

Climate Change

Trees prevent floods and droughts as well as holding topsoil in place. Chin State was very cold not only in the winter but also in the summer before. Today the weather is very hot because there are no trees. If we look particularly at the capital city Hakha, before the land faced the effects of deforestation, they got 18,000 gallons of water per day. But today, they can get only between 7,000 and 10,000 gallons of water per day.¹²⁰

The Chin people's suffering from climate change is seen clearly from the year 2000 and onwards. Especially the rainy season has changed from twenty years ago (the era of General U Ne Win). The river cannot flow like before, it is dried up, not only the river but also the state. There is not enough drinking water and people fight each other about stealing water. Not only humans have felt the drought, but all living things have. The climate of Chin land is now unhealthy and effects human life and endangers the future of the land. Therefore, climate change is a big problem in Chin land today.¹²¹

People cultivating crops depend on the rain. The crops need water, so the crops cannot grow when the climate is changed. They have not had enough water. In 2003 and 2007 they did not succeed at all because of drought. When they needed the water it did not rain, and when they do not want the rain, it is raining worse. They have no food for the next year. In 2008 it did not rain until the end of May, local people could not grow the crops or rice at all. There is no other job to do; they are waiting for the rain. They do not know how they will survive for the next year. They are working hard but the harvest is poor because of climate change.

Social Problems

Article 23 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights states that 'Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.'¹²²

Forests are the major economic resources for the survival of the Chin people. People are finding escape routes rather than struggling against poverty. They

¹²⁰ Ibid., page 11.

¹²¹ Interviews 9, 11, and 14.

¹²² <http://www.unhchr.ch/udhr/lang/eng.htm>



Cultivation during drought. (Photo by Icon).

cannot harvest enough food. There are two kinds of poverty in the Chin Hills: physical poverty and emotional poverty. The environmental destruction affects both kinds of poverty. 'In physical poverty human value is decreasing and material value is increasing. Mental poverty and psychological poverty lead to selfish interpretation of creatures, which cannot foresee the next generation.'¹²³

After 1988, many families relocated to India and to the flat lands in Burma due to battles between the SPDC and the rebel Chin organization. The SPDC accused villagers and local people of disobeying them, and tortured them. People could not stay securely in their villages; as a result, it was difficult for them to find a livelihood.

About 50,000 Chin people abandoned their homeland and took refuge in foreign countries in the past year to escape oppression by a brutal military regime in Burma. The military is still forcing Chin people to work on army camp construction, carrying army rations without paying them, and is confiscating land in Chin State. As a result, people have fled their homeland. There are no other options for a career except farming in Chin State.¹²⁴ In the beginning, most mature Chin males hunted animals. There was no trading in Chin culture. But after they could not survive they had to sell everything that they had. The Chin are economically poor due to a poor economic system.

Education & Ignorance

The system of teaching in Burma is too limited. Most teachers were never deeply convinced of the original meaning and purpose of education. Rather they use memorization. Many students pass exams without proper qualifications and without reading a single book. Therefore many do not have ecological knowledge. Hence, most Chin seem to be completely ignorant about the ecological crisis.¹²⁵

Chin State is the only state in Burma without an airport for public transportation and without a university to equip young people for their futures. Few young people have the opportunity to obtain higher education due to poverty. Poor

¹²³ Thesis by Joel Za Hlei Kap (see above), page 81.

¹²⁴ Khonumthung News, 21 February 2007 ('Oppression in Chin state forces people to abandon homeland'), page 5.

¹²⁵ 'The Root Causes of Ecological Crisis, document on file with author, page 47.

people are automatically excluded from the educated circle. This is against the Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 27, which says: 'States Parties must recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.'

Health

In 1950, the government built a hospital in Falam Township; there are no other private hospitals. After building the hospital, there is not enough medicine and equipment. Only rich people can go to the hospital, it is not for poor people because they discriminate a lot and the cost is so high. Therefore many people died due to poverty. When the poor were sick they could make medicine from the forest, but when the forest was destroyed the poor lost their traditional medicines. Diseases have increased and the trees cannot bear fruits as before. People often suffer from burning eyes, sore throats, and coughs as by-products of urban life. In addition, people are suffering nowadays from ailments that are different from 15 years ago. Now, diseases are caused through breathing dirty air. Dirty air may cause much more harmful problems than minor irritations. Dirty air can cause cancer and birth defects. In addition, the people suffer from malaria and dysentery from water pollution due to lack of fresh water and dried up streams.¹²⁶

Conclusion

The Declaration on the Right to Development Article 3 says that, 'States have the primary responsibility for the creation of national and international conditions favorable to the realization of the right to development.'

Chin State is being deforested and is losing its most valuable and beautiful natural resources. Analyses of the root causes of deforestation have pointed to factors such as poverty, corrupt politics, unjust taxes, dishonest courts, lack of education, lack of economic development, the traditional way of living, the violence of ruling classes, and the lack of electric power.¹²⁷ All of these factors led people to change their cultivation, cut firewood, burn forests, and to find and exploit orchids and other forest resources. Deforestation has had a negative impact on the environment in the whole of Chin State.

We can sadly count the number of negative results of deforestation in Chin State. The environment of Chin land appears as destroyed forest and land and some

¹²⁶ 'Ecological Crisis in Chin Land', document on file with author, page 25.

¹²⁷ 'The root causes of ecology crisis in Chin Land', page 35.

species of small animals are almost extinct. The land is covered with smoke during the burning time for around four months and people face a lack of water in the dried up land. The people suffer from bad health as a result of these environmental problems.

The Chin people did not need to migrate to other countries before because before their land could produce enough food and forest in a controlled climate. Currently, Chin people are living in an economic crisis and the lack of education is one of the root causes of deforestation. Deforestation creates refugees; people cannot get enough food to live. They are suffering double poverty - material poverty and emotional or mental poverty. This causes a decline in loyalty and faithfulness of the people.¹²⁸ Almost all rural people are ignorant about the current ecological crisis, due to a lack of education.

The SPDC ignorance of rural development is causing social and environmental problems in the Falam and Hakha Townships of Northern Chin State. If the government continues to ignore rural development, it will mean more deforestation and more causes for negative and destructive environmental impacts in Northern Chin State.

In the northern Chin State there are few environmental activists and few health organizations. There is no organization for rural development. A few individuals and the ZTC (Zomi Theology College) could work in development and protect the environment, but they need technical support and money.

This research reveals that one of the main needs of the Chin community is to develop ecological knowledge and technical restoration in the Chin Hills. Technical restoration would not only prevent further environmental destruction but it would also reduce the poverty by creating sustainable development. Sustainable development will bring a new sound environment and a new understanding of ecology to the communities of the Chin Hills.

Recommendations

To the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC):

- To create social, political and economic development.
- To provide basic needs for people in Chin State.
- To respect and protect the Chin people's rights and dignity.

¹²⁸ Document on file with author, page 33.

- To follow international environmental law as has already been agreed to.
- To practice the Convention on the Rights of Child as was already signed.
- To stop dividing the reserve forests.
- To stop unjust taxes.
- To stop using forced labor for planting tea and castor.
- To make decision through just and fair courts.
- To stop corruption in business.
- To support sustainable livelihoods for rural people.
- To take responsibility for poverty.
- To allow non-governmental organizations to do their work.
- To build a university in Chin State.
- To educate the people on how to protect the environment.
- To provide technical assistance for Chin State in sustainable development.

To NGOs / environmental and human rights organizations:

- To strongly pressure the SPDC to respect the international environmental law that they signed and ratified.
- To pressure the SPDC to ratify other human rights conventions and they have not ratified such as the ICCPR or ICESCR.
- To pressure the SPDC to establish NGOs and CBOs to protect the environment and reduce poverty.
- To provide adequate education resources so that the people have the opportunity to receive quality education.
- To educate people to understand environmental law.
- To serve in restoration work for a sound environment.

To local communities:

- To demand that the SPDC to preserve forests in each village.
- To change from traditional shifting cultivation to permanent commercial farming methods.
- To change from hunting to caring for the valuable wild animals.
- To change from an undisciplined animal rearing system to a systematic animal grazing system.
- To share environmental knowledge.
- To protect the environment and maintain natural resources.

To Religious groups and other organizations:

- To create programs to raise awareness about the environment.
- To grow substitution crops every year.

Forced Labor



SPDC Use of Forced Labor on the Electric Power Lines & the Effect on Villagers in De Maw Soe Township, Karenni State

By Khon Nasa

Introduction

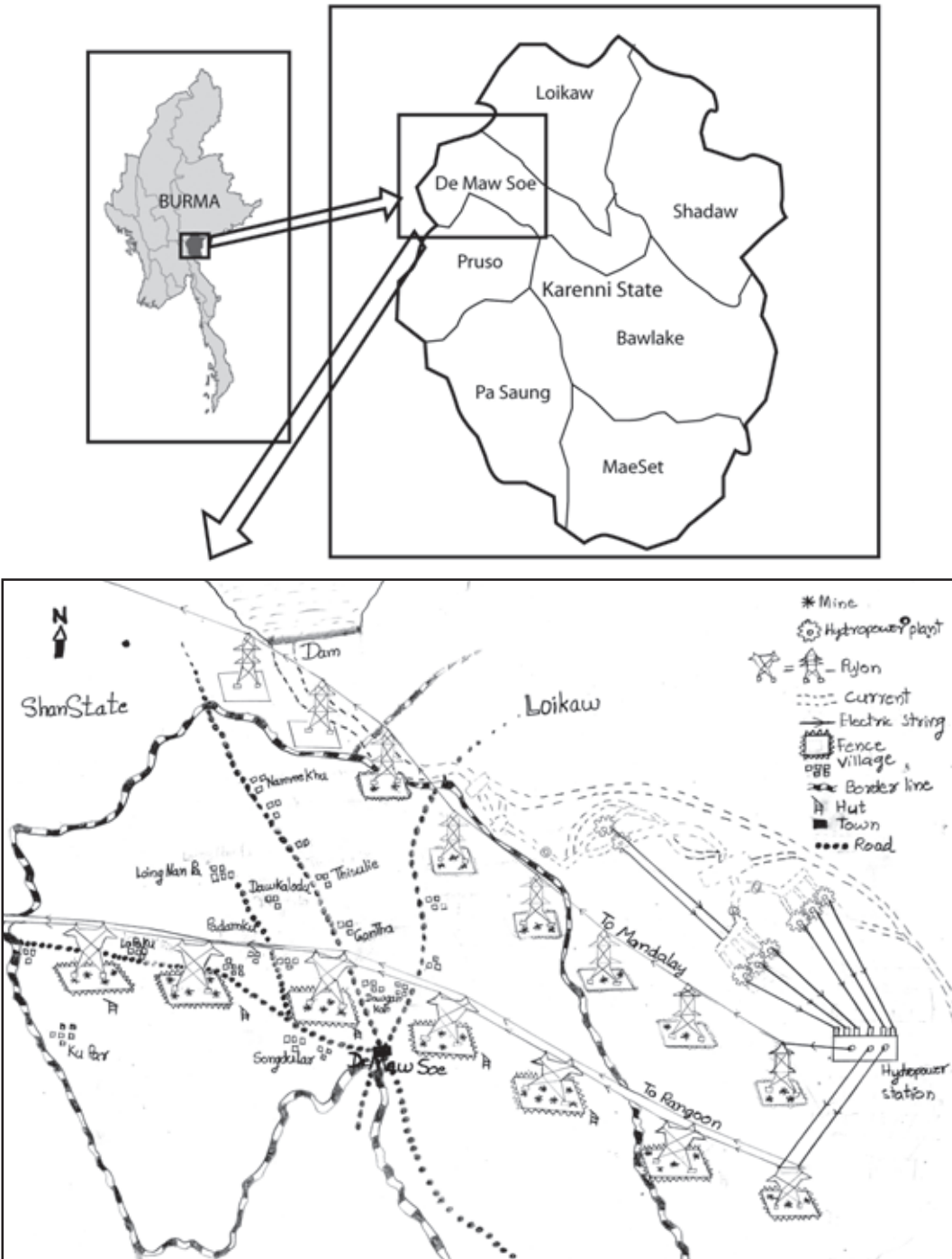
When U Nu took power for the first time in October 1954, the Burmese cooperated with two Japanese companies called Kajima and Nipon Ko Ee to construct the hydropower plant at the Law Pi Ta waterfall. In 1960 they brought electricity from Law Pi Ta to Rangoon successfully.¹²⁹ The electric power line passes through the De Maw Soe Township in Karenni State and many local people's property was confiscated by the military regime. After the electric power line was finished the villagers were suffering and faced a lot of violence as a result of the military regime's actions. The Burmese cities need electricity, so the regime uses forced labor and abuses the human rights of Karenni people. The Karenni villagers have already experienced suffering from violations of their human rights for a long time. The Karenni villagers do not know for how much longer they must suffer from the State Peace and Development Council's (SPDC) actions.

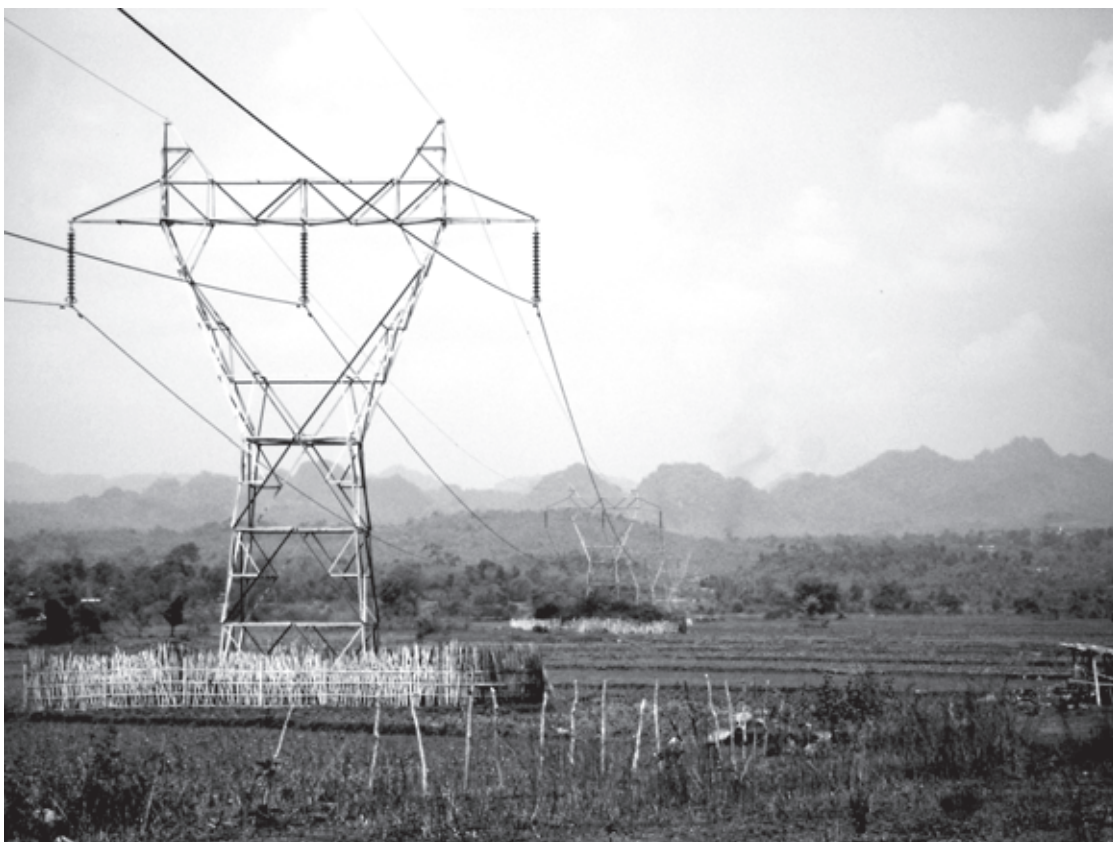
The purpose of this report is to inform the local and international communities about how the SPDC forces the villagers to work, to take responsibility for electric power lines and be on sentry duty at night in the pylon area. In 1955 the Burmese military signed the International Labor Organization convention (ILO) NO.29 on forced labor. However, despite the fact that they signed the ILO convention, the villagers are still facing forced labor as a result of the military soldiers. The State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) are ignoring the ILO and silently uses forced labor in De Maw Soe township of Karenni State. This report aims to expose the strategies used for forced labor and to force the villagers to take responsibility for the pylons, despite the regime not providing any electricity for the villagers. The villagers must take responsibility and offer their lands, houses, animals, blood, sweat and energy from the dam site and down the power lines.

Part covers the international law standard according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and International Labor Convention (ILO). Part two discusses the forced labor situation including making fences for the pylons and guarding electricity power line at night and day time. Part three covers the impact on the lives of local people and animals, including the use of landmines.

¹²⁹ *Myanmar Encyclopedia* (page 292).

Map of Karenni State and Power Transmission Line





*The SPDC electric power line passes through local villager's lands, villages and forests.
(Photo by Khon Nasa).*

The SPDC continues using force labor in Karenni State every day. The SPDC uses various kinds of forced labor on villagers. The SPDC soldiers order villagers to be on sentry duty in the region of the pylons at night time. Anyone who does not obey and follow the orders of the soldiers is fined and tortured. During the night time there is no security for the villagers. There is also not enough sleep. They are unable to go to their fields and they lose their income. When the SPDC soldiers force them to clear the land, go as porters and make fences without compensation they say 'it is voluntary' and not forced labor.

Though villagers do everything that the Burmese military demands, the military has no humane feelings and plants landmines near the villages, around the pylons and near their camps. They even stipulated to the villagers that if they accidentally explode a landmine, the villagers must pay a fine. It is one way of income for the SPDC soldiers. Many local people are obliterated because the SPDC soldiers' plant landmines. It is very dangerous for local people to work and find their food.

Even though the Karenni villagers make fences and stand sentry for pylons every year the electricity is not for them. Some house get electricity, but they have to pay taxes and it is very expensive. Usually the villagers can only access the electricity for five or six hours a day.

The situation of the villagers is dire. They are silently facing discrimination, limited access to education, poor health care, and no access to electricity as an ongoing result of the military regime. The SPDC soldiers do not care about the villagers' health, food security, elderly people, pregnant women and young people. They only want to follow their order and say "an order is order."

Methodology

The research for this report was done in De Maw Soe Township, Burma in April 2008. Twelve interviews were conducted in total, including with local leaders, farmers, ex-soldiers and interviews with people who had suffered from forced labor by the SPDC soldiers and who were used to make fences in the region of the pylons and sentry for pylons at the day and night time in De Maw Soe Township.

Background

Ne Win took power of Burma in 1962. From 1968 to 1969 the Ne Win military regime cut down the trees and cleared the Lawpita dam site, forcing all the villagers to clear the dam site without payment.¹³⁰ All villagers in Karenni State had to give their time on the dam site and hoped that they would receive electricity. However, the Burmese regime has only supplied electricity to Rangoon and Mandalay.

In 1970 Ne Win cooperated with a Swedish company and constructed a dam project on the Shan and Kayah States' border to organize the water for the Law Pi Ta hydropower plant. This dam is called the Moby Dam.¹³¹ It is built on the Beluchan River. The river flows through Karenni State and it becomes a big waterfall at Law Pi Ta, therefore the waterfall is called Law Pi Ta waterfall.

In 1973 the Law Pi Ta hydropower plant's average output was 168 MW. A 402 kilometer-long electric transmission lines carries electricity to Rangoon and an-

¹³⁰ Interview 5.

¹³¹ Interview 5.

other 400 kilometer-long transmission power line carries power to Mandalay. In the end of 1992 the military government built Hydropower Plant No. 1, with an average output of 28 MW.¹³²

Those who live in Karenni State have no access to electricity in their homes until now. When they have tried to get electricity from the military regime they were ignored. The military regime uses Law Pi Ta electricity and makes weapons in Rangoon. In addition the military soldiers use their weapons and force the local people to take responsibility for the electricity power line. Some villagers were killed by SPDC soldier. Therefore many local people are against the military regime.¹³³

Ethnicity and Culture

De Maw Soe Township is located in the eastern part of Kayah State in Burma.¹³⁴ The east of De Maw Soe Township is bordered by Shan State, in the north it is bordered by Loikaw township, in the west it is bordered by Shadaw and Bawlakeh townships and in south it is bordered by Prouso township. Many different kinds of ethnic groups live in De Maw Soe Township. There are Kayan, Kayah, Pa O and Kayaw people. Most of the villagers are farmers and they are very close to their culture. They have their own traditions, languages and religions. Their villages are very small and the village systems are different.

International Law Standards on Forced Labor

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) military regime is a member of the United Nations. The international community has agreed on the human rights law for their citizens. However, the SPDC does not follow the international human rights law and pressures the local people to lose their rights. Many local people are facing human rights abuses by the SPDC. Therefore the SPDC should sign the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

¹³² *Dammed by Burma's Generals* (2006) Karenni Development Research Group (KDRG), page 29.

¹³³ Interview 6.

¹³⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demoso_Township

Article (5) *No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.*¹³⁵

The military soldiers' torture and kill villagers who are absent from their sentry duty at the pylons or work for the SPDC benefits. Therefore, the Burmese military regime is in violation of human right according to the UDHR article (5).

Article (9) *No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.*

The SPDC is also in violation of human rights according to the UDHR article (9). For the reason that the SPDC soldiers arrest local people with out any reason and people who do not stand sentry at the pylon are sometimes arrested by SPDC soldiers.

Article (23) *Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.*

All villager in Karenni State are facing force labor as a result of SPDC soldiers every day for security of the electric power line, however, they have no access to electricity in there house. The electricity is for Burma's cities and military officers. The SPDC is in violation human rights according to UDHR article (23).

International Labor Organization Convention

The ILO convention prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor and the SPDC has signed the International Labor Organization (ILO). They recently announced that if any person is forced to work, they can complain to the ILO. However, forced labor is increasing day by day. If some one complains to the ILO the SPDC will threaten them with death. The ILO has the responsibility to pressure the SPDC to follow what the convention said. The SPDC should obey the ILO convention.

Article (2) 1. *For the purposes of this Convention the term forced or compulsory labor shall mean all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily.*¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

¹³⁶ Convention concerning Forced or Compulsory Labor (ILO No. 29), 39 U.N.T.S. 55, entered into force 1 May 1932.

The SPDC force the Karenni villagers to build the fences for pylons every year without any compensation. In that case the villagers have to take their own tools and bamboos. Consequently the SPDC is in violation of ILO Article (2).

Article (18) Forced or compulsory labor for the transport of persons or goods, such as the labor of porters or boatmen, shall be abolished within the shortest possible period. Meanwhile the competent authority shall promulgate regulations determining, inter alia, (a) that such labor shall only be employed for the purpose of facilitating the movement of officials of the administration, when on duty, or for the transport of Government stores, or, in cases of very urgent necessity, the transport of persons other than officials, (b) that the workers so employed shall be medically certified to be physically fit, where medical examination is possible, and that where such medical examination is not practicable the person employing such workers shall be held responsible for ensuring that they are physically fit and not suffering from any infectious or contagious diseases, (c) the maximum load which these workers may carry, (d) the maximum distance from their homes to which they may be taken, (e) the maximum number of days per month or other period for which they may be taken, including the days spent in returning to their homes, and (1) the persons entitled to demand this form of forced or compulsory labor and the extent to which they are entitled to demand it. 2. In fixing the maxima referred to under (c), (d) and (e) in the foregoing paragraph, the competent authority shall have regard to all relevant factors, including the physical development of the population from which the workers are recruited, the nature of the country through which they must travel and the climatic conditions.

The SPDC soldiers force the villagers to transport their ammunition and equipment. According to ILO Article 18(1) the SPDC is in violation of human rights.

Article (11)1. Only adult able-bodied males who are of an apparent age of not less than 18 and not more than 45 years may be called upon for forced or compulsory labor. Except in respect of the kinds of labor provided for in article 10 of this Convention, the following limitations and conditions shall apply ...

The SPDC soldiers not only force those between the ages of 18 to 45 to work, in addition they force children to work in their camp, clearing and in sentry duty at night. The villagers in Karenni State who are less than 18 years old have to stand sentry at the pylons at night. According to ILO Article 11 the SPDC is in violation of human rights.

Forced Labor

The SPDC military junta continues forced labor practices in Burma. Ten of thousands of men, women and children of all ages do many kinds of forced labor including working in the military camp, building pylons, building highways, working as porters, making fences for pylons and other infrastructure projects. The SPDC calls this labor voluntary.

Around 127 Karenni villages are facing many problems because SPDC soldiers force them to make fences, clearing brush, cutting down trees under the pylons, or do sentry duty at night for around 100 pylons in De Maw Soe Township every year. Each village has to take responsibility for each pylon and if anything happens the villagers must know about it. Villagers also have to build fences around the pylons and sentry at night and during the day. If a villager is absent the soldiers demand a fine.

The SPDC uses forced labor even in landmined areas, forcing villagers to porter in the front row and using them to sweep for landmines. The villagers have to carry heavy weights and the SPDC tells the villagers that if they cannot carry what the soldier force them, the soldiers will torture or kill them. The SPDC forces the people to work until the point of malnutrition or exhaustion. If the villagers get sick from diseases there is no medicine for them.

Making the fence is not safe for villagers because around the pylon areas the SPDC soldiers have planted thousands of landmines. The villagers must work with the knowledge that if a landmines explode they will die in addition to the fact that their family will have to give a fine to the SPDC soldiers.

The SPDC usually sends written orders to villagers demanding laborers and then one person has to go for each family. If the family has no husband or boy in their house they have to hire a person to go to the work site. They have to pay at least 2,500 kyat per day or more if the work is not finished. Sometimes they have to pay for two or three days. As a result some families do not want to work several days in a work site, so they bring their children with them to finish the work.

The work sites are very far from the villages and consequently the people have to walk for many hours without any transportation to get to the work sites and the time is not enough for them to finish the work. If the villagers are late the SPDC soldiers swear or give the villagers punishment.

Making Fences For Pylons

Since 1980 the soldiers have forced the villagers to make fences for the pylons every year.¹³⁷ Before, the villagers were working on their fields and were happy with their families everyday. However, because of the military regime members who live in De Maw Soe Township, the people have to make fences for the pylons every year and they spend a lot of their time doing so. Consequently they lose their jobs, income, bamboo and they have no time to be happy with their family anymore. SPDC soldiers live in their camp and give orders to village headmen to build fences for the pylons. Sometime they demand money from the villagers without explanation. They tell the villagers to send bamboo to them for building their camps. They give orders to the village headmen to make fences for the pylons, but nothing is for the villagers, and they have to use their own tools and food.

"First they order village's chairman like this, 'this time your village has to make the fence for pylon and don't be so late, we give you authority to supervise it.' Then the village's chairman gives us an order again. Usually they send orders by letter."¹³⁸

"I used to do my own fence on May every year and when I do my fence, I have to make a fence for the pylon every year."¹³⁹



*The SPDC forces villagers to make fences.
(Photo by Khon Nasa).*

¹³⁷ Interview 6.

¹³⁸ Interview 1.

¹³⁹ Interview 10.

The villagers have to make fences for the pylons every year without benefit for themselves and with no access to electricity in their house. If they do not do it the SPDC soldiers will demand a fine and punish them. Subsequently they have to use their own bamboo and have to do it on time. If they do not have bamboo they have to buy it with their own money. Sometimes the villages who have no money for buying the bamboo have to change their crops, including rice, to bamboo. Widows in the village who cannot make the fence have to hire men who can build the fence for them. Then they have to do light work or housework for the people who do the fence for them.

"When the SPDC soldiers force my village to build the fence for the pylon I have to hire a man for making the fence on behalf of me every year and I have to give him 2,500 kyat."¹⁴⁰

"I have no bamboo in my garden therefore I have to buy bamboo for making the fence every year and I have to pay 500 to 1,000 kyat for each bamboo. Right now I can still buy it, but I think not so long from now in my village will be gone. If the bamboo is gone, next time where can I get it and how can I make more fences for the pylon? No one will be able to make more fences in my village."¹⁴¹

The SPDC soldiers live comfortably in their camp and they give orders to villagers to take responsibility for the pylons. The villagers cannot follow their own methods; they have to follow as they are ordered. If the villagers do not respect their orders they torture and punish them or they have to build a new fence again.

"They give orders to us to have to build two layers of fences for each pylon. They must be 100 yards along and each fence must be 4 armspans apart."¹⁴²

"Sometimes, if I'm not free to go in the working area I have to hire a man for making the fence instead of me. I have to pay at least 2,500 kyat per day if the work is finished. For a day it is no problem, but more than one I can't pay for it anymore."¹⁴³

The SPDC does not take responsibility for the pylons and uses forced labor from the villages to protect the pylons. They give orders to villagers to work as their

¹⁴⁰ Interview 12.

¹⁴¹ Interview 3.

¹⁴² Interview 7.

¹⁴³ Interview 10.

slaves and each village has to make, a fence for each pylon every year. As a result of the fact that the villagers have to make fences for around 100 pylons every year bamboo, trees and other traditional plants are gone.

"When my husband's health is not good I have to make the fence instead of my husband. If I did not do it by myself I would have no money for the fine in my house, so I have to cut down the bamboo and bring it by myself and I have to climb mountain to get there. The place is quite far from my village and it is not easy for women to cut down the bamboo and making fences for the pylons."¹⁴⁴

The SPDC uses forced labor everywhere along the pylons area and other places also face similar problems as De Maw Soe Township.

"LIB 261 forced the villagers to rebuild fences around the pylon. Daw Paw Kler and No Ko villages in northern Karenni State have to build them."¹⁴⁵

Guarding Power Lines

The villagers face many problems including guarding pylons day and night. SPDC soldiers force the villagers to be on sentry duty along the pylons area at night time without any compensation for it. The majority of poor local people and widows are becoming poorer day by day; they have no income in their lives, no jobs and most of them are day workers.

A number of the families only get 1,500 kyat for a day of work in the rainy season. They have no job and no income in summer. How can they support their families? There is not enough food, clothes, medicine or education. The work is



*Villagers must guard pylons day and night without benefit.
(Photo by Khon Nasa).*

¹⁴⁴ Interview 11.

¹⁴⁵ www.freeburmarangers.org/Reports/2008/20080115.html

not easy for them; they have to be in the farm from 7am to 5pm to get 1,500 kyat. The authorities should take security, health care and food security as a priority for the citizens. Instead of take responsibility for them, the authorities extort money, demand forced labor and torture them.

During sentry duty the villagers face several systems of treatment from the SPDC soldiers. They have to stay awake the whole night, so in the day time they cannot work in their fields. They are poor families and they have no time for being on sentry and they have no money. However unfortunate the citizens are, the authorities do not care about their lives.

The SPDC ignores that the citizens are poor. Their aim is only to get money from them and force the villagers to work. The widows in the villages have to hire men for about 2,500 kyat to sentry the pylons. They have to hire them three or four times per year. If they are not in the pylon area when they are supposed to be on sentry duty, the SPDC soldiers will check and demand a fine from them or chicken or alcohol.

"In 1988 my son was arrested by SPDC soldiers because my son was not free to be a sentry duty for the pylon. When the soldiers check the around the pylons area at night time, my son was not in the pylon area and the next day they found my son and arrested him. Then I had to take 2 viss of chicken and went to the place where they arrested my son. I apologized to them for my son and I gave them chicken, then they allowed me bring my son back home."¹⁴⁶

The SPDC do not care about the young people, they only want to get benefits for Burma's cities. Many Karenni young people have to be on sentry duty every year. The young people who have no fathers or brothers in their house have to be sentries for the pylons at the night time from 6pm - 6am. The SPDC does not take responsibility for the pylons and demands local people and forces them to do it.

"In May 2006 I was 16 years old and one of my friends was 17 years old at that time. We two have to sentry the pylon in the night time. The SPDC soldiers said the situation was not good so they gave orders to village chairman to remind the villagers to sentry the pylon and he told me to sentry the pylon at night and gave me a time table. At that time my father was ill and my brother was not in the house. Then I had to prepare my own food, water and blanket. At 5:30 I arrived at the

¹⁴⁶ Interview 6.

*pylon area. Then I heard them shoot their gun and after a few minutes they arrived at our sentry hut. A soldier came and asked me, 'What is your village name?' I answered him, 'My village name is xxxx village.' At that time I was very afraid of them."*¹⁴⁷

Impact on local people's lives and animals

Landmines

The villages have several problems from forced labor by SPDC soldiers. The SPDC forces the local people to build camps, fences, roads, porter, clear the area, sentry for the camps/pylons and to grow the castors plants. In addition landmines exploded on villagers and the SPDC fines and tortures the people. The villagers' pigs, dogs, cows, and other animals have exploded landmines under the pylons so those who own the pig or others have to give money to soldiers for the mines.

"Before the SPDC soldiers plant about 40 landmines for each pylon."

*"In 2008, one SPDC soldier came and planted 4 landmines for each pylon. The pylons are very close to my house, therefore I told them, 'Please don't plant landmines around this area because I am very worried about my children, dog, chickens and cow will explode it.' Then I saw a child climb the pylon and three children were playing with a bomb under the pylon. The bomb exploded and one child lost 2 of his left fingers, another one lost 2 left toes. I'm very worried for my village's children."*¹⁴⁸

Because the SPDC landmines exploded many children got injured and animals died and were lost. They demand fines from the villagers and people who own pigs have to give money to the soldiers. Pigs are valued at 4,000 kyat, so owners have to pay 4,000 kyat to the soldiers. Half of the pork must be for the soldiers or major and they can punish the owner or demand a fine. The SPDC plants landmines at all the pylon areas, not only in De Maw Soe Township but also in other township and places.

*"On December 20, 2007, eight villagers were injured by SPDC landmines that exploded near the pylon."*¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Interview 2.

¹⁴⁸ Interview 8.

¹⁴⁹ www.karennihomeland.com/NewsArticle.php?ContentID_122

Children who explode SPDC landmines have to get medical treatment on their own and give fines to the SPDC. The villagers have to find their own money to treat their children, so they are continually facing family problems in their houses.

Impact On Animals

"I saw a pig exploded bomb under the pylon before. The house of the pig's owner is very close to the pylon at a village called xxxx village. The SPDC soldiers said, 'Whoever owns that pig must pay me 4,000 kyat for value of my bomb.' He spoke like that."¹⁵⁰

Because the SPDC plants landmines under and along the pylons area, several of the villagers' animals and property has been destroyed. In addition the local people have to give money for the mines. The Karenni local people are very close with their animals; cows give them condensed milk, bulls work in their fields and give them crops, buffalos give them natural fertilizers and the pigs give them income. However they are suffering by SPDC landmines, and the SPDC soldiers ignore them. They not only lose their animals but are also fined by the SPDC every year.



SPDC landmines kill many local animals. (Photo by Khon Nasa).

¹⁵⁰ Interview 4.

“My uncle’s cow entered the pylon area and exploded the SPDC landmine, therefore he lost his cow and in addition he had to give a fine to the SPDC soldiers.”¹⁵¹

“On 12 January 2008, on the Shan and Kayah state border in the area of Loikaw Township, Kou Thar village tract, a cow exploded a landmine under a pylon, so the owner had to go to the soldiers’ office everyday, then the SPDC soldiers demand a fine from him. He said ‘I have lost my cow already and I also have to give a fine to SPDC soldiers.’ He had to spend his time and job as well.”¹⁵²

Impact On Livelihoods

Before the majority of the Karenni villagers were very closely related with their environment and they got everything from the forest and soil. The bamboo was especially helpful for Karenni local people. Most of their houses are constructed by bamboo and bamboo is their life. Bamboo is one kind of primary food for Karenni people. The Karenni people get mushrooms, bamboo insects, herbs and wildlife from the bamboo forest.

Right now the bamboo is used to construct the camps, fences and other construction for the SPDC. As a result their bamboo forests are gone and they cannot find food easily. It is a worry for their new generations.

Then Karenni local people were getting enough food from their farm land. For the reason that the Burma’s cities electric power line is passing though their village and land all of their things were destroyed and their future lives were lost. Instead of getting any supplies from the authorities the local people have lost their things.

Subsequent to the electric power line passing though the local people’s lands and forests consequently they have lost their livelihood; they cannot find their livelihood from farms anymore. After that they have to cut down their trees and bamboos for making fences for the pylons every day. The local people were very dependent on natural plants but now they are in worried about food security. The Karenni local people have to send their bamboo for several years for the military soldier’s profit. All the bamboo is gone and the wood is also gone for the military camps. Villagers also cannot get bamboo anymore. They have to buy bamboo and wood with their own money for the military’s profit every year and they have lost their livelihood. If people want to construct a house or other things it is expensive.

¹⁵¹ Interview 7.

¹⁵² Interview 5.

"I had to pay 500 kyat for each bamboo before. But right now I have to pay 1,000 kyat for each bamboo and I have to buy three or four bamboo each year. The SPDC think I could not get any more because the bamboo in this area is gone and I'm worried for my children because we have no bamboo to build our houses and things and also food."¹⁵³



The tubers from the bamboo forest. (Photo by Khon Nasa).

The Law Pi Ta hydroelectricity project is the first and biggest in Burma. The hydroelectricity project was finished over 40 years go. However it has not been a good thing for the local people and they are still facing problems. Before the local people did not face any problems in their homeland and they could live without electricity in their houses. They could support their families without electricity. Burma's

military regime's development has impacted Karenni local people. Burma's cities want to get everything from the Karenni villagers and starting from the Moby dam site and from guarding the pylon. The Karenni villagers have given their time and labor on the dam site. The water covered their fields and land. They could not do more with their fields and lost their income and finally they have no access to electricity. Before the Karenni local people used to get income from their lands, but later with the hydroelectricity project they have no property to plant crops and there is no way to get money for them.

Conclusion

For the benefit for Burma's cities the electricity pylons have caused increasing forced labor in De Maw Soe Township. The SPDC is a member of the International Labor Organization Convention (ILO). They are ignoring the ILO and continue to use forced labor from the local people. The majority of Karenni local people are still facing various kind of forced labor as a result of SPDC soldiers.

¹⁵³ Interview 3.

The SPDC soldiers force the villagers to build fences for the pylons every year. The villagers have to bring their own bamboo, food and tools for making fences. If a villager is absent or does not obey their order they are tortured or ordered to pay a fine. What's more the villagers have to sentry the pylons at night and day time. They force the villagers to clear around the pylons.

The villagers are facing discrimination, limited access to education, poor health care, and no access to electricity ongoing as a result of the military regime. The SPDC soldiers don't care about the villager's health, food, elderly people, pregnant women and young people; they want only to follow their order and said "an order is an order." In addition the villagers do not know how long these problems will be ongoing.

Recommendations

To the State Peace and Development Council

- Immediately remove military camps from the local community.
- Give opportunities to the local people to improve their living standard.
- Immediately stop forced labor inside Burma.
- No more landmines on local land.
- Stop the action on local people.
- Stop corruption on local villagers.
- Do not force the villagers to sentry and make fences for the pylons or camps.
- Accept the ILO's request to stop forced labor and respect human rights.
- Do not force the local people without their agreement.
- Respect the farmer's voices.

To the NGOs

- Put more pressure on the Burmese military regime to stop force labor in local areas.
- Pressure the SPDC to ratify the ICCPR or ICESCR.
- Pressure the SPDC to practice democracy.

To Neighboring Countries

- Don't provide weapons to the SPDC.
- Pressure the SPDC to change their policies.
- Keep up pressure on the SPDC to change their action toward local people.

To Ceasefire Groups

- Unite with each other and find good ways for villagers.

The Impact of Land Confiscation on the Palaung People in Namkham & Mantong Townships, Northern Shan State, Burma

By Mai Naw Jar



Map of the Palaung area in Mantong & Namkham Townships



- ★ SPDC army
- ★ PSLA position before
- Township
- ➔ Field research area
- ▨ Palaung area