

Lightless Life

The negligence of the Military Regime, lack of opportunity in education and the futureless live's of Ta'ang people

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About Report

Data for this project was collected between August 2006 to January 2007 and between February and March 2009. TSYO tried to acquire genuine information from the Ta'ang people, concerning their suffering and insufficient education system in their community. This information was typed by member of TSYO, and 175 people were interviewed for this project. Our aims are to develop the “**Education System**” of young Ta'ang people in Ta'ang areas to inform the international community about the failed education system of the SPDC in Ta'ang areas and gain educational support, as well as to put further pressure on the SPDC to rethink their education system.

Note; please do not copy any of the photos in this report without informing or asking permission of TSYO. Thank you.

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Terms and Abbreviations

ABFSU	All Burma Federation of Student Unions
BSPP	Burma Socialist Programme Party
HRDU	Human Rights Documentation Unit
Na Ta La	Regime Boarding Ethnic Development School (RBEDS)
NHEC	National Health and Education Committee
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
PSLA	Palaung State Liberation Army
PSLF	Palaung State Liberation Front
PWO	Palaung Women's Organization
PYNG	Palaung Youth Network Group
SLORC	State Law and Order Restoration Council
SPDC	State Peace and Development Council
TLCC	Ta'ang Literature and Culture Committee
TSYO	Ta'ang Student and Youth Organization
TDCAC	Ta'ang Development Committee and Alliance Committee
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
USDA	Union Solidarity and Development Association
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Childs
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
EFA	Education For All
NEC	National Education Committee

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Foreword

Issues, problems, and opportunities related to education in Burma are paramount in the present times. As the political turmoil and deadlock prevails for decades, current political upheaval, ethnic struggles, democracy and human rights campaigns all highlight an urgent call for action to provide schooling opportunities for Burmese children.

Over thirty percent of students enrolled in grades 1 to 10 in public schools are from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Whilst the education system is not preparing the nation's next generations for full development of their potential and becoming democratic citizens, the ethnic population suffers from discrimination and lack of proper support in education. The fact that one in five children do not proceed to middle grades means the population is also suffering from quality of decent life and human resources in the knowledge age.

These demographic, social and political trends have important implications for education in Burma. The development of a nation along with a conscious and productive citizenry depends upon the standards of education. To a large extent, this depends on the standard of teachers because teachers are undoubtedly the most important component of our education system. Until now, no one has made serious efforts to look into the aspect of the teacher preparation and teaching profession. What problems, difficulties and barriers confront us today in the task of improving the professional status of teachers is a matter of great concern.

This education research report, *Lightless Life*, highlights the educational situation in Ta'ang areas, which also represent an overview of education in rural and ethnic regions throughout Burma. As there is a clear lack of education research on children's schooling opportunities and quality of education inside Burma, this report is valuable for understanding the crisis in education.

Education remains always under pressure. In present-day Burma, among the political and socio-economic crisis, a diverse and multicultural education system that promotes educational rights of children is of the utmost importance. I would like to underline the recommendations in this report as immediate actions that should be taken for our Ta'ang and other underprivileged children's rights to schooling and a quality education.

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Foreword

“Several students have dropped out of school in the past few years as a result of the economic crisis. This has affected students in rural communities more so than urban scholars. Education has suffered since the country has become politically unstable. Before the PSLO and the Burmese military junta agreed to a ceasefire, Man Tong town only had a primary and middle school. Poor transportation and lack of safety due to the military regime’s presence are all factors that lead to difficulties attending school. Having far fewer schools in rural communities than in urban, leads to hardship for children from low socioeconomic background leaving them without sufficient education. When incapable of affording government schools, parents are forced to send their children to village monastery schools, such as Mandalay Pawn Daw Oo monastery school.

Subsequent to PSLO signing a ceasefire with the military regime, the quality of education improved for a short period of time. The PSLO founded a boarding school in the center of Man Tong town to educate students who would otherwise not have a chance to receive schooling and covered half of the tuition to attend this institution. The school principal of this new institution also invited teachers with relatively good experience to improve quality of education. The PSLA sponsored students to get educated, providing financial resources to properly prepare students for high schools. Villagers were motivated to send their children to school.

After the PLSO disarmed, education worsened. The PSLO no longer had the financial resources to sponsor students’ educations, leading to villagers losing motivation to send their children to school, and children losing expectations of a bright future, and sense of morale. Helping their families sustain themselves was now a main concern for many former students, since education had become relatively expensive.

Currently in education, teachers let students pass their classes, though students’ test scores may be inadequate to go on to the next class. When scholars are at an age to go to high school, they oftentimes lack the knowledge to pass their classes then, because of insufficiency in the primary school system.

Boarding schools are available only to students from wealthy families due to high costs. Boarding schools provide smaller classes and enable students to participate in class. In government school, asking question in class is unheard of. Nowadays, curricula are not created for students to improve

their knowledge, and instead force children to drop out to contribute to their family's livelihood.

Students with good basic education want to continue to study at the same level. However secondary education is more expensive than primary. With the current economic situation, the state should provide enough supplies, equipment, and facilities such as libraries in communities to promote children's educational careers. Teachers should give students the chance to speak up and think, rather than just recite during their studies. Good curricular systems are very important. Parents as well as teachers should work together to motivate young students and to promote better education in the future.”

School Headmaster of Local School
Ta'ang Region

Executive Summary

This report seeks to explore the targeted institutionalized failings of the Burmese military regime with regard to the education system in Burma and for the Ta'ang people. Data was collected primarily from Namkham, Man Tong, and Namhsan Townships in the Ta'ang region. 175 interviews were conducted in 61 villages from August 2006 to March 2009.

Through decades of the regime's mismanagement, Burma is one of the few areas in the world where the current generation of students will be less educated than their grandparents and little more than half of children complete their primary education¹. The educational system in the Ta'ang region is demonstrably sub par and heavily controlled by the SPDC, thereby lacking the most basic resources for teachers and students, restricting critical thinking, and subsisting mainly by charging fees from impoverished parents. This leads many young Ta'ang youth and their families to abandon education so as to secure financial survival through other less effective and constructive means.

Following a major collapse of the tea cultivating industry in the Ta'ang region in 2008, a significant economic shift occurred. The decimation of the region's traditional industry placed a newfound premium on education for the Ta'ang people, who were forced to find new ways to provide for their families. The military regime's use of educational suppression has led to not only an educational crisis, but also a major regional opium epidemic and increases in incidences of human trafficking and other illicit activities.

Although the SPDC are signatories to the international conventions of CEDAW and CRC, ensuring access of education to all, the educational system in Ta'ang and other areas of Burma is vastly under-supported and of poor quality. Burma spends a paltry 1.4 per cent of GDP on health and education, and is the only country in the region whose military budget is greater than that of health and education combined¹. This lack of funding leads to several important logistical issues, which conspire to diminish the state of educational affairs in the Ta'ang region. First, students often cannot afford the expenses associated with attending school due to the lack of governmental support for school fees and school supplies. Additionally, teacher salaries are wholly inadequate, leading many teachers to sacrifice the quality of their lessons and own training in order to seek out supplementary income. Most classes are taught by rote memorization and students often pass from grade to grade without sufficient knowledge of required materials, resulting in numerous students who are unable to read and write adequately upon completion of high school.

Furthermore, there are vast discrepancies between the quantity and quality of educational institutions in rural and urban areas. Wealthy urban youth and private boarding schools associated with the military receive privileges and support,

while in rural Ta'ang areas there is only one school for every three or four villages². This discrepancy prompted many villages to create community-run schools, but they are struggling to survive without support from NGOs or government institutions. Additionally, many parents particularly in rural Ta'ang region work day-to-day on a subsistence basis, and children are expected to contribute to the family's meager income. As such, the additional time and transit costs associated with attending a school in another village lead to significant dropout rates. It is not uncommon for students to leave school to help support their families. Due to the economic crisis, many end up working at poppy farms or developing addictions to drugs, with a reported 85% addiction rate for men over 15 in one village in Man Tong Township².

Studies conducted in the Ta'ang region between 2000 and 2009 showed one school in which a class of 172 children dwindled to only three students by tenth grade as a result of various external pressures and inadequate internal support from the school staff and SPDC.

The regime maintains many policies to exert systemic control over the educational system. Many state policies such as articles of the 2008 Constitution ensure that ethnic people will have no local influence over education by giving exclusive legislative and governing power to SPDC officials in the national Parliament and the commander in chief. Other systemic issues include overtly political school curricula, which is strictly enforced by the military regime. Similarly, schools for military personnel receive a higher standard of financial and material support, including incentives for teachers willing to work in these institutions and assurance of government jobs for students upon graduation. The regime also imposes arbitrary fees ranging from basic attendance and supply fees to requiring students to purchase school uniforms to greet top SPDC officials, making the high costs of education nearly impossible for a majority of youth.

The failings of the regime in other sectors such as gender equity, health care, and regard for human rights also degrade the quality of education. Girls have limited opportunities to attend school, especially in times of economic crisis. Students and school staff are frequently absent from classes due to the prevalence of infectious diseases and lack of medical aid in ethnic areas. The heavily militarized presence in the ethnic areas lends itself to human rights abuses where students are routinely recruited for forced labor to repair roads or military camps and to join USDA forces. It also permits culturally repressive policies whereby Ta'ang students are not permitted to study their native language in school and cultural celebrations in the school are banned by the regime.

Burma's Ta'ang people are in the midst of an educational crisis, which can only be rectified by significant educational and political reforms on the part of the SPDC.

Methodology

TSYO started this project to research education in Ta'ang areas, in the northern part of Shan State, Burma. Data collection for this project occurred August 2006 and January 2007, and commenced again from February 2009 until March 2009.

Researchers of education from TSYO joined together with other members of the organization to discuss interview questions and the project's objectives. Prior to this, we researched the state of education during meetings held approximately every two weeks. Information was collected in several townships in Ta'ang area. Researchers conducted workshops and organized focus groups, to get a better understanding of education in the mentioned area.

Firstly, our researchers interviewed TSYO and PWO members who had been living in Thailand regarding the education they obtained in Burma. Secondly, researchers went into northern Shan state of Burma to find their sample population. Data on the education of people in Ta'ang area was collected, both inside and outside of Burma. Lastly, we translated all the information we obtained into English for publishing our research project. The final sample population was 175 people.

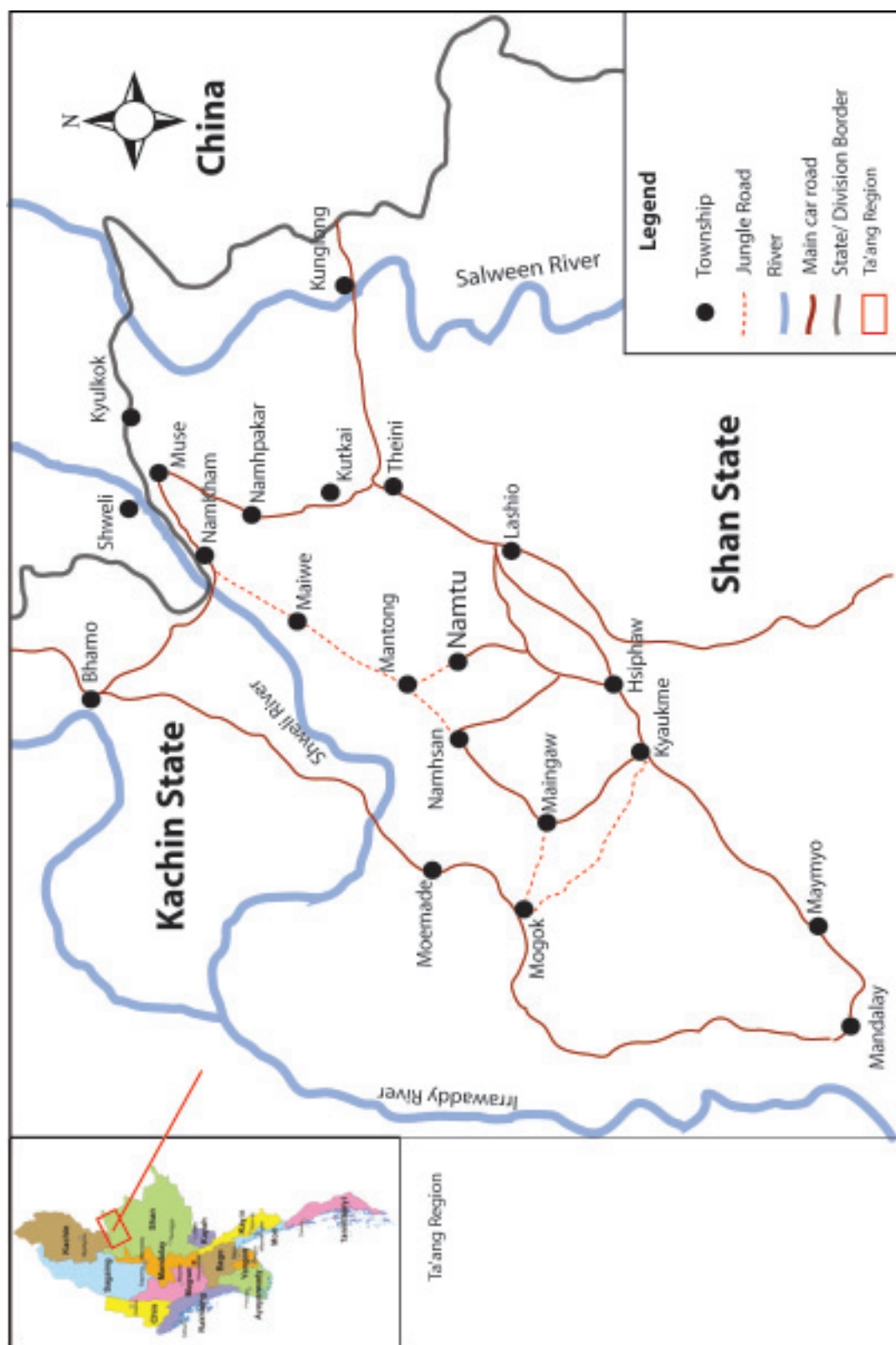
The researchers tried to acquire genuine information from the Ta'ang people concerning their suffering and the insufficient education system in their community. Researchers interviewed their subject using semi-structured interviews, and collected a wide variety of information from the local community. The interview population included government teachers, committee teachers, orphans, headmasters, parents, students and boarding school staff.

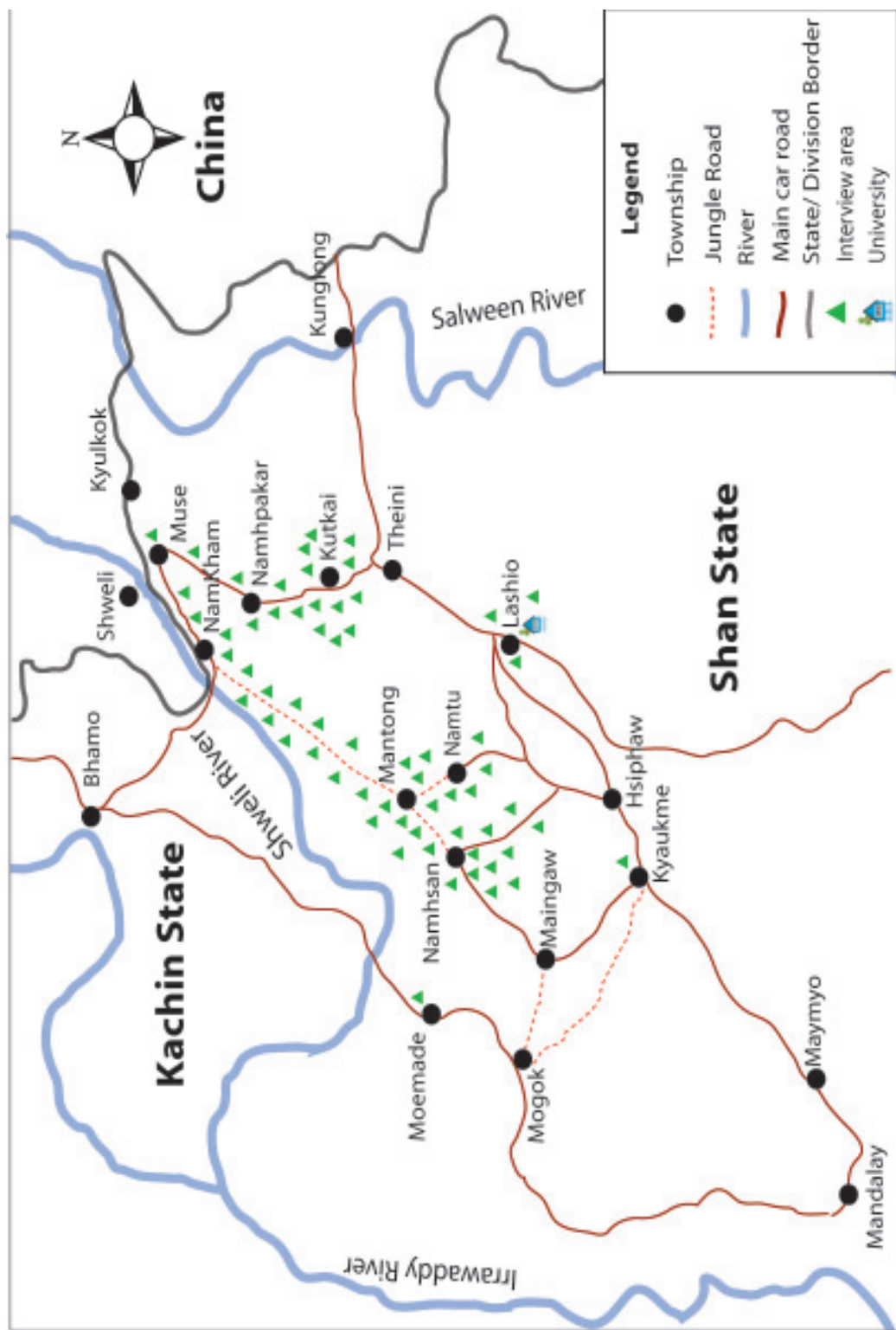
We collected information from the following townships Namkham, Man Tong and Namhsan in Ta'ang area. Most interviews were conducted in remote rural communities. Very few people were interviewed from urban communities, since people from rural areas are most affected by the poor quality of education. Prior to conducting interviews, we collaborated and conducted focus groups with a variety of community people including heads of villages, teachers, headmasters, boarding school staff, villagers and students in order to give ourselves a more wide-ranging and extensive pool of information in relation to education. We also collaborated with former PSLO leaders and TLCC.

Researchers frequently faced security and safety issues while the interviews were being carried out. This was due to the presence of large numbers of government militia and staff present. Notwithstanding, researchers had to

cooperate and pay money to them, ensuring their safety while collecting information. Heads of villages also received money in the process of collecting, for our safety, since they are affiliated with the SPDC. In order to show gratitude and in accordance with Ta'ang custom, interviewers would give presents to interviewees after receiving information.

"I often faced problems when I interviewed local people, because most people did not believe me and always questioned me about what I did it. I could not bring my collected information during the day, which is why I only traveled around midnight to pass checkpoints. Even then, it was very difficult for me to pass army gates, or go to other villages. When I would pass the gates, multiple soldiers would interrogate me, and asked me for my reason being where I would be"(A field work researcher, 2009)





History of Ta'ang people

Ta'ang people are one of the nationalities within the multi-national Union of Burma, they are descendants from Mon-Khmer, and have a long history and a strong sense of their unique identity. They have their own language and literature, distinctive traditional culture, their own territory and a self-sufficient economy. Ta'ang are predominantly Buddhist with less than ten percent identifying as Animist and Christian. The Ta'ang population is over one million, and the people mainly live in the mountains of Ta'ang land in northern Shan state. People live in towns throughout southern and eastern Shan State. A large number of displaced Ta'ang people also live in Thailand and China.

Ta'ang people have many ruby and sapphire mines, and mines for recovering different kinds of metals such as silver, zinc, gold and aluminum in their land. Ta'ang tea is famous in Burma for its high quality and is grown in farms located in mountainous areas. They also grow a variety of temperate climate fruit crops such as apples, plums, avocados and pears, which are highly valued in lowland areas.

For centuries, Ta'ang people have suffered loss of their territories to the Burmese army, among other armies. The Burmese kings tried to expand their imperial reach into Ta'ang lands and then British colonialists tried to take over their land. The Japanese imperialists followed them, and shortly after World War II. Chinese nationalists from the Kuomintang moved into the lands of the Ta'ang where the Burmese army fought them.

The Burmese army declared a coup d'état and established the BSPP in 1962. After that, the Burmese army committed many injustices against its people, the Ta'ang people, and many other ethnicities. The Ta'ang took up arms against them by forming the PSLA on January 12, 1963. In 1988 the Burmese government was reorganized under a new dictatorship called the SLORC. SLORC put pressure on the Ta'ang people to force the PSLA to negotiate in order to create a more peaceful environment. First, they cut off communications between the PSLA and the Ta'ang villagers. They forcibly relocated villagers to sites near towns during the tea-harvesting season. As a result, the villagers could not harvest their tea, and suffered great difficulties from the loss of income. As PSLA feared the situation might worsen, they were forced to negotiate with SLORC to provide relief to the Ta'ang people.

They reached a cease-fire agreement in 1991. Even with the ceasefire agreement, the SPDC continued to commit human right abuses in Ta'ang land. There has been inadequate education and health care in Ta'ang area as well as a high ratio

of unemployment, leading to insufficient nutrition. Many Ta'ang have become internal refugees trying to survive in remote areas in the hills. Some fled to seek refuge at the China border and in the northern border areas of Thailand.

Unfortunately, on April 29, 2005, SPDC forced the PSLA to disarm and abolished the PSLP, the political wing of Ta'ang people. Today, there is no group of people to lead the Ta'ang people in building a federal democratic country or cooperating with other ethnic groups, nor are there pro-democracy groups in our Ta'ang area. When SPDC convinced the National Convention in December 2005, they only allowed PSLA to attend as Ta'ang representatives; however they could not show political interest.

After SPDC abolished and disarmed the Ta'ang people's political party and armed group, the military regime led ex-PSLA leaders to form TDCAC. However, all their power and influence had been taken away from them and they could not implement development projects in Ta'ang area like they had the past.

The situation of health, education, warfare, and drug problems have gradually become worse. The SPDC military armed groups, pro-Junta's militias, USDA, businessmen and drug traders are manipulating Ta'ang people. They have been using forced labor to build their new military camps and cultivate their farms in Ta'ang area. They force young Ta'ang people to join the army and to attend military trainings.

Regional Education Background



Regional Education background

a. Inadequate Education conditions in Ta'ang region

Presently, most Ta'ang people understand that a higher education standard is a crucial step to develop their occupational sector and improving the Ta'ang political climate. Due to the SPDC's economic mismanagement, many Ta'ang communities remain extremely impoverished and parents struggle to ensure that their children have an education and a future.

The educational system began to deteriorate after the Ta'ang armed resistance groups signed a ceasefire with the SPDC in 1991. The resistance forces promoted the formation of community-led departments on education, health, and other social programs. Students were free to learn in their local languages and to study a more systematic and open curriculum. Under SPDC control, the quantity of schools is slowly increasing to comply with international pressure, but the quality of education remains woefully inadequate.



Primary school (1-6 grades) were built by local Authority and villagers



High School in Ta'ang area

The SPDC has neglected educational development of Ta'ang and the citizens of Burma. Little more than 50% will complete their primary education. The regime's material and financial mismanagement lead to frequent school closures, extortion of fees from students and parents, lack of education materials, and inadequately trained teachers and curriculum. These sub par standards have led students, teachers, and communities to become increasingly disillusioned and apathetic about investing in their education.

b. International, Regional, and State Policies on Education

International Policies

Many international and regional policies address the gross mismanagement of Burma's educational sectors. Globally, the Education For All (EFA) project as envisioned by UNICEF and the UN Millennium Development Goals require states to comply with international standards of education. In addition, the educational stipulations outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child were ratified by the SPDC in 1991. These stipulations include the availability of free primary education for all, higher education accessibility on the basis of capacity, encouragement of regular school attendance and reduction of drop-out rates, and the development of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, cultural identity, and language through the education system. Finally, international norms dictate that women have access to the same educational opportunities as men, as provided for in article 10 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which was ratified by the SPDC in 1997. According to this convention, women should have equal access to career and vocational guidance, curricula, scholarships and grants, and continuing education programs. CEDAW also provides for the elimination of stereotyped gender roles in all forms of education, and the reduction of female student drop-out rates.

State Policies

National Education Council

After 22 years of military rule, the SPDC continues to intentionally prioritize its military over the welfare of Burma's ordinary citizens, especially in the realm of education. After the 1988 uprising, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) founded the National Education Committee (NEC) which was led by top military officials who proceeded to use the educational system to promote the regime's agenda.

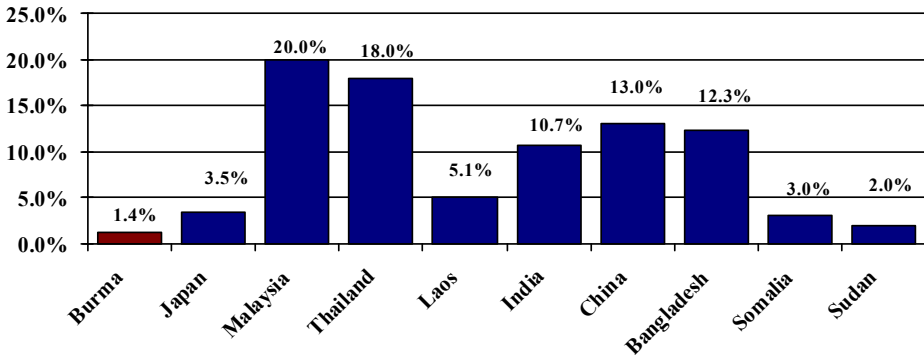
Principally, the NEC consistently promotes a militarized education system through highly politicized slogans and principles of cronyism in allocation of funds and resources. Practically, they focus on establishing higher quantities of schools to align with international standards, rather than improving the quality and dispersion of these schools into the areas with the greatest need.

The NEC provides sufficient materials and staff to SPDC-supported education institutions such as the Defense Academy, the Military Medical University, and nursing, IT, and administration departments in military universities. The relatives and relations of military employees' can study at these institutions on the grounds that they will work for the regime post-graduation and maintain political allegiance.

2008 Constitution

The 2008 Constitution has an inherently flawed structure which further entrenches military control within education and other key sectors. Article 232 ensures that the army commander-in-chief decides who will be eligible to be Minister for Border Affairs. This policy centralizes control, thereby limiting the influence of ethnic communities in their own decision making. Articles 96, 188, 196, 216, 249 grant the national Parliament and the executive branch exclusive power to legislate and govern on critical issues such as land administration; use of natural resources; health, education, and justice. The general budgeting priorities will not likely be changed as the military will still have a key role in government. The general environment of economic mismanagement and corruption that prevents young people from accessing education will most likely continue.

Percent national GDP Allocated to Education



The Burmese junta spends nearly 45% of its GDP on the military, in contrast, the SPDC spends on 1.4% of the country's GDP on health and education combined, making it only country in the region whose military budget is greater than that of health and education combined.¹ Other countries in various regions and levels of development spend significantly more on education than the SPDC. Japan spends 3.5 %, Malaysia 20 %, Thailand 18 %, Laos 5.1%, India 10.7 %, China 13 %, Bangladesh 12.3 %, Somalia 3%, and Sudan 2% of their GDP on education. This demonstrates that Burma remains drastically below international standards and the 6% minimum regional standard.

NGO Support

Due to the regime's mismanagement, many INGOS began withdrawing their support from Burma. With the 2008 tea crisis, the need for community-supported education initiatives in Ta'ang area is even more dire, with nearly 65% of school-aged children unable to attend school. Save the Children UK, WFP, the Japanese Social Relief Organization and other INGOs previously working in Ta'ang's areas could support these community based institutions directly.

c. Curriculum

School curricula enforced by the military regime is rooted in discrimination and exclusion inherent in the SPDC's laws and policies. The curriculum prevents students in ethnic minority areas from studying in their own language, placing Ta'ang and other minority children at a distinct disadvantage.

The SPDC and NEC curriculum is one leading component of the substandard quality of education throughout Burma. It lacks an overall systematic structure, excludes historical or social components that advance critical thinking, and promotes learning by rote. Consequently, students pass effectively through grades but lack the critical logical skills and frameworks needed to advance their education and their future. This issue is most apparent when students must repeat 10th grade for several years in a row, because they cannot pass the standard graduation exams. Further entrenches military frameworks.



Text-Book

d. Two varieties of schools

In Ta'ang region, there are two varieties of educational institutions, government run schools and community run schools. There are few middles and highs schools built in rural villages. There are only three or four villages with a primary school, and however villagers have not yet managed to build middle and high schools.

There are few schools in rural Ta'ang areas. Only one in every three or four villages has a primary school. If the students want to continue their education after completing primary they have to go to another village or town, many students do not even complete primary school because their parents are poor and cannot support their children while they attend school. Another reason is the distance of the school from their homes and the lack of transport. The schools are also very small and can not accept all the children. (PWO Poisoned Flower report, 2006- pg-19)



Primary school with 27 students and 3 teachers

i. Government run schools

The government has been building a limited amount of schools. These middle and high schools are predominantly built in urban or semi-urban areas. Government teachers earn approximately 45,000 Kyat per month and many teachers struggle financially on a daily basis, as their income does not cover life's basic expenses. To contribute to the well-being of government teachers, villagers often collect money to donate to teachers. In more rural areas, many government schools are old, small and in need of repair, including those in Ta'ang area. In relatively urbanized areas, schools have more materials and teachers are more qualified, yet the quality of education is still poor.

"I think we have a lack of teachers, and the teachers we do have are not very good. Our teachers favor military officers' children, and children of rich people, since being nice to them can help them out in life. They know that by helping these students they will receive benefits, but poor students and their parents have nothing to offer them."(Interview HI# 004).

ii. Community run schools

Villagers in many cases establish primary schools themselves, in towns where there are no schools yet. In such scenarios, villagers have to provide materials and teachers themselves, a process that the government does not assist. To provide incomes for teachers, villagers collect money, food, firewood and basic goods for them, coming up to about 45,000 Kyat and 10 pyi (about 25 kilograms) of rice per month. Community run schools often lack materials and qualified teachers.

The deficient numbers of middle and high schools in rural communities results in students facing difficulties in accessing education after completing community-run primary schools. Traveling great distances to go to high schools or government run high schools are another problem.



“We did not have a middle school when I moved to attend fifth standard. We changed the

primary school into a middle school. After this, primary school students had to attend private, or monastery schools. Monks were our teachers, but they would only be available for a few hours a day. In order for us to still learn something and pass our evaluation test, we had to work very hard on our own. After two years of studying we had to go to another village, K Khin, to take the exam.” (Interview MID# 052).

Basic primary school was funded by villagers, with 43 students

e. Teacher Situation

In Ta'ang region, there are two different kinds of teachers, government employees and community employees. Rural communities recruit people to become teachers when the government fails to meet the quantities of teachers demanded in these areas. Community run schools do not get support from the government. Finding materials, recruiting local community teachers and providing their salaries are responsibilities of communities founding schools. However, when schools are state-run, the government still does not always provides enough teachers either. In such institutions, communities also have to contribute to finding teachers and resources. A lack of teachers forces communities to recruit people to become teachers, even if they are not qualified to do this profession. This can be difficult for these teachers, as they have never been given the proper training to teach effectively.

i. Teaching skills and methods

As there are government employed teachers and community-employed teachers, their skills and qualifications vastly differ. Government employees have had the opportunity to get degrees and follow courses to become teachers. After this, teachers often follow three to five month capacity trainings. All government teachers have obtained at least bachelor degrees those diploma's being a significant contribution to their skills.



“Different from government-employed teachers, most community-employed teachers have not finished high school, nor are special classes and trainings an option for them. Communities cannot give educational opportunities as these, as they are very expensive. Therefore, other than by gaining knowledge through experience, little improvement in one’s teaching methods is possible.” (Interview TH#007)

Among government-employed teachers, corruption is also prevalent. Although educators working for the Union may have more chances to improve their skills and gain knowledge, compensation frequently has to be paid for this.

There are some similarities between both kinds of teachers. Both use the same “teacher-centered learning method”. Teachers do little more than lecture students. Knowledge is tested using memory rather than interactive teaching or enabling students to think critically. This system has been used in schools throughout the country for decades now. As a result, students for all their knowledge rely on their teacher, and lack the ability to develop critical analysis or to think creatively.

ii. Salary and other forms of compensation

Inadequate salaries for both types of teachers have affected students as well as teachers. People will work as teachers during school hours, and after schools hours, or during the weekend they will work elsewhere to earn enough to sustain themselves. This sometimes compromises the amount of time people can spend teaching.

“Our school is a community-run school and because our government doesn’t support our school, we have faced many problems. Specifically in 2008, the economic crisis led to lower prices of tea and high prices of goods. Student’s parents couldn’t donate enough money to support the school’s operating costs and teachers’ salaries, so our school was closed. Therefore, some students had to move to other villages to continue going to school while other dropped out of school. It was a terrible situation for us”.
(Interview HI# 051)

Government Teacher and Community Teacher salaries
in generally

Government			Community		
	Salaries support per month	Others support per month		Salaries support per month	Others support per month
High School master	80,000 Kyat (80 USD)		Community Teacher	45,000 Kyat (45 USD)	
High grade teacher	50,000 Kyat (50 USD)				Rice (10 Pyi
Middle grade teacher	45,000 Kyat (45 USD)				oil, bean, vegetable
Primary grade teacher	30,000 Kyat (30 USD)				

c. Difficulties

In comparison with current market prices, teacher’s salaries are considerably lower. Students lack school stationary, among many other problems. In extreme cases, closing schools may be the only solution to deal with the lack of teachers and supplies. Moreover, lack of school buildings is considerable, as classes are usually very overcrowded with students. Lastly, the lack of skills and qualifications of professionally trained teachers, as well as their absence is a major problem. When they are working other jobs outside of their teaching duties, they do not have time to focus on the students and or they do not improve their own teaching skills either.

Attending community schools is easier for students, as tuition fees are lower. Children therefore do not have to contribute to generating as much of an income to pay for their education as they would when they would go to government schools.

f. Students situation

In Ta'ang region, acquiring an education has little effect on a student's future opportunity. Curricula have not improved over the last two decades. This leaves students without the opportunity to expand the skills and knowledge they can contribute to society. In addition to this, most students do not have enough supplies, as the government does not provide these even in government-sponsored education. Due to few materials being provided, and the bad quality of materials that are available, students face many problems while studying.

Another problem is that students oftentimes cannot pursue their won educational interests, as the educational authority, the Ministry of Education, and teachers provide classes according to their won interest or popularized military.

There is a vast difference in education between urban and rural areas. Methods of learning vary; in city areas, teachers have more skills, more time for students, and there is more of a dialogue between students and teachers in class. In rural areas, in-class teachings are limited to lectures. Teachers also have more power, leaving them with the ability to temporarily shut down schools. Urban students tend to be from higher socioeconomic classes, allowing them to receive tutoring and engage in useful extra curricular activities. Bribing for higher test scores more often occurs in urban areas as well. Rural student can often not pay for tutoring sessions, as these are expensive. Only students living within close proximity to schools can afford these sessions, since traveling to lessons is easier, making the cost relatively inexpensive. This leads to a disparity between the skills and abilities of students from urban areas compared to rural areas. People living in more densely populated areas are better prepared to get jobs.





Children carrying their daily water to the village



Students helping his father after school

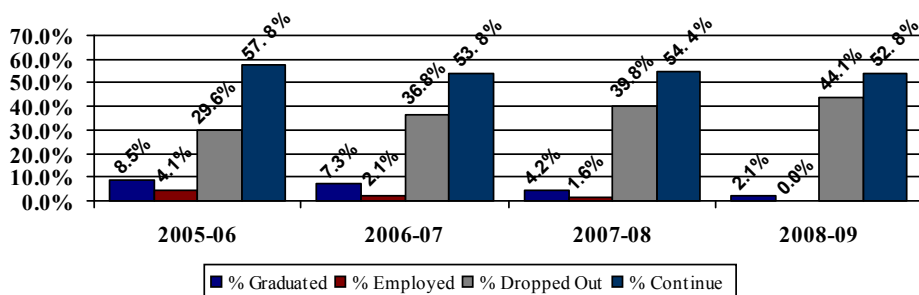
Students from rural areas have to be content with education of lower quality than their urban counterparts. Even when obtaining secondary education in more urbanized areas is financially possible, rural students oftentimes have learned little, and the transition of going from a rural school to an urban one is too difficult.

Though students may not have passed classes, they still receive grades indicating they did. At early ages this does not impact children much. As they get older, however, it makes it much more difficult since pupils may not have sufficient knowledge to go to the next standard, or level of education. Burma's schooling system does not assist students in gaining knowledge, nor does it prepare young people to join the work force. As in other areas and institutions of the country, freedom of speech and critical thinking are not promoted, and indeed are not allowed. Obtaining unbiased information about international relations and history is also impossible.

Numerous students whom completed school are jobless. Rural students have less chance than urban students to get high positions in the government sector. Urban students have an increased opportunity to get high positions, as their educational background has been better.

g.Education Index

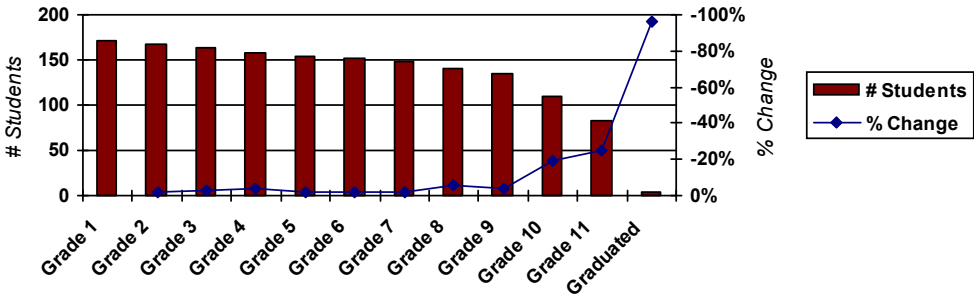
Graduation, Post Graduation Employment, and Dropout rates for students enrolled at a Typical School in Ta'ang region



Students drop-out and graduation	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Students	127	122	104	102
Graduate	8	7	4	2
Employment	4	2	1	0
Drop-out	29	36	39	44
Continue	57	53	54	53

In villages of Ta'ang region, more than 65% of school-aged children cannot go to school. Instead they are asked to work and assist on their parents' farms, working on tea plantations, slash-and-burn farms, paddy fields and poppy growing fields (Global Peace Index Rankings, 2008). Although some parents send their sons and daughters to schools, they found that their children could not get employed even after they finished high school, or finishing their bachelor degrees. This made many parents lose the incentive to invest in their children's education and send them to school. Many families are struggling to make ends meet and they cannot afford to send their children to school.

Annual drop out rates for the class of 2007 (observed 1999-2007 at a Typical School in Ta'ang region)



Evaluating	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	
Kindergarten	172											
<i>Primary</i> , Grade 1		168										
Grade 2			163									
Grade 3				157								
Grade 4					154							
<i>Middle</i> , Grade 5						151						
Grade 6							148					
Grade 7								140				
Grade 8									135			
<i>High</i> , Grade 9										109		
Grade 10											82	
Students graduated												3

Note; 172 students started to Kindergarten school in 1999. By 8th grade in 2007, 135 students continued to attend and 42 students had already dropped-out from their studies. Additionally, 109 attended the 9th grade and only 82 could attend 10th grade, 53 dropped-out of school during 9th and 10th grade. This meant that shockingly, only three students graduated out of a possible 172.

IMPACT Of EDUCATION



Impact of Education

A. Government policies on education

The SPDC has attempted to control the minds of the Burmese population through its education system in two ways. The first of these has been by keeping that sector of the country underdeveloped, so that teachers cannot afford to teach and that students cannot afford to learn. Secondly, the junta monitors all school activities closely, keeping the quality of education so low that those who do make it to secondary and tertiary education cannot learn anything the junta does not allow them to. (Burma Human Rights Yearbook, 2007).

“I went to university education is to get a good government job position. I didn’t understand anything what they taught me.” (Interview UNI# 005)



There was no school for children in this village so the head of village collected money (2500 Kyat) from each family to build primary. The school built in 2004. Currently, there are 52 students attend the school with 4 community teacher.

The regime’s education system is insufficient, using schools to promote propaganda and to enable the SPDC to strengthen and maintain their power. Because of the low quality of education, it is very difficult to get jobs outside of the government sector, and the salaries for those jobs are very low. To get the best government position and receive a good income, people need to have money or a good relationship with military employees. If not, they have no opportunity to obtain a desirable placement, and promotions hardly ever occurs. For Ta’ang youth who finish university or similar institution, getting good job positions is

highly unlikely. Students' parents do not want their children to lose their time on going to university and are confused as to whether they should spend money on their sons and daughters' schooling.

The Regime Boarding Ethnic Development School (Na Ta La) is the SPDC's propaganda training place for ethnic youth. Realistically the regime does little to promote ethnic awareness. Actions of the Council lead students to believe that they want nationalities to comply with what they have to say.

A Ta'ang youth with a school diploma said: *“As soon as I finished my school I had to work having an important position in my office, as I have no experience related to my job. I have a lot of problems in the office and with our community because my lack of experience”*.

A significant impact on the lives of both teachers and education administrators is that the official salary is not enough to live with, even with limited government assistance (*ABFSU issue, 2005*).

[illegible]

Na Ta La (RBEDS) documentation form

B. High percentages of school dropout

A high percentage of students in rural communities between ages 13 and 15 drop out due to high school fees, high costs of equipment, materials and transportation. For students who live far away from their schools, the high cost of transportation or the necessity of moving to another town are also factors that deter students from continuing their studies.

"I have three children attending school, so I often have problems during the time they are in school; I am from an impoverished family, and we struggle a lot for our livelihood. We don't have investments in land, like many other people. Currently most parents order their children to leave school and work, so the family earns some extra money.

As for me, I don't know if I should force my children to leave school. I don't want to see them become bad people and struggle in their future, like other people in the area. As my husband does not work, I have to work very hard to keep my children in school and pay their school fees"(Interview PAR# 009)



Children forced to drop out and work

The student's parents have to pay 9000 kyat for school fees when students start attending school. The 9000 kyat does not cover all costs of the year; students often have to pay other fees for material and equipment while they study. Subsequently parents cannot afford to pay school fees and force their children to leave school in order to work with them in the farming industry to earn money. Low incomes of parents are the main reason why children drop out of school.

"It was due to financial problems of our family. We could not support our children's school fees, and no one could help us work on the farm to earn more money. So we decided to stop sending them to school. Our daughter was getting older; she needed to help at home, and also needed to help her younger sisters and brothers. We lost over 100,000 Kyat in one year because of school fees" (Interview PAR# 060)

Students schooling costs per year at the government school

	Primary school	Middle school	High school
Schooling form fee	4,200 K	6,500 K	11,000 Kyat
Text-book fee	3,500 K	5,500 K	8,500 Kyat
Stationery fee	8,000 K	15,000 K	17,500 Kyat
Monthly school fee	10,000 K	15,000 K	17,000 Kyat
School furniture fee	4,500 K	6,000 K	10,000 Kyat
Another fee	2,000 K	2,500 K	3,000 Kyat
Examination from fee	1,000 K	2,500 K	4,500 Kyat

Students schooling costs per year at the community school

	Primary school costs
Schooling form fees	2,000 Kyat
Text-book fees	3,500 Kyat
Stationery fees	5500 Kyat
Monthly school fees	3,500 Kyat
School furniture fees	4,000 Kyat
Another fees	1,500 Kyat
Examination from fees	500 Kyat

C. Futureless life after graduation and dropout school

There is a widespread opinion in the Ta'ang community that the education system does not increase opportunities in students' lives. Students say that they have many reasons for feelings of hopelessness about the future. Though only a small percentage of Ta'ang students can afford to complete school, even those who do are unlikely to find well-paying employment.

Many students are forced to leave school to work to support their families. For many families, education is a luxury that comes after obtaining enough money to survive. Many students cannot even afford the high costs of primary education. According to statistics released by UNICEF approximately 50 percent of children in Burma drop out of school before the end completion of fourth standard (around the age of 12). The main reason given for dropping out is financial hardship (www.unicef.org)



Children forced to work at the charcoal farm

“My education does not relate to my profession. I studied law at university but I sell tea. Education is no guarantee for our future. I did not want to waste my time on a useless certificate, so I left University. The education system only teaches us to be afraid and obey, I find it very corrupt.” (Interview UNI# 073)

There is no equality in the education system, as students must pay for recommendations to find jobs. Some students are assigned to subjects they do not want, and feel discouraged about their future job prospects. Some students report that teachers are not well trained, and that they are not learning. There is also discrimination against poor children, and children whose parents are not in the government.

“I remember the lectures of my parents, ‘because we are not educated we have a hard life, so study hard to have a better future.’ But do the educated people really have a brighter future, or good jobs?” (Interview UNI# 071)

It is not only the undeveloped hillside areas where people lack job opportunities, but also in developed cities.

“I worked in a government factory during and after my classes, while going to university to be able to afford education. At that job I never had a guarantee for my future or for a normal life without corruption. I felt sad because of discrimination, unfair salary and debt. When I would travel back to my home each year I would have to borrow 50,000–100,000 Kyat from my parents to cover my expenses.” (Interview UNI# 071)



The education system in Burma does not prepare its citizens academically. Many students report that critical thinking is discouraged in schools. There are no jobs available to those who cannot pay bribery fees. Many students feel that the subjects they study are arbitrary, and will not be related to desired jobs later in life. Many students have lost hope in the system as they have witnessed lawyers and engineers working as farmers.

The youth are the future of Burma. Our country urgently needs to increase their educated population, and to utilize the knowledge of those with education to contribute to creating a democratic society- a society where people can provide at least the primary needs in life for their families.



PHOTO: TSYO



PHOTO: TSYO

Children affected by health problem, who can not receive health care, this affects their ability to obtain an education

D. How inadequate health assistants affect students studying

Inadequate health care harms students and forces some to leave school. Illness affects many students in the Ta'ang region. Medical costs are very high, and often families must sacrifice education fees to pay medical fees. Health care and medicine are not available in schools. In many villages, medical care is not available. If illness prevents students from working to earn their school fees, they are unable to attend school.

"I was often sick while attending school. I didn't have medicine and they [teachers] didn't give medicine to poor children. They gave medicine to rich students and sent them to the clinic. The teachers would discriminate between rich and poor students." (Interview UNI# 066)

Malaria is the leading cause of mortality in Burma, and is very prevalent among children (<http://www.who.int>). Students reported that although occasionally medicine was donated to schools by NGOs, teachers would sell the medicine for profit.

Many Ta'ang people have poor access to health care, especially those living in remote hill areas. Only about one in every ten villages has a clinic. Patients have to pay for all medicines, which are sold at a higher price than in the towns. As a result, villagers mostly rely on traditional healers who have no formal medical training. (PWO Poisoned Flower report, 2006- p/18)

“Because of my bad health while I attended school I would come late which resulted in me being punished. Sometimes teachers beat me in front of the flag (in front of the assembly hall) and sometime I would have to clean toilets. There was not a sufficient amount of medicine for all the students in my school; our teachers would favor certain students. Teachers discriminated in favor of government employees’ children. If they would fall ill, medicine was given to them, but us, poor students that would feel ill, were told to go to get medicine ourselves elsewhere. Even when the Red Cross came to vaccinate us, we sometimes had to pay money to our teachers” (Interview HI# 010)

E. Drugs addiction and education

After Afghanistan, Burma is the world’s largest producer of opium, accounting for 8% of the world’s production (UN, Office on Drugs and Crime, December,2005 Pg 5-6) Much of the opium produced in Burma is produced in Shan State, where the majority of the Ta'ang people reside. Drug abuse affects many students in the Ta'ang area. Many local Ta'ang villagers have replaced growing tea with growing opium to make a profit, as opium fields are more profitable than tea farms. Often, wages are paid in opium. Increased opium production has led to higher addiction rates. Amplified military control over the Ta'ang area has hurt the tea industry, as farmers must pay taxes on their lands. Widespread opium farms have increased drug availability to youth. There is widespread poverty among students, which also contributes to drug abuse. Schools employees and teachers do not always interfere when they notice drug abuse.

“When I wanted to learn a subject in fifth or sixth standard, I smoked cigarettes a little bit to stay awake. In the eighth and ninth standard I used a bamboo pipe to smoke cigarettes. My friend used drugs, and when our teacher saw him she called the police to have him get arrested. There is a lot of depression and pressure, and we had no money to attend school. Some students didn’t want to attend school and were interested in drugs. At that time it cost 1500 Kyat for one WY tablet (a local variation of methamphetamine), 3500 Kyat for one packet of raw opium mixed with banana leaves, and 500 Kyat for one penicillin medicine bottle cap of heroin. Twice I tried to smoke raw opium mixed with banana leaves”.(Interview UNI# 074)



Pure Opium mixed with banana leaves (Kar Ku)



Students drop-out school and use drug

Many people face problems with addiction in their families. In some cases, children may be taken out of school to earn a living to support their parents' drug habit. For wives with addicted husbands, issues include a loss of family income, abuse, shame, and fear (PWO, Poisoned Flowers report, 2006).

"I have never used them, but some of my friends used drugs and cigarettes. After they started using them they didn't want to go to school anymore and became lazy. Teachers didn't seem to care about this and would not care about their students' well-being." (Interview HI# 006)

Young men work on opium plantations trying to obtain wealth. The significantly higher income related to this industry initially benefits them. The use of drugs is heavily promoted, and they are provided for free to workers by their plantation owners. Use of drugs increases the output of workers, since as a stimulant, people work longer hours and work harder when under the influence of stimulants. However, after circa half a year of being addicted to drugs, people as well as their capacity as worker's bodies start to deteriorate, and are sent back to their home towns, with little left besides an addiction.

F. Socioeconomic backgrounds and gaps between urban and rural education

The Ta'ang people mainly rely on one source of income tea farming. Many have increasing difficulties supporting their children to complete school, since incomes generated by farming have significantly decreased. To help sustain their families, children discontinue their education to work with their parents on farms. Students have a dream of getting good degrees and contributing to society, yet these dreams are seldom realized as education is expensive, and its quality is poor.



“My parents were facing many problems and our financial situation is very bad. They could not support me to continue my study so I had to stop going to school. In our village jobs are scarce, other than working on a tea farm, there is little to do. Sometime we needed to move to other towns to get an income. Even though we are working hard, we get very little money. Many of the jobs we get are temporary. Our insecurities about not having a job are postponed, however they do remain”. (Interview HI# 013)

Many students from rural communities, even if they have completed high school, still will not attend tertiary education. With farming being the main source of income, not enough money is generated to cover costs of people's educational careers. Rising costs of transportation and materials make education less feasible. Working in the tea industry no longer generates enough money to last the year; it now is barely enough to last six months. Living standards are low; however other sources of income are scarce, which results into incapability earning an income sufficient to pay for life's necessities and education.

“As for me, I have a dream of being well-educated, but the situation is very different from what I would have dreamed to happen in my life. However I will never give up, and I will do all I can to improve my chances to succeed. When I attended school, I faced many problems to continue my study at school, to pay transportation costs and tuition fees. During this time, I had to stay very far away from my parents and I could not get enough supplies to do well in school, which my parents could not help me with. When I attended school, they could not provide all that I needed as they also needed to support my brother and sister. My family’s financial situation wasn’t good at the time”. (Interview # 067)

Burma generates a significant amount of foreign investment from neighboring countries China, Thailand and India, as well as from selling oil, etc. to countries outside of the region, yet uses financial gains from this to strengthen the government. Little of this money is used to contribute building infrastructure of the Union, and the educational system does not profit from it.

“I left school because I don’t have money to continue my education and we have problems in our family. One of them is being too poor to pay for basic needs in our lives. I didn’t pass the tenth standard at school because I faced so many difficulties during that year. The biggest problem was lack of money; we simply do not have enough of it to attend school. I must work for my family during my school time and weekends. Then I spent much of the salary I earn on studying. I struggled with many problems, so I did not have time to read and do homework.” (Interview HI# 033)



Children eating rice with dry-celery



Child carrying rice a heavy sack of rice back from the shop



School in urgent need to repair



A high school in town

“When I look back at my education, I am very disappointed because I just attended school for 10 days that year, after which I stopped, because I learnt nothing from it. I do not believe in the education system of Burma; I know even though I passed my exam, I will not be a good lawyer. Although people told me about the Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) degree, to support the PSDC, I do not want it. For these reasons, I eventually decided to leave school, since I did not believe it would get me further in life”. (Interview UNI# 011)

“Commuting is very difficult for us because we have to walk for two days to go to Mandalay. Even by bus it is very difficult to travel roads are so bad, that it would still take a whole day. My friends and I wanted to take action against the SPDC, and teach people how the junta has been negatively affecting our country’s education, but we are very scared. We learned that in comparison to education in other countries, education in our country is very bad, that is why I left school.” (Interview UNI# 068)

As stated earlier, quality of education is poorer in rural, than in urban areas. The Ministry of Education is responsible for which teachers teach, in what areas. This institution, together with local authorities decides where teachers will be stationed. Community leaders have some say in this, depending on financial resources they can spend. These leaders can apply for experienced teachers to come out to their villages, however this is very costly. Generally teachers with little experience, or lack of abilities get sent to rural areas. This is a vicious cycle; the military regime believes that providing education in rural areas does not benefit teachers, therefore the worst teachers



Community school, grade one

get sent there, and schooling of villagers does not improve. Well-educated, experienced teachers stay in urban areas, where education is significantly better, though still worse than in many other countries. The government enforces this system.

"The village schools and town schools are very different. In town they have normal opening hours and weekends as free time. But in the villages, they don't have weekends free, as children need to help their parents on rice farms, tea gardens and with other jobs. For example when the town school has Thitainguyt Literature Festival, village schools don't have weekends free, and dates are changed to when rice should be harvested." (Interview TE# 062)

In urban areas, children are commonly found to be working in food processing, selling, refuse collecting, light manufacturing, and as waiters. Other common jobs include working as domestic laborers, or collecting rubbish from street corners and railway lines to recycle it and sell it in markets. According to a report, the main reason children work is due to their family's financial needs. Poverty is cited as the main reason why children are not in school (ABFSU Education Report, 2002).



Children work to earn extra money at the weekend, to pay for their study.

G. Gender priority on education

In Burma, the education sector has been seriously neglected by the military regime. There is also a serious shortage of schools, supplies and teachers, especially in rural areas and conflict-affected areas. Corruption also has been increasing among teachers.

The majority of people in Burma regard gender inequality as part of culture, traditional practices and beliefs. People believe that women do not have the same power men do. This starts at a young age, when boys can make decisions and later in their lives learn to be leaders in the country, community and family. According to popular culture, girls do not need to complete high school and get a degree. Parents accept this, thinking that they have to prioritize education for boys completing education as men can exercise power and support the family in the future. For girls, it is enough to complete only primary school, as they will be taken care of by their husbands when they get married.

“Parents have discriminated against their children and we also used to discriminate in my community. Men and women are not treated the same people say women don’t need to study or go to school, that they have to work for their family. In the rural areas it is even more difficult for women. It has been like this for many generations, but we have to fight for equality now”. (Interview UNI #072)

At a young age, this influences potential students since parents will not let girls out of the house to attend school. This continues once girl get married, and don’t allow their wives to continue schooling either. Parents view well-being of their sons as more important than the well-being of their daughters, so very few females get the opportunity to attend school in Ta’ang Area.

Girls and women are not treated as equal to men. This appears to be true for the whole Union, though it’s a larger problem in Ta’ang Area. In rural communities where social mobility is less likely than in urban areas, education is one of the few, if not the only, to improve living standards. Lack of education and high rates of dropping out of school at an early age are not the only difficulties women face. Women are also subjected to emotional and physical violence.

“We were discriminated against by our own parents. Boys could go to school, but girls had to stop at high school. As girls we were not allowed to travel, or even visit anyone at the hospital. Our parents did not have the money to send all their children to school, and they chose that their sons would go to school, instead of us girls. My parents would give us money, but if my brothers would get 100 Kyat, I would only get 70”. (Interview UNI #068)

The economic situation has led to an increasing problem with lack of education. It is women that suffer most from this hardship, as when they are expected to sacrifice themselves to work for their families and later for their husbands. With their lower status in society, females have to forgo their schooling and work for their family. Their lower status, the dangers for them to travel alone in Ta'ang's

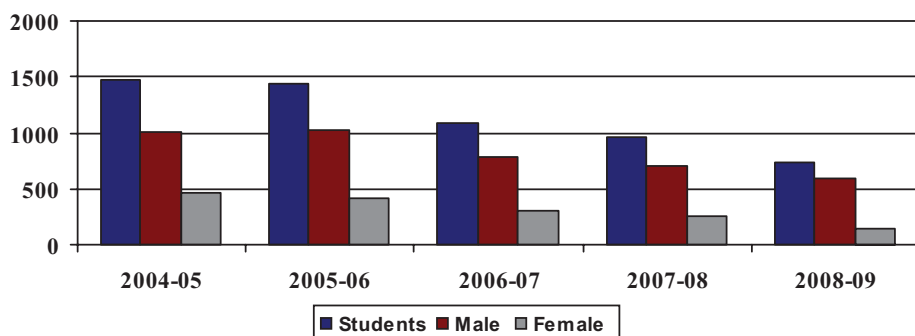


mountainous area, education's rising expenses, and the fact women's education is culturally less valued, all make it difficult as a woman to get a degree. Girls don't contribute to their family's wealth as much, while boys do. This makes it a less worthy investment for girls to get education, since it will not benefit its sponsors.

"Yes, I have been discriminated against while I attended school in Lashio. An example of this is when there were three Chinese girls that gave money to their teachers and the teachers gave them high scores in return. The teachers did not tell the Chinese girls to clean at school. However, I had to do everything I had been told. If I would not, I would be punished, simply because I did not have the money to bribe my teachers". (Interview HI#018)

Although families may have the wealth to send their daughters to school, they still may not do so. Education is not at all times seen as a worthy investment; some parents would rather give their daughters money. Girls also often have to work to earn money in order to support their family. For many girls education stops after primary school, and opportunities are scarce for them in lower socioeconomic classes. To contribute to their family's well-being, and enable their brothers to go to school, they have to earn money. Common tasks for girls are looking after cattle, finding wood, fetching water, babysitting, cooking, selling as street hawkers, producing charcoal, tea-plucking, working at tea factories and working on tea farms.

Enrollment by gender at a typical school in Ta'ang region



Students drop-out school and gender equality	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Students	1475	1436	1093	961	735
Male	1003	1025	792	711	588
Female	472	411	301	250	147

*Comparing the rate of dropping out of school between males and females
Statistics are from a high school in Ta'ang region.*

Materially, men are also better off. Men are the ones to inherit their parents land and property enabling them to fund their education. Girls get no inheritance, due to common belief of education and wealth being less important for girls. It is expected that after marriage, men provide all necessities. This used to be a reality but as tea prices have decreased but the cost of living remains the same, relative cost of living has significantly increased.

Discrimination extends to outside girls' homes. Teachers do not believe in the education of girls, since it is common belief that they should submit their lives to men. Girls are used for singing songs for entertainment, cleaning, and are the ones to blame for all that goes wrong even when it's not their fault. All they engage in has to be done separately from boys, nor are they allowed to play with them.

The few women that want to and can afford to go to university still face problems. In order to apply to post-secondary education, females have to acquire higher test-scores than men to get into the same programs.

H. Corruption in education

There is rampant corruption throughout all levels of the education system. Education officials function with very little transparency, often changing the costs of school supplies and fees without explanation. Students are responsible for paying for any number of arbitrary fees related to their education. Many students report that they needed to stop attending school to work full time in order to earn money for school fees.

In addition to the extremely high costs of attending school, students must also pay for gifts for teachers, celebrations, and any new furniture. Students also have to bring rice and food to the teachers.

“Even though I had to pay school fees, I also had to pay for extra curricular activities, examination fees, and school facilities. These included playing sports, participating in school shows and concerts, and using the bathroom and rubbish bins. If our class went on a picnic, we had to pay.” (Interview HI# 006)

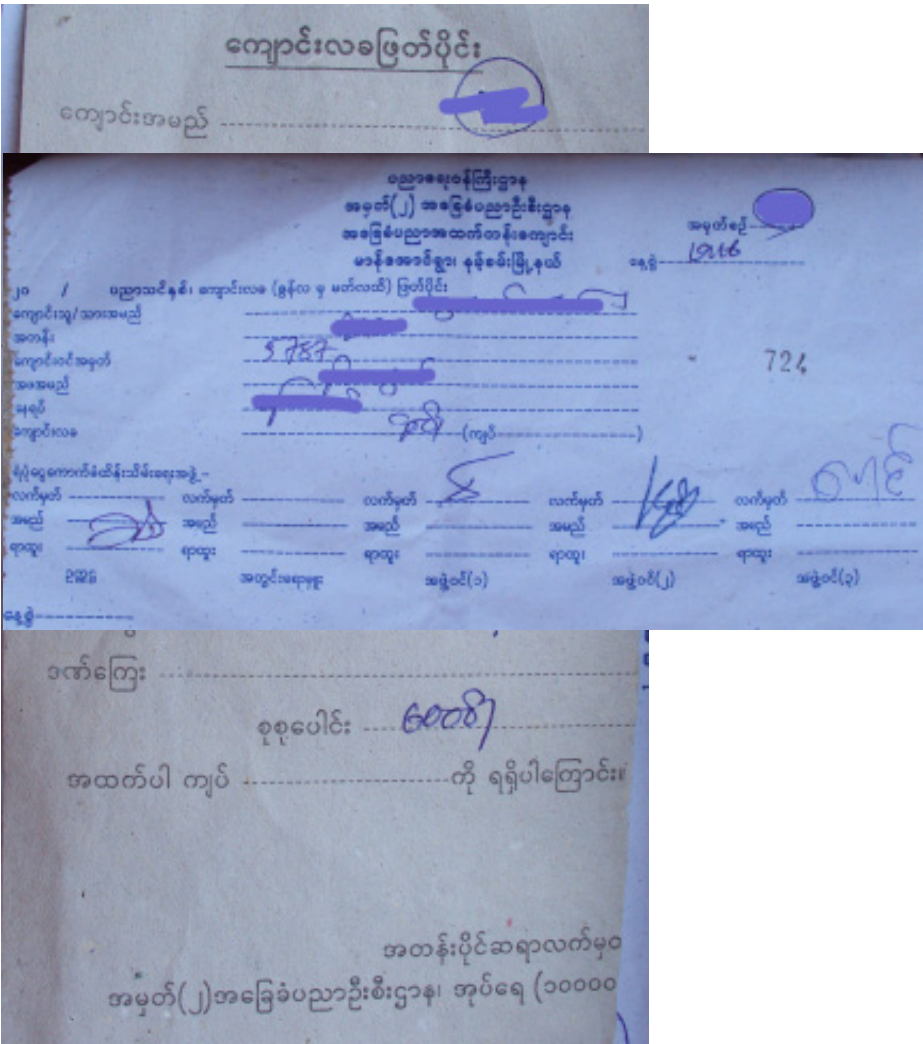
Teachers have to pay money to the government to become teachers. Teachers cannot change schools without paying money and being approved by the authorities. As a result of low wages, teachers may sell the school supplies that the students have purchased or material that have been donated to the school. Despite having the ability to teach well, teachers may neglect their classrooms and instead charge for private tutoring.

“I think that education helps rich people more because they can bribe the teachers. For as far as I know, this system does not exist in other countries. The education system is just getting worse.” (Interview UNI# 066)

Corruption in the education system extends beyond government officials and teachers using students. Educational instructors often rely on students paying bribes to pass grades each year. Cheating on examinations is very common among students.

“I passed my exams each year by cheating and copying. I will explain some of the methods we used to cheat in examination room: we wrote down answers on the exam table during the night, we used to copy answers into small books, we wrote down answers on the wall at the night, and we

gave money to the teacher who monitored the exam room.” (Interview UNI# 073)



Bill for student's monthly school fee

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS



High schools close to town and with over 2,000 students from different ethnicity to attend this school. This school was famous from 1997 to 2000 and most of students have good skill and graduated. Unfortunately, after the year 2000 this school failed to produce many students and is now renowned for inequalities among students



Students Toilet

One and two grade students are learning together in a classroom



Human Rights Violations

a. Official ban on studying own language (Ta'ang Literature)

“Children belonging to minority or indigenous group, have the right to learn about and practice their cultural customs and traditions, native languages. These rights should not be infringed upon by members of majority racial, ethnic or cultural group”(Taken from article 30, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2008)

Many students report that the SPDC forbids ethnic groups from formally studying their own languages and cultures. All classes at all schools are conducted in Burmese. Ta'ang students are not allowed to speak their own language or celebrate Ta'ang culture in school. Students must learn and speak Burmese. As a result, the number of Ta'ang people, who can read and write their native language is decreasing rapidly.



Learning Ta'ang literature

“We celebrate and praise our teachers, but we never celebrate our Ta'ang culture at the school. We would secretly study Ta'ang literature at night at the monastery. Most people said that knowing Ta'ang literature wouldn't get you a job, and that you needed to know Burmese. People forced us to study Burmese.” (Interview MID# 052)

The Ta'ang people always have to report to the local authority what curricular activities they follow. Anything related to ethnic culture is prohibited. In order to study ethnic language and culture, people have to go to local monasteries. The number of times this can be done is restricted to seven to ten days a year. Language and culture classes will be disrupted by local authorities, believing that restrictions on such classes will help integrate into Burmese culture and forget about their own heritage.

“Students must learn their native language after school hours, because government schools do not allow us to do this. Most people I know can speak Ta'ang, but not write it. I find it very important for us to know how to read our own literature. I don't want that part of our culture to get lost. This is difficult though as the local authority forbids us to do so. They don't even allow us to speak our own language.” (Interview LIT# 095)

b. Forced labor and recruitment to USDA membership

Throughout their military rule, the SPDC has utilized forced labor. Much forced labor occurs in schools in the ethnic areas of Burma. Forced labor is called “lah ah pay” in Burmese language. In recent years the SPDC has used forced labor in collaboration with Chinese corporations. Unpaid civilian labor is widely used by the SPDC in construction of infrastructure, including the Shweli Dam projects in the Ta'ang area. Those unable or unwilling to comply with demands of forced labor are fined or must send replacements.

“Governments should protect children from engaging in work that is dangerous, inhibits their ability to obtain an education or jeopardizes their health and overall development”(Reference from article 32 in UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2008)

Forced labor occurs in both the government run and locally run schools in the ethnic areas. Students are coerced into hard labor, and often need to leave school to complete projects. Local government officials, including police officers and soldiers, enforce most forced labor.

Students are forced to clear bushes, clean highways, dig canals, plant and chop down trees, and build military camps. Teachers order students to work during their holidays and sometimes during school days. Most students do not want to participate, but fear that if they refuse, they will fail their exams. General knowledge is that teachers give high grades to the students who listen well and follow orders.

Sometimes parents of the primary school children are also forced to do labor at school, this appears to be so when children are too young to work. Teachers order the students to call their parents to dig canals, build toilets, and repair the roads and bamboo fences.

Soldiers and police would sometimes order high school students into forced labor when they came to villages. Students would also have to bring food to the soldiers, and transport them to other villages.

“The SPDC uses forced labor to bring their rations and show them around if they do not know where villages are, we have to bring wood and bamboo from our house to build fences for the military. We had to do many kinds of jobs.” (Interview UNI# 068)

During the rainy season, the soldiers force students to repair the roads affected by landslide damage. The soldiers did not respect that the students must miss school in order to do this. This kind of problem has been increasing in the Ta'ang area as the military junta has been expanding their camps.

In 2005, the SPDC began to force citizens to grow castor trees to produce oil. With the potential of generating lucrative capital, the junta started forcing villagers, government authorities, schoolteachers, and students to work on plantations.

Villagers and students are also forced to join various governmental organizations or the military. The SPDC forces villagers to become soldiers. The USDA recruits so many people/per family. If no one within a family no one is willing to join the USDA, families are forced to pay fees.

“Governments should undertake all measures necessary to protect and care for children affected by war. This includes putting in place safeguards, which prevent children under the age of 15 from being recruited or coerced into active combat. This provision is augmented by the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict which specifies that children under age 18 cannot be recruited for nor take part in active combat”. “(Taken from article 38, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2008).



Students and villagers clean a road in the weekend

Forced military conscriptions continued to increase alongside the high rate of desertions throughout 2007, as the army is facing a shortage of trained soldiers. Recruitment of children into the government armed forces continued as a result of this and children as young as 10 were recruited into the army. Human Rights Watch estimated that there might be more than 70,000 child soldiers in the SPDC's Army (<http://www.state.gov>).

“When I was in sixth standard in Nam Sam Township, the USDA came to recruit people in our village. They said that we needed to give person from our family and that if we didn't participant we had to give them money. I didn't want to go, so my brother joined.”(Interview MED# 053)

c. Human trafficking related with education

“Education in our country is a tragedy, but because we know little about it, things keep going wrong. A man that used to stay in my village, left to the city to come back after several years. He suggested that he would take my daughter to continue her education at “Phaung Daw Oo” (school in Mandalay sponsored by the west), which I agreed too. Later I realized he trafficked people to other regions of Burma. I have not seen her since, and no one helped me to find her. I don’t know where she lives, or works, which upsets me very much. I often cry, because of what has happened.” (Interview TRA# 096)

It is quite common for children from rural areas to be trafficked to urban locations. Traffickers arrange opportunities for children to find jobs in urban areas, where wages are much higher; with little knowledge regarding this, parents and children don’t question legitimacy of traffickers improving their lives. Trafficking oftentimes is a process, involving many people, which leads to confusion. With many traffickers representing different ethnicities, they speak languages related to their cultural background, leading children to be disoriented concerning what they are involved in. Parents are willing to give people the benefit of the doubt in the process of trying to improve their livelihood, and traffickers exploit such situations. Parents in most cases don’t have a clear understanding of what happens to their children either, resulting in families losing touch with each other.

d. Student’s Rights Violations

i. Inadequate education supplies

Students in the Ta'ang area do not have adequate access to education materials. With the lack of supplies available in school, students are unable to learn at an acceptable level. Students also often lack access to qualified teachers. Schools are both understaffed and overcrowded with students. Classrooms in the Ta'ang area do not have the basic materials to support learning. Without access to adequate education materials or qualified teachers, Burma will produce a generation of students who cannot contribute to their country.

“ When I was in fifth and sixth standard, we had to attend school in the hall of a monastery, because there were no buildings for studying.” (Interview MID# 051)



Grade three class- rooms



Students toilets

This situation is bad not only for the students but also for their parents, who are very poor and have difficulties paying school fees for their children. It is difficult for parents to pay school fees and still see their children receive a poor education.

ii. Lack of library Access

The ability to have access to a library at school is very important for students, as it supports their studies. Especially in Burma, a library is an opportunity to learn from sources other than teachers, who may be unqualified.

"I am a grade three student. In our school we don't a good library and the text-books are not enough for us. My parents can't buy any text-books for me and I have to borrow from my friend when I need to look. (Interview MID# 053)



A primary school library

There is a lack of libraries in Ta'ang area. The government does not supply funding. Ta'ang students have difficulties learning about human rights violation in their country because they do not have access to outside information.

iii. Being forced to attend top leader's visit

Based on cultural traditions and beliefs in Burma, people respect their elders and leaders. Respecting anyone with a higher status in the hierarchy is embedded in the Union's culture. This interferes with time spent in class. Preparing ceremonies to welcome leaders is time consuming. Also leaders don't always show up when they say they will, which means ceremonies where food is specially made and children are ready and waiting to meet these officials is all for nothing.

Due to their lower status children often have to comply with ceremonies and money extortion of their headmasters and teachers. If children don't obey their requests, they will not allowed to continue their education.

"During my education I never had a school uniform, however wearing one was important to show respect to the SPDC. I told my teacher that I would not be able to greet any leaders in my old dirty uniform, to which she replied: "Do as you have been told, and don't ask me questions. Listen to me if you don't want to get punished" (Interview # 067)

It is difficult for poor students from rural areas to buy school uniforms to wear to official ceremonies. They only have dirty clothes they cannot wear, since this would not show respect when top leaders come to town. Therefore they must buy or borrow school uniforms from their friends. The headmaster visits every grade to check students school uniforms and sends those who do not look presentable home. Although they respect the top leader, most students do not receive anything from their government, and must provide materials, schools, equipment and school uniforms themselves.

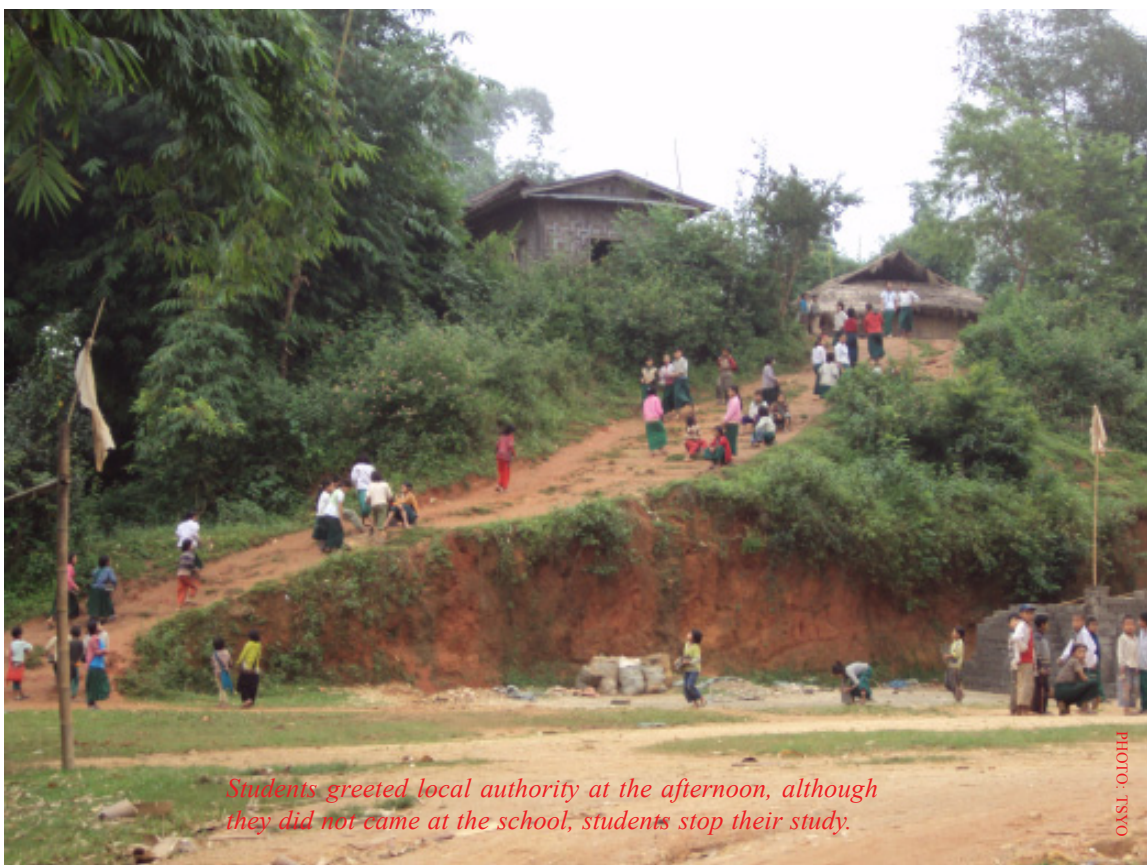
"Anytime when the government staff, top leaders from the town or other people with higher functions visits us at school or in our villages, students have to look presentable. Gratitude is shown by wearing uniforms or traditional Ta'ang clothes and holding ornamental flowers. In addition to this, money is collected by the militia, and food is specially made for them. This whole process is time consuming and requires students to pause their learning experiences, sometimes waiting in blazing heat for hours". (Interview # 004)

"Most people are poor in our village because as farmers we have low incomes. Students do not have enough money to buy school uniforms. Only some students can afford them, but most of us wear our regular clothes. Therefore, students would be absent from school if leaders come visit us at

school. Teachers would check if we wore uniforms and it would be a big problem if we didn't. Some students had to borrow uniforms from their friends, while others would compromise eating to buy uniforms. It is difficult, because our government does not provide anything to us, but also extorts us.” (Interview TE# 136)

Both villagers and students know little about education and the political system of Burma. People obey to what has been said, and follow their orders. Although demands of higher ranked people may conflict with their well-being, people still listen to the SPDC, school headmasters, etc.

“I respect our culture and beliefs but sometimes I do not think we need to follow everything ordered by our leaders. We also have our family problems; we have to prioritize sustaining ourselves. We should refuse to do something ordered by leaders but we are so scared of them. This results in us leaving our work to do their job.” (Interview HI# 145)



Students greeted local authority at the afternoon, although they did not came at the school, students stop their study.

PHOTO: TSYO

Conclusion

Since the Union's Coup D'état led by U Ne Win in 1962, Burma's politics, economy, education system, and social system have changed. Oppression due to colonialism was exchanged for oppression under the rule of a military dictatorship state. Gradually people have lost the right to freedom of opinion and expression, among many other rights. This has led to the deterioration of education and living standards. As in all other sectors, the military junta heavily influences education. Donations from other countries to improve and build schools are kept by the SPDC for use in building up their military arms, leaving students to travel for hours to get educated. In rural areas there are a shortage of schools, with the lack of secondary and tertiary education being more prevalent than primary.

Teachers are unable to teach. There are many reasons for this, including no materials, poor salary, lack of proper teacher training and lack of motivation. Teachers are the foundation upon which any education system is based. Without teachers, who can transfer knowledge and learning to our children. Unfortunately, the teachers in Burma have not been given a helping hand by the government, to enable them to teach properly. Thus although there are schools, they are just there for show as the quality of teaching is poor and there are no incentives for the teachers to learn new methods. This is more evident in rural villages like in the Ta'ang region. The education system is a vicious circle.

In the few schools accessible in rural Ta'ang areas, resources are scarce. The system, to evaluate knowledge relies on reciting, rather than critical thinking. Authorities control curriculums and censor information, so these students will not form opinions, or gain knowledge that would hinder the power of the SPDC. The cost of education has also been rising, which forces children from poorer backgrounds to leave schools early. In addition to these high costs, money is paid to bribe teachers, yet the quality of education does not improve from this. Even after having obtained degrees, people do not have a guarantee to accomplish anything in life.

As stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the right of opinion and expression relies on different aspects of culture. This has been restricted to a certain number of days per year. Ta'ang language is forbidden in schools, this being part of the government trying to faze out all ethnicities other than Burman. Discrimination is not limited to ethnicity, but also effects gender. Boys are more likely to finish school, since parents go through greater lengths to support their education than girls. likely to finish school, since parents go through greater lengths to support their education than girls.

There has been a decline in the quality of education for decades now, with no direct signs of improvement anytime soon. This is an educational crisis. Students' minds are being subdued to enhance the power of a government that is slowly running their country into the ground. All the potential of its young people is being left undiscovered. Education should be the key to a young person's future, not something quashed by a government who limits its students to no opportunities and a **lightless life!**

Recommendations

To the State Peace and Development Council

- ◆ To increase educational expenditures from less than 1.4 % to 6% to comply with the international and regional standards
- ◆ To promote the study of local Ta'ang literature and language in the school curriculum and support qualified local language instructors
- ◆ To cease the disproportionate allocation of state funds to military education institutions and the enforcement of curriculums with political propaganda, which create an educational and vocational system that privileges military personnel and entrenches the current authoritarian system.
- ◆ To provide teachers and educational professionals with adequate salaries to end the widespread corruption in the education system and degradation of quality education
- ◆ To promote education for all (EFA) as envisioned by UNICEF and the UN Millennium Development Goals and to implement the CRC articles ratified by SPDC in 1991 which guarantee free primary education for all and the development of respect for human rights through the education system
- ◆ To implement the CEDAW articles ratified by SPDC in 1997 to ensure that women have access to the same educational opportunities and access to career guidance as men.
- ◆ To support the formation of student and teacher unions to monitor SPDC educational policies, and levels of local corruption, and to ensure the proper implementation of CEDAW and CRC.
- ◆ To immediately implement a nationwide ceasefire and begin tripartite negotiation with ethnic leaders and the National League for Democracy, to release all political prisoners, and cease attacks against ethnic minorities, as an initial step towards establishing genuine peace in Burma and begin addressing the deeply entrenched educational problems in our country.

To the parents and communities

- ◆ To encourage children to remain in school until they have completed the minimum 9 years of schooling.
- ◆ To eliminate discrimination against girls and allow them equal opportunities to attend schools.
- ◆ To support community school curriculum, teachers, and ensure that the highest standard of education is possible.

To the UN, ASEAN, and the international community

- ◆ To challenge Burma's military regime for its failure to seriously address the education crisis in Burma
- ◆ To pressure the regime to implement a constitutional review to eliminate policies that take local control in educational and other critical issues
- ◆ To increase material support and capacity building for community schools, particularly in rural areas, and to pressure the SPDC to adhere to the educational standards outlined in the CRC and CEDAW
- ◆ To support the formation of teacher's unions under ASEAN and other regional bodies to enforce UNSCR 1612, prohibiting the forcible recruitment of child soldiers, child trafficking, and other violations against children in conflict

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Other Resources

www.unicef.org
www.state.gov
www.who.int

Appendix **i. List of interviewees (table)**

Here an explanation of where we did research in the Ta'ang area. We interviewed 37 people in Namkham Township, 2 people in Muse Township, 37 people in Man Tong Township, 35 people in Namhsan Township, 15 people in Namtu Township, 1 person in Nampa Kar village, 1 person in Thieni Township, 40 people in Kutkai Township, 4 people in Lashio Township, 2 people in Kyaukme Township, and 1 person in Moe Mate Township.

Age	Sex	Interview code	Occupation
23yr	M	UNI# 001	Teacher
26yr	M	UNI# 002	Tea farmer
-	M	HI# 003	Committee teacher
25yr	M	HI# 004	Tea farmer
21yt	F	HI# 005	student
18yr	F	HI# 006	Tea farmer
20yr	F	HI# 007	student
25yr	F	HI# 008	Tea farmer
18yr	F	HI# 009	Tea farmer
24yr	F	HI# 010	Tea farmer
22yr	F	HI# 011	Tea farmer
23yr	F	HI# 012	Tea farmer
20yr	F	HI# 013	Farmer
20yr	F	HI# 014	Farmer
23yr	F	HI# 015	Tea farmer
19yr	F	HI# 016	Tea farmer
26yr	F	HI# 017	Tea farmer
18yr	F	HI# 018	Tea farmer
23yr	F	HI# 019	Tea farmer
26yr	F	HI# 020	Tea farmer
25yr	F	HI# 021	Tea farmer
23yr	F	HI# 022	Tea farmer
24yr	F	HI# 023	Tea farmer
24yr	F	UNI# 024	Tea farmer
22yr	F	HI# 025	Tea farmer Charcoal- worker
23yr	F	HI# 026	Tea farmer
28yr	M	HI# 027	Trader
23yr	M	HI# 028	Tea farmer/ farmer
19yr	M	HI# 029	Tea farmer/ farmer
18yr	M	HI# 030	Tea farmer/

			farmer
18yr	M	HI# 031	Tea farmer
21yr	M	HI# 032	Tea farmer/ farmer
28yr	M	HI# 033	Tea farmer/ farmer
18yr	M	HI# 034	Tea farmer
21yr	M	HI# 035	Tea farmer/ farmer
17yr	M	HI# 036	Tea farmer
20yr	M	HI# 037	Tea factory worker
24yr	M	HI# 038	Tea farmer
25yr	M	HI# 039	Tea farmer
19yr	F	UNI# 040	Tea farmer
19yr	F	UNI# 041 (Science subject)	Tea farmer/ farmer
19yr	F	HI# 042	Tea farmer
22yr	F	HI# 043	Trader
21yr	F	HI# 044	Student
18yr	F	HI# 045	Tea farmer/ farmer
20yr	F	HI# 046	Trader
19yr	F	HI# 047	Tea farmer/ farmer
25yr	M	HI# 048	Tea dryer
20yr	F	HI# 049	Tea farmer/ farmer
26yr	F	HI# 050	Tea farmer
18yr	M	MID# 051	Student
26yr	M	MID# 052	Tea farmer
16yr	F	MID# 053	Student
35yr	F	PAR# 054	Day laborer
40yr	F	PAR# 055	Tea farmer
32yr	M	PAR# 056	Day laborer

36yr	M	PAR# 057	Tea farmer
34yr	M	PAR# 058	Tea farmer
40yr	M	PAR# 059	Day laborer
38yr	M	PAR# 060	Tea farmer/ farmer
37yr	F	PAR# 061	Tea farmer
26yr	F	TEA# 062	Teacher
25yr	M	H# 063	Farmer
22yr	F	UNI# 064 (1 st Geography)	Farmer
21yr	L	UNI# 065 (2 nd)	Tea trader
19yr	M	UNI# 066	Tea farmer/ farmer
23yr	L	UNI# 067 (Tea farmer/ farmer
22yr	M	UNI# 068	Trader
23yr	M	UNI# 069	Tea farmer/ farmer
24yr	M	UNI# 070	Farmer
28yr	M	UNI# 071	Tea farmer
20yr	M	UNI# 072	Tea farmer
31yr	M	UNI# 073 (3 rd Law)	Tea farmer
24yr	M	UNI# 074	Tea farmer
26yr	M	UNI# 075 (2 nd Geography)	Tea farmer/ farmer
27yr	F	UNI# 076 (2 nd science)	Tea farmer/ farmer
25yr	F	UNI# 077 (Law 1 st Year)	Committee teacher
22yr	F	UNI# 078 (Final Law)	Sewer/ tea farmer
24yr	M	UNI# 079 (Final Geography)	Farmer
22yr	M	UNI# 080(1 st Eco)	Tea farmer
22yr	M	UNI# 081	Tea farmer
22yr	F	UNI# 082	Student (first year)
23yr	F	H# 083	Tea farmer/ farmer
19yr	F	H# 084	Farmer/

			green grocer
19yr	F	H# 085	Farmer
20yr	F	UNI# 086 (1 st Year)	Tea farmer
24yr	F	H# 087	Nurse student/ Tea farmer
21yr	F	H# 088	Committee teacher
25yr	F	H# 089	Committee teacher/ tea farmer
25yr	F	H# 090	Tea farmer
25yr	F	H# 091	Tea Farmer/ farmer
26yr	M	H# 092	Farmer
21yr	M	H# 093	Farmer
22yr	F	H# 094	Shop attendant
58yr	M	Inter# 095	TLCC member
30yr	M	PAR# 097	
26yr	M	UNI# 098	Bachelor student Computer Science (B.C.S)
19yr	M	NO# 099	
20y5	M	H# 100	Motorcycle trader
30yr	F	TEA# 101	Substitute teacher of middle school
27yr	F	TEA# 102	Teacher
21yr	F	UNI# 103 B. Computer	Gasoline shop attendant
28yr	F	TEA# 104	Teacher
21yr	M	UNI# 105 English 1 st year	Food seller
27yr	M		Hydroelectric manager
24yr	F	UNI# 107 Final E,co	Education staff
29yr	M	UNI# 108 1 st Eco	Farmer
39yr	F	PAR# 109	Green

21yr	M	HI# 110	Motorcycle trader
25yr	F	UN# 111 Geography	Shopkeeper/headmaster
28yr	F	TEA# 112 Myanmar	Teacher
21yr	F	UN# 113 Philosophy	Castor gas station attendant
38yr	F	PAR# 114	Farmer
41yr	M	PAR# 115 8 grade	Farmer
24yr	F	UN# 116 Final history	Shopkeeper
21yr	M	UN# 117	Student final year
14yr	M	MID# 118	Farmer
24yr	F	UN# 119 Economy major	Teacher
15yr	M	PRI# 120 3 grade	Student tea farmer
19yr	M	PRI# 121 (3 grade)	farmer
38yr	F	MID# 122	Tea farmer
	F	TEA# 123	Middle school teacher
20yr	F	HI# 124	Car gate clerk
18yr	F	HI# 125	Car gate clerk
27yr	F	TEA# 126	Teacher
20yr	F	UN# 127 1 st Myanmar	Auditor
15yr	F	HI# 128	Seller
30yr	M	UN# 129	Headmaster
28yr	F	UN# 130	Education staff
	M	MID# 131	Farmer
	M	HI# 132	Farmer
	M	HI# 133	Student/tea Farmer
	F	MID# 134	Farmer
45yr	F	HI# 135	Farmer
	F	TEA# 136	Middle school

			teacher
	M	UNI# 137	Boarding school Headmaster
	F	TEA# 138	Middle school teacher
	F	TEA# 139	Teacher
	M	PAR# 140	Chairman
25yr	M	CS# 141	Committee school coordinator
	M	TLCC# 142	TLCC Secretary (2)
	M	TLCC# 145	TLCC Chairman
25yr	M	UNI# 144 2 nd Law	Tea farmer
15yr	M	HI# 145	Student
22yr	M	HI# 146	Day laborer
18yr	F	UNI# 147 1 st Myanmar	Tea farmer
22yr	F	HI# 148	Tea framer
19yr	F	UNI# 149 1 st Eco	Farmer
20yr	M	UNI# 150 1 st Philosophy	World Food Program staff
22yr	F	UNI# 151 1 st History	Working in Battalion Infantry No, (130)
40yr	M	PAR# 152	Trader
60yr	M	PAR# 153	Tea farmer
60yr	M	PAR# 154	Farmer
45yr	F	PAR# 155	Tea framer
43yr	M	PAR# 156	Tea framer
40yr	F	PAR# 157	Farmer
35yr	F	PAR# 158	Farmer
30yr	F	UNI# 159 Geography Major	Gas station attendant
29yr	F	TEA# 160 Myanmar Major	Middle school Teacher
	M	TLCC# 161	TLCC Chairman

20yr	M	UNI# 162 1 st Myanmar	Farmer		20yr	F	UNI# 169	Tea farmer
55yr	M	PAR# 163	Trader		19yr	F	MID# 170	Farmer
45yr	M	PAR# 164	Farmer			M	PAR# 171	Tea farmer
	M	Villager# 165	Farmer		40yr	F	PAR# 172	Noodle shop keeper
53yr	M	PAR# 166	Framer			M	PAR# 173	Committee teacher
45yr	F	PAR# 167	Tea trader		20yr	M	HI# 174	Tea farmer
	M	UNI# 168 1 st Philosophy	Tea farmer		50yr	M	PAR# 175	Farmer

Interview table

Middle school students interviews	High school students interview	University students interview	Teacher interview	Parents interview	Other interview
Total, 9	Total, 69	Total, 49	Total, 11	Total, 30	Total,7

ii. Suggestions from interviewees

“We hope that education would guarantee jobs for children who completed it. As I analyze education, the system is very corrupt, and in order to pass classes we need to pay a lot of money in addition to the fees.” (Interview – PAR#003)

“If someone could support my children, I would want to send all my children to school because they are looked down on by their friends. It’s my fault as I can’t support them to go to school.” (Interview – PAR#007)

“The system of education is not of good quality, it does not provide people knowledge and experience. Although cost of tuition is high, students don’t learn much. Completion of schooling is no guarantee to improve the quality of life. I would suggest that teachers would improve the curriculum they use, hiring qualified teachers, and giving them a high enough salary, so they don’t need to bribe children anymore. Subjects taught in school should also be appropriate for students. Another suggestion would be that primary education should be free.” (Interview –UNI# 001)

“It seems education is good for everyone, though it’s very frail in Ta’ang area. Other places and areas have better schools than our areas do. I think if our

Ta'ang people have a chance to study more, it would be an improvement for us. In order to get better schools, we have to get nursery schools in every village with enough teachers. And school fees should not as much as they are.” (Interview- UNI#003)

“To have a better education system, my suggestion is that the government should use half the amount of money they spend on the military, and use it for education, because education does not have enough resources. School materials such as stationary and laboratory stuff we don’t have enough of. In chemistry, we have to separate components however, we never accomplish the wished for result. Our teachers will try to explain what we need to know, but it is less efficient to have a lecture, than to practice the tests. Because we can’t practice what we learn in school, we cannot improve our skills; our schools are not as good as in other countries. That is why I suggest using more money on education.” (Interview- UNI#005)

“My main problem is the “copy-system”. We are expected to copy to evaluate our knowledge, but we don’t learn anything form this. Teachers don’t apply any system, and there is no order in which we learn things. Teachers also need to provide us materials; it is impossible to study sciences without practicum resources. It would be essential for teachers to get a fair salary, so tuition would not be so expensive for us, and primary school should be free. This would result in corruption and discrimination not playing such a big role anymore, which would improve schooling a lot.” (Interview- UNI#008)

“We need a good education system, good curricula, and history classes teaching us what really happened, not the censored classes we have now. We should be able to freely choose what classes to take and be able to learn what we are interested in. There should not be discrimination between genders either, and the system should rely on students to think, rather that just to recite. Teachers need to be adequately qualified to teach. More importantly, education should be free, at least primary education. I would also like it if it would not cost money to go to high school, and if we could learn what we were interested in. I don’t believe in the “copy system” where we only recite, since this leads to corruption. Many children pay to see the test answers before taking tests, and then only copy the test results. I don’t think this is a good system.” (Interview- UNI# 011)

“I want a different education system, similar to the system in other countries. In our area I would like to see good and qualified teachers, teaching a logical curriculum. It should not be how it is now. Education does not allow you to get good jobs after graduation. Money spent on the military should be reduced; this money should be spent on schools. The government should also provide free primary education to everyone. I think this would improve the situation a lot. It

would also be important for us to be able to freely practice and learn about our culture and language. If we cannot do this, our culture will get lost and I don't want this to happen. Therefore it's essential for us to learn about our own language and culture.” (Interview- HI#017)

My suggestion for education in the future is to stop discrimination against ethnicities, as we are all nationals of Myanmar, so we should have equal rights. As the SPDC says, Union of Myanmar refers to the whole nation and its entire people; therefore we should all have equal rights. The right to express ourselves and take classes we are interested in. In recent years teachers have been applying a system where children who don't pass their evaluation test at the end of the year still go to the next standard. It should be that students, who do not pass this test, do the same year again, but this has not been the case. This is bad for the quality of education. This will result in less qualified people in the country. We need to try to implement a higher education level, the same as in international secondary and post secondary schools. As for history, we should teach people about what really happened, who really contributed to the well-being of our country, and not about things that are unimportant, or information that is not true. (Interview- HI#004)

We need to improve our economic and social system to better our future. The government should create orphanages and schools. Schools should focus on English and Burmese language; this would make communication among different ethnicities easier in our country. It would be important that schools have enough teachers, and those students who have graduated from high schools or universities could get good jobs. (Interview- HI#014)

In schools, there should be enough qualified teachers; this would help students understand lessons better and allow students to do better at exams. The government should also provide free primary education so the number of uneducated people would go down in my country. Schools should not discriminate ethnic minorities either. Moreover, we should be allowed to learn our own language and literature freely because it is very important to maintain our culture. (Interview- MED#001)

If possible, there should be free primary schools for students who live far away from their parents, this would help and encourage students who live far away from home. When I went to school, it was far away from my village, which made it very expensive. Traveling and cost of living were very high. I don't want our future generation to face these difficulties, and want them to become well educated. (Interview- MED#004)

iii. Interviews conducted with students and villagers regarding education.

Parent's interview

Name	: Daw/—/—
Age	: 53
Ethnicity	: Ta'ang
Education level	: Second standard
Occupation	: Farming
Religion	: Buddhist
Sex	: Female

Q: How many people are there in your family and your occupation?

A: we have eight people in my family. We are green tea farmers, we don't have other work. I don't think we could do other jobs because we have financial difficulties in our family. Our wellbeing depends on tea prices, if tea prices rise, it's good for us and if the tea prices fall, it creates difficulties, because we do not have other jobs or other sources of income. Sometimes we don't have enough rice for everyone in the family, and we have to mix our food up with beans we find on our land.

Q: How many of your children are attending school and already left?

A: I only have one child in school because my other children left school to work. My children really want to attend school but we have financial problems and could not support their school fees, so they left school to work. If we did not work, we would not have enough food for the family. They saw us, suffering and having difficulties paying our expenses. They become depressed, so they left school. We had to pay over 100,000 Kyat each year to the nursery school. If our children attended middle or high school, we had to pay more money. We used to forbid our children to leave school even though the family had hard-times, and they needed to pick green tea in the morning. On holidays, they worked cleaning the farm and chopping wood to earn money to pay for school fees. If the school fees had not increased, we could send the all children to school.

Q: Do they have health problems? Do their friends pressure them to leave school?

A: If they felt sick while at their study, we did not have money to take them to the hospital. We must buy medicine at the hospital, and to get vaccinations and tests costs a lot of money too. Sometime we have to pay over 10,000 Kyat in fees, which creates difficulties, because it's a lot of money. If we couldn't afford the western medicine, we had to get traditional medicine instead.

Q: Are there enough schools and supplies available in your area?

A: We do not have enough schools or equipment rather for the students. If the students want to attend middle or high school, they must go to another village or into town.

Q: from your perspective as parents, what is your perspective of education?

A: As parents, I think that education should guarantee a good life, and we see that we have to pay money to receive education. This system is not fair for the people, because the rich just pay to pass their exams. This is not a good education system for students.

Middle school student's interview

Name : Mai/- -/—
 Age : 26
 Sex : Male
 Occupation : Green tea farmer
 Education : Middle school
 Ethnicity : Ta'ang
 Religion : Buddhist
 Address: Nam San Township, Nam Line village

Q: Which schools did you attend and what kind of problem you have during your study?

A: I attended primary school in Man Aung village, and middle school in Myaw Mya village Tone Po Township, Irrawaddy. I moved to attend fifth grade in Namhsan Township Nam line village, and I finished middle school in 1998. I finished eighth grade. My problem is, we didn't receive any government support in our hill school and secondary school, and I had to move another town. I stopped going to school for two years, because there was no secondary school and the tea price fall-down. At that time, the fifth and sixth standard students have to attend school in the monastery. After that we only had teacher who were appointed by committees in the villages, and they didn't have the best teaching skill. I had malaria when I studied, but the teachers didn't take care of us or give us any medicine, and didn't have medicine in school. And also there were not enough textbooks for everyone, we had to pay outside school.

Q: How much were your school fees for one year and other fees?

A: They changed from year to year, for my school fees I had to pay 2,000 Kyat for per month and 20,000 K for per year. In 1995-1995, when I attended the six grades I spent tow and half million because I didn't stayed with my family. In addition to, we had to pay twice fees, and we pay to the teacher appointed by government and committee. For other fees I couldn't remember all, I had to pay for sports and

USDA committeewomen but they didn't explain to the students how they used this money, and for class room material. The local authority took money to the villagers for build the school 3,500 K each family but they didn't implemented.

Q: What were your parent's occupations and did you have to work to pay your school fees?

A: My parent's occupation was green tea farming, and we didn't other job. We lived on the tea farm; however, I had to work before and after studied and helped pick green tea every weekend for school fees and our family food.

Q: How did you feel about the quality of instruction?

A: The teachers sent from the committee didn't attend any training, and taught the students however they wanted. In middle school, we only had two teachers from government and three teachers from the committee and including headmaster, teacher didn't have enough and one teacher have to teach two classes at the same time, which meant he couldn't help individual students until everyone knew what they had to do. We didn't have teachers who could teach very well, and we had difficulties with the Burmese language.

Q: Did your parents encourage you? Did they discriminate between boys and girls? If so, did your sisters and brothers leave school? If you experienced discrimination how did it make you feel?

A: My parents encouraged us to attend school but we had financial problems, and school fees rose. One of my older sisters left school. Our parents discriminated us, because older generations don't let females have the chance to continue school. People say that the education isn't important for girls. I did not understand it at the time, but now I feel a little sad for my sister and other girls. It is important to find a solution for this problem.

Q: Have you ever used drug? (Opium, alcohol and cigarettes)

A: I smoked cigarettes and drank alcohol during middle school. Some of my friends also used opium, but the school committees didn't take any action. This was not good for us.

Q: Did the government force you to enter the fire brigade or Union Solidarity and Development Association?

A: Yes, they forced us to enter the Union Solidarity Development Association. We had a teacher from the USDA, who tried to get us involved, she would guarantee better jobs if we would join, we were told if we joined the USDA, we would have the opportunity to study outside the country, and if we joined, it would be easier to pass the exams.

Q: What are your opinions or suggestions and goals on education?

A: I want to encourage a better education system in the future. I think that primary and middle school should not cost money. The teachers should be better trained. Right now, we can't get jobs after we finished university and high school. I don't want to support the current education system, because it costs money and doesn't guarantee jobs. I had many expectations for my education. I really wanted to be an engineer. I was trying to become an engineer, but the education system was poor and the school fees rose. I had financial problems. I lost my future expectations and goals.

Q: What are your suggestions for a better education system?

A: We should have a higher quality of education with better teachers, so that we can pass our exams. The government should operate free schools through middle school. If we had free schools, we would have better education. Education should be guaranteed and should teach the subject of democracy. We must also be given the opportunity and the right to study our own literature, because it is very important to our ethnic identity.

High school student's interview

Name	: Lway/ —/ —
Age	: 18
Sex	: Female
Parents' occupations	: Tea farmers
Education	: Ninth standard
Ethnicity	: Ta'ang
Religion	: Buddhist
Address	: Namkham Township, Man Sat village

Q: Which schools did you attend and what kind of problem you have during your study?

A: I attended school in Man Sat village, Namkham Township northern Shan state, I studied until I completed ninth standard, and I left school in 2005. My biggest problem was an illness during middle school, which made me miss one month of school. Sometimes I didn't have money for school fees and couldn't attend school until I saved up money, when we had holiday or weekends, I needed to go work on a farm to earn money for my school fees and help my parents, I didn't learn very much during school. I left school, and I needed to help my parents support my younger siblings because no one was working in our family. I really wanted to continue my education and my parents encourage me but my parents couldn't support the school costs, if I had to continue I would have needed a lot of money to pay.

Q: How much were your school fees and what other fees you have to pay for one year?

A: It depended on our level and location, when I attended middle school I spent 150,000 Kyat, and ninth standard I had spent 200,000 Kyat. Even though I had to pay school fees, I also had to pay for extra curricular activities, examination fees, and other school related cost. These included playing sports, participating in school shows and concerts, and using the bathroom and rubbish bins. If our class went on a picnic, we had to pay.

Q: What are your parent's occupations? Were they able to provide you with the basic living essentials? Did they have any financial difficulties?

A: My parents are tea farmers. They could not provide the basic living essentials because we came from a poor family, and we had to live day by day. We had many problems and both of my parents needed to work. We had many people in our family, so we could not attend school; we had to help our parents. We had to buy food at very high prices, and pay farm taxes to the SPDC. Sometimes they made us do forced labor. If we could not do the forced labor, we had to pay them.

Q: Did you have problems with school supplies or furniture?

A: We had many kinds of problems with school supplies. If we bought books from school, we still have to give them back at the end of the year, for our teachers to sell them to other students again. Because our schools were open, without gates and such, we would have cows and buffaloes coming into our school. To clean the mess they would make, we would have to come early in the morning and clean everything, but didn't have anything to clean with, which at times left us with no time to study, since to school would be so dirty.

Q: Was there discrimination between the children with parents in the government and the other children?

A: Yes, they discriminated between children with parents in the government and other children. There was inequality between the poor and rich people. If teachers' children would fight with other children, teachers did not see their own children's mistakes and always blamed other kids. They didn't like the poor people either.

Q: What are your opinions and suggestions for education?

A: If we improved the school system, it would be good for the next generation. I don't like government policy because they take a lot of money from students and make people poor. There are not enough teachers. If something is broken in the school, they don't fix it. They don't build the schools well or take care of children. We also have difficulties with transportation.

Q: What are your expectations or ambitions for education?

A: I had hoped that if I finished high school and university, I could become a teacher. However, my parents had problems with money, so I couldn't attend high school. Some of my friends passed high school but didn't get any jobs and had to pick green tea and make charcoal. Being unable to get a job even after finishing high school, made me lose interest to continue my education. When I look at them, my perspective about wanting to attend school in Burma changed.

Q: What suggestions do you have for better education in the future?

A: The government should build better and free schools for children in every village. After we finish school, we should get jobs. Teachers must do a better job of explaining things to students. They shouldn't take bribes, and shouldn't beat children. They need to take care of children's health and respect them.

University Students Interview

Name : Mai/—/—
 Age : 23 years old
 Sex : Male
 Education : University
 Ethnicity : Ta'ang
 Religion: Buddhism
 Address : Hu Khin Group, H.. M— village, Nam San Township

Q: Which school did you attend and when did you leave school?

A: I attended basic school, through eighth standard in the village of Hone Mon, and then I attended a middle school in Nam Sam Township to do eighth standard again. I attended high school in Tong Dagon in Yangon. I didn't pass the first year of tenth standard, so I moved to attend Man Tone High School. I finished high school and left in 2004.

Q: Did you pass your exam on the first try?

A: I tried to take the exam for two years but failed because I had to work to pay tuition fees since I wanted to change schools and go to Yangon. I had difficulties because I couldn't speak Burmese very well. I don't think we can compare the students who can pay school without having to work, with the students who have to work, because it's very different. I stayed in a monastery and had to get up early to clean, and go to the city and ask for offerings for the monastery. We didn't have time to do our homework, and we lost more time working. We tried hard to read books. I also couldn't pay tuition fees every month because my parents couldn't send the money sometimes. If people from my village came to Yangon my parents would give them money. I failed the exam many times and left to continue high school in Man Tone Township. When I attended high school

in Man Tone Township, my parents gave me money to stay at boarding school. Each year, we had to pay 250,000 Kyat for fees. All together, I spent over 700,000 Kyat. If I had money, I skipped school with my friends and I would go out to drink alcohol and smoke cigarettes. I often did not attend school but my teachers never said anything to me. When it was almost time to take the exam, our teacher asked us for 500 Kyat to show us the exam ahead of time to help us cheat. We had a chance to copy from the paper. I did not study at all year, but I passed because I knew the questions before the exam. Ninety percent of the students passed that year in Man Tone School.

Q: What did you do after you left school?

A: After I passed high school, I went to apply the Border Development School in Mandalay, but I didn't pass the interview. I also didn't have the ambition to pass. I applied late, because I didn't know the school was open. The school was recruiting different ethnic groups to join government military camps. Since I didn't pass, they asked me to work in Yangon, so I went to Yangon and I stayed there for one month, but I didn't find a job. Later, I went back and worked as a teacher for four months in my village. I didn't have any ability to teach and I didn't want to, but they asked me because there were not enough teachers in the schools. They called the people who had passed high school and asked us to teach in the village, so I had to work for four months. At the time, I received a salary of 8000 Kyat for one month and a pot of rice. This was not enough for my daily food. It is enough to buy alcohol and cigarettes. If I could work a different job, I could get more money than if I taught in the school. Many of our schools were not qualified, and they did not stick to the curriculum, they just taught what they felt like. We did not learn anything either, because we just copied information word for word from the blackboard, and never learned to critically think. If children would say anything wrong or before our turn, teachers would beat them. I stopped teaching, since it didn't pay enough money. I left Burma to try improving my life in Thailand.

Q: What are your ambitions? Was education profitable in your situation?

A: I was never encouraged to become an engineer or doctor, and I didn't have the ambition to become these things. My community and my parents didn't expect me to because they didn't have degrees. Also some people had degrees but couldn't get a job, so they know education doesn't guarantee security.

Q: What were the biggest challenges while obtaining education and how much were your school and other education fees?

A: I didn't have freedom to pursue education. The financial conditions were difficult in our family. We had to struggle to pay for festival sporting events, equipment costs, the teacher's supplies, and our graduation ceremony. We also had to pay fees for the textbooks. It was very difficult.

Q: Were you forced to do labor for the SPDC while you attended school? Did you have any problems with transportation?

A: The road I took to go to school sometimes flooded. After rain, sometimes there were landslides. The military would come after a landslide and force people to clean up the road. If our parents were too old to work, they would call students to leave school and do forced labor. There were landslides every two weeks in the summer that we were forced to clean up. We had problems with transportation in the hill lands.

Q: How do you feel about the quality of the teaching and the school fees?

A: The method of teaching does not help students. Teachers are not skilled enough to teach students. They make the students memorize, because it is easier for the teachers. This method doesn't help students think critically. They collect money from students, but keep it themselves. The students who have to pay the fees themselves don't have time to study, and then cannot pass exams. To earn money on the side some teachers would also start selling food, and such, but for much higher prices than elsewhere, which would not be fair.

Q: Did you have adequate furniture in school?

A: We don't have enough tables or chairs at the school. It was very dirty both inside and outside of school, yet no one would improve the situation. Because everything was open, we would often have animals staying in our classrooms to look for shelter. They wanted to ask for money from our parents to repair the school, but we did not have money for this. Students would have to go to school very early to clean. Teachers would also take our money and not provide things we would pay for. Even though we would pay teachers, we would still have to pay to get resources outside of school.

Q: Does the education system discriminate between students who have parents in the government and those who do not?

A: The teachers discriminate between poor and rich students. They favor students who have more money and they don't take care of the poor students. Those without money are discriminated against by other people. We are all Ta'ang, so we would get along well with our community teachers. With the government teachers we would not have bad relationships. We did however have some problems, because they would speak Burmese, and we don't speak Burmese very well.

Q: What are your suggestions to better education in the future?

A: We should have free primary schools in every village. We should change the model of our education system to be at the same level as international schools. We should build a university in the hill lands and be able to speak our own language at school.

အစည်းအဝေးတက်ရောက်ခွင့်ပြုရန်တောင်းဆိုထားသည့် ဝန်ထမ်းများအမည်စာရင်း

စဉ်		လုပ်ငန်းများစီမံခန့်ခွဲခြင်းနှင့် စီမံကိန်းရေးဆွဲခြင်းသင်တန်း လေ့လာနာယူမှုဆိုင်ရာ ရည်မှန်းချက်များ			
၁	ဒေါ်နု	(၁) ကလေးသူငယ်များ၏ ဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးဆိုင်ရာ လိုအပ်ချက်များကို ပြန်လည်သုံးသပ်တတ်ရမည်။			
၂	ဦးအောင်	(၂) ကလေးသူငယ်များအတွက် ဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးအနာဂတ်ပုံရိပ်ကို ဖော်ထုတ်နိုင်ရမည်။			
၃	ဒေါ်နု	(၃) ကလေးသူငယ်များ တက်ခွင့်ဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးစီမံခန့်ခွဲမှုကော်မတီ၏ ဦးတည်ချက်လမ်းစဉ်ကို ပြောပြတတ်ရမည်။			
၄	ဒေါ်အေး	(၄) စီမံခန့်ခွဲခြင်း၏ အဓိပ္ပာယ်နှင့် ၎င်း၏အခြေခံကဏ္ဍ(၄)ရပ်ကို ရှင်းပြတတ်ရမည်။			
၅	ဒေါ်အေး	(၅) ကလေးသူငယ်များတက်ခွင့်ဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးလုပ်ငန်း ရည်မှန်းချက်များကို ဖော်ထုတ်တတ်ရမည်။			
၆	ဒေါ်အေး	(၆) ဖော်ထုတ်ထားပြီးသော ရည်မှန်းချက်တစ်ခုချင်းအတွက် ဆီလျော်သော လုပ်ငန်းစဉ်များကို ဆုံးဖြတ်တတ်ရမည်။			
၇	ဒေါ်အေး	(၇) ထင်လုပ်ငန်းစဉ်များအတွက် လိုအပ်မည့် အရင်းအနှီးအင်အားများကို ရွေးချယ်တတ်ရမည်။			
၈	ဒေါ်အေး	(၈) လိုအပ်သောအရင်းအနှီးအချို့ကို ပြင်ပမှအထောက်အပံ့ရရှိရေးအတွက် အဆိုပြုတင်ပြတတ်ရမည်။			
၉	ဒေါ်အေး				
၁၀	ဒေါ်အေး				
၁၁	ဒေါ်ရီရီအေး	။	၃၆	ဦးအောင်ထွန်း	မ (၂) နမ့်မတ်ကာ
၁၂	ဒေါ်နုနုမလ္လာ	။	၃၇	ဒေါ်အိအောင်	မိုးလေး
၁၃	ဒေါ်အိအောင်	မူလွန် (၄)	၃၈	ဒေါ်အိအောင်	။
၁၄	ဒေါ်နီနီအေး	။	၃၉	ဒေါ်အိအောင်	ကျဲနော့
၁၅	ဒေါ်အိအောင်	အမက (၅)	၄၀	ဒေါ်အိအောင်	လုံကန်
၁၆	ဒေါ်နီနီလှိုင်	အမက (၄)	၄၁	ဒေါ်အိအောင်	ပန်ကွတ်
၁၇	ဒေါ်အိအောင် (အိအောင်)	အမက (၇)	၄၂	ဦးမြင့်အောင်	။
၁၈	ဒေါ်မိုးမိုးခိုင်	အမက (၉)	၄၃	ဒေါ်အေးယွန်း	လုံကန်
၁၉	ဒေါ်မေမေမြိုး	ပညာရေးမှူးရုံး	၄၄	ဒေါ်အိအောင်လှိုင်	ပန်မိတ်
၂၀	ဒေါ်အိအောင်	။	၄၅	ဒေါ်အိအောင်	လှိုင်လှိုင်
၂၁	ဒေါ်အိအောင်	အထက (နမ့်မတ်ကာ)	၄၆	ဒေါ်အိအောင်	။
၂၂	ဒေါ်အိအောင်	။	၄၇	ဒေါ်အိအောင်	။
၂၃	ဒေါ်အိအောင်	မ (၁) (နမ့်မတ်ကာ)	၄၈	ဒေါ်အိအောင်	ဟူမျက်မန်ပုံ
၂၄	ဒေါ်အိအောင်	ပန်ကျဲရောင်	၄၉	ဒေါ်အိအောင်	နောင်ဆန်း
၂၅	ဒေါ်အိအောင်	။	၅၀	ဦးတိန်	လော့ခွမ်

"My parents are uneducated. My youngest brother and I also couldn't read and write and didn't attend any school. My parents don't encourage us to attend the school because we don't have money in our family we are poor, and if we need to know something we are always going to ask some children who are attending the school. For me, I can write number one to ten in Burmese. Most of villagers are not educated in our village"

MISSION of TSYO

The Ta'ang Students and Youth Organization-TSYO is working for peace, justice, to build a Democratic country, and to improve the lives of Ta'ang students, youth, and all people.

Goals of TSYO

- To work for peace and to develop the Ta'ang region.
- To increase the number of Ta'ang youth who can participate as leaders.
- To promote gender equality.
- To end the military dictatorship system.
- To build a federalist democratic country with equality and self-determination.

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Background of TSYO formally -PYNG

PYNG established on 27 December 1998 on Thai-Burma border, PYNG had its first congress in March 2007, and an Executive Committee was elected democratically during the congress, they had led the organization splendidly.

In 2008 December, the second congress of PYNG decided to change the name of the organization to the TSYO to reflect that although we are called the Palaung in the Burmese language, we will start to call ourselves “Ta'ang” as per our own language.

We also changed the structure of our organization during our second Congress, from a Coordinator system to a Secretary system. The congress elected 7 Executive Committee Members to lead the second term of the TSYO by secret ballot. The Secretary system was implemented.

TSYO try to develop skill of youth, improve their knowledge, and political awareness through training program, media dissemination and publication of accurate information on events to our local Ta'ang area and the international community to highlight awareness and promote change.