not difficult for the monks to teach the children but they face a problem to get sufficient food.

III : New School Year and Expenses

The Burma’s Education Academic year starts on June 1 every year. In 2007-2008 academic year, the school enrollment fees is more expensive than last year in every places of Mon State and the whole Burma. In Mon State, after few days of school opening, the Mon State Peace and Development Council having announced free admission at the primary level and ordered to all school to not collect admission fees from the students. But other fees charged by the school are higher than admission fees, according to a student’s parent in Three Pagoda Pass (PTT) Township, Karen State (IMNA, June 2007). The students who paid admission fee prior to announcement did not get back their money.

Before the SPDC announced free admission, the government school collected a lot of admission fees. On June 6 2007, according to a student’s mother from Kyone-Laung village, Ye Township (Mon State), said she had to pay for my son around 19, 200 Kyat including school textbooks, entrance fees, exercises books and food cost for teachers.
According to 7th grade student from No. 1 Middle School in Ye town on June 6, 2008 said:

“I have to pay 2,000 Kyat for the enrollment fees, 2,500 Kyat for school textbooks and if I take exercise book I have to pay 2,600 Kyat more including for the school building. In this year, 5th Grade students have to pay increasing amount of school enrollment fees, but when the school started to access the students we have to pay a lot, after 3 or 4 days later the SPDC the higher authority came to visit this school and they reduce the school enrollment fees.”

On June 6, 2007, Ma Yu Yu Htwe from Kaw-kamar village, Ye Township said that:

I am 3rd Grade student at the Ayu-taung village at the Middle school. My mother is Daw Myat Soe and she is a seller. I have to pay 3,500 kyat for the enrollment fees. In this school there are more students at 5th Grade class than every year; because there are more students from neighboring villages come to attend this school."

Note: The school enrollment expenses in different schools in townships of Mon State are described in BOX 1, Page 5.

IV : Deteriorated Burma’s Education System

a: High Drop-outs in Secondary (Middle) Level Schools

In Burma, although many parents would like to encourage their children to have higher education, but the poverty of each family withdraw their children from schools. The parents have great responsibilities to pay various types of school fee, while each family in Mon State earns less than 50,000 Kyat per month. The poor family in Pegu Division earns less than 30,000 Kyat per month. Many parents worry of the time of school opening and difficult to find to pay for sufficient admission fee to schools.

For families, those have many children are more problematic during the school opening time. They may have to spend 30,000 – 40,000 Kyat admission fee plus students’ uniforms and other needs. Many families withdraw the elder children in Middle Level School when young children at Primary Level started their education.

According to a mother of a 6th Grade student who left from the school in Kyone-Laung village, Ye township said:

“I have to pay the entrance fee for 6th Grade is 19,200 kyat including school textbooks. I have two children for attending the school but the school cost is very expensive and I can’t afford for both of them to join the school. So I want my older son left from the school. The reason is that the school asks high entrance fees because I know that they no budget for the teachers’ salaries and they will use some of this money for the teachers’ salaries.”

Not only secondary level students from Kyone-Laung Village left from the school, there has been always a high drop-out rate in schools in Ye town and the villages nearby. According to a student, Win Zar Phyu from 7th Grade student from Son-na-tar village near Ye Town said she have to leave from the school because her family has 6 children and their parents can not earn enough income from their family livelihood. Their parents can not afford to pay all school costs for children.

Similarly a story of a 5th Grade student, Min Zaw Oo from Ye Town said, he had to leave from the school because his family is very poor and the parents can not afford to pay sending him to the school longer. His mother sells the dry fishes at the market and his father works as a daily worker. They earn very low income. His family has 8 children altogether.

VI: No Access Education by Poor Children

Beside students’ drop-out problems, the economic situation of many poor parents who could not send their children due to various fees in schools is some hurts. Some families even they do not have any money even for their foods and so that they did not consider to send their children to schools. Even they wish to send, but they have known from their neighbours how much they may have to pay if school opens.

In June 2007 when the school opened in Kalaw-thut village, Mudon township, Mon State, according to the parent who could not send their children said:
"We really would like our youngest daughter to join the school, but at the school they (teachers) ask different kind of fees and we are not able to pay for all. We don’t have extra money to send our child to the school. Maybe next year, if we have extra income, we can send our child to the school. Even my daughter, when she saw her friends going to school she felt so disappointed and sorrowful for not having a chance to attend any school".

She said her daughter also told her that she would like to go to school with her friends and play with them. She was so along in the village ward when many children were at school.

In some family, after their income is getting low and economic situation at home is deteriorated, they could no longer send their children to schools. In this case, a parent said:

"We have five children and they all didn’t go to school. Some of them got a chance to join 2nd Grade to 3rd Grade in the previous years, but now all of them have to leave from school. Two of my children already married. Because we are very poor and we have no house to live in the village and now we live in a work place. They hire us to work at the paddy farm and we got 120 baskets of paddy as a rent cost in a year. We also got extra 30 basket of paddy for guard the yard in a year. We did not stable place to live and no sufficient money to pay for school cost."

High Drop-out Rates in Displaced Communities’ Schools
(June 2007)

When almost Mon national schools re-opened in the border areas of Thailand-Burma, the Mon teachers expressed there was a high drop-out rate in these schools while many children above 3rd Grade (3rd Standard) left from the school in order to help their families' various types of livelihood.

"The patients tried to use their children when they got about 10 years old and they did not come back to schools again" said a Mon teacher from Halockhani Mon refugees resettlement camp, which is just on the right of the border in Thailand’s Sangkhlaburi District.

In June, when there was rainy season, the new livelihood of ‘cutting bamboo shoots’ (finding a type of forest products) started in the displaced communities along Thailand-Burma border. Many families who live in the remote and mountainous areas tried to cut bamboo shoots and sell to Thai traders. In this situation, some poor families demanded their children to leave from schools and helped them.

"I need someone to help me when I go to forest (to cut bamboo shoots). I can not carry too much of these bamboo shoots", said explained by a mother of a family on the reason why she withdrew her children from schools.

The Mon National Education Committee (MNEC) does not have exact and detail information on the drop rate but the Mon teachers who constantly live in the communities and teach in schools knew the situation of their school children.

"In kindergarten classes, you will see there are many classes with many students. We might have (in Halockhani resettlement camp) about 3 classes, but the students reach to 4th Grade, it remains only one class. We knew very well why these students disappeared".

After limited food assistance to displaced population to these communities, the families have to try hard to engage in various types of livelihood, in order to earn small income. But the works in the area is so limited. Accordingly to the families, they could rely on only two types of livelihoods – collecting broom (making) grasses in dry season (from January to March) and cutting bamboo shoots (from June to August).

Besides the students’ drop-out rates, many young displaced persons (boy and girls) also migrate into Thailand in order to seek and send money back to their family.
In Burma, since the military government does not allow local and international NGOs to get access into all parts of the country, there has been no care of these children who do not get access to education. There has been lack of schools for poor children and no care service from the government.

V: Corruption from Education: Private Tuition

At the government school teacher salaries are so low, 50,000 – 70,000 Kyat (approximately 40 – 56 US Dollar) and it is not sufficient for the family to live in a better condition. It is just enough for buying food for a family. So mostly of the teachers open the private tuition to earn extra income for their daily life. Otherwise they will face a problem in their livelihood to use in expenses of various costs. Currently, the commodity prices are rocketed and their income and expense are unbalance. Their expenses have been more than they earn in each family. So the teacher fined the way to earn extra income for their family, opening tuition classes and encourage children at school to attend these classes.

In the rural area, the estimation of monthly expense for 4 people in a family is more than 85,000 Kyat (68 US Dollar). But the teachers in towns and cities have to use more expenses than the teachers in rural area. Because the commodity prices in towns are always expensive than rural area, the teachers could not find any food resources but they have to buy every thing from the markets. Teachers in rural areas can find vegetables and other types of foods from gardens, farms and forests.

Therefore, there have been more and more tuition classes mushroomed in towns and cities, and many teachers concentrated their teaching on their own tuition classes. For the children those want to have education or who want to pass exams have no choice but have to attend tuition classes.

Because of mushroomed tuition classes in Ye township, the SPDC Township authorities ordered the teachers not to open any tuition classes starting from August. They included in the orders that they will charge the teachers who operate the tuition classes. But in Mudon Township mostly in every village and town wards, the teachers operate private tuition classes and they are not affected by SPDC Township authorities.

Tuition fee is another type of non-school fee that many poor families could not afford to pay. But many rich families are happy to pay because they believe that their children can get more education while many ordinary families have no choice and send
their children in order to pass final exam. According to local source from Kamarwet Sub-town, Mudon Township said, a student 9th Grade tuition cost for total subjects are 300,000 Kyat (240 US Dollar) in a year.

As the teachers have more opportunity to make more money from tuition classes, even the teachers in Primary Level School (1st Grade to 4th Grade) also operate tuition classes and encourage children from 6 to 10 years old to attend these classes. The Primary Level students’ tuition cost in Ye town for total subjects are 2,000 Kyat per month that the parents have to support for teachers. In general, the Secondary Level School (5th Grade to 8th Grade) students’ tuition cost for total subjects are 10,000 Kyat a month and for High School (9th Grade to 10th Grade) students’ tuition cost for total subjects are 15,000 Kyat per month.

VII: Conclusion

Although many families have to pay expensive fees for education, but many of them are disappointed there have been no available works after passing high school or Universities. This disappointed sentiment in almost Mon families withdraw their children after 10 years old age and force children to work at homes or at farms to help the families. Because of this reason, there has been growing number of child labourers in Burma.

On the other hand, due to lack of interests and intention by teachers to teach at schools and more intentions to teach in tuition classes, education qualities have been low and many poor children could not get access to proper education.

SPDC authorities have a very lack intention on the development of education, the plight of poor children, and situation of teachers. They do not allocate sufficient budget for school needs and just ordered the local schools to operate their own schools by themselves. This makes many schools in Mon State collect more fees from students.

Not only the children in Mon State, but also the children in all over the country lose their opportunities for better education. But there has been no educational assessment countrywide to realize situation of education in Burma.
In this “The Plight Newsletter”:

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s Birthday is held in Thailand-Burma for Community Awareness on the Role of Women

On Page 7

The lives of Children in rural area Face a livelihood problem and didn’t get a chance to go to school

On Page 9

A
d
r
o
n
y
m
s

ADB - Asia Development Bank
BSPP - Burmese Socialist Programme Party
CEDAW - Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRC - Convention on the Rights of the Child
GDB - Gross Domestic Product
NGOs - Non Government Organization
NMSP - New Mon State Party
MNEC - Mon National Education Committee
SLORC - State Law and Order Restoration Council
SPDC - State Peace and Development Council
UDHR - Universal Declaration of Human Rights
WCRP - Woman and Child Rights Project

Woman and Child Rights Project (WCRP)
P. O. Box 2237
General Post Office
Bangkok 10501, Thailand
E-mail: wcrcpcontact@yahoo.com
Website: www.rehmonnya.org

Address Correction Required