



“We want genuine peace with a political solution”

Civil Society Voices from Shan, Kachin, Karen and Karenni States



Humanitarian
Aid Relief Trust

Visit Report
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Thailand-Burma Borderlands

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Cover photo: Nang Yung and her daughter, recent arrivals from Shan State, now living near Fang.



ACRONYMS

CBO/CSO	Community-Based Organisation/ Civil Society Organisation
CHW	Community Health Worker
DfID	Department for International Development (British Government)
FBR	Free Burma Rangers
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
KIO	Kachin Independence Organisation
KWAT	Kachin Women's Association Thailand
MNDAA	Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army
NCA	National Ceasefire Agreement
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NLD	National League for Democracy
RCSS/SSA	Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army
SHRF	Shan Human Rights Foundation
SWAN	Shan Women's Action Network
SSDF	Shan State Development Fund
SSA	Shan State Army
SSA-S	Shan State Army – South
TNLA	Ta'ang National Liberation Army
TBA	Traditional Birth Attendant
THB	Thai Baht (Currency)
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UWPC	Union Peace-Making Work Committee
UWSA	United Wa State Army
USDP	Union Solidarity and Development Party
WHP	SWAN's Community Health and Maternal and Child Health Education and Service Delivery Programme (acronym stands from previous project title)
WLB	Women's League of Burma



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fighting continues in Shan, Kachin, Rakhine and Karen states between the Burma Army and ethnic armed groups. In central Shan state, during the 2015 elections, the Burma Army carried out an airstrike on a town with a civilian population of 6,000. On 19th May, further airstrikes on civilian areas of Shan and Kachin states were reported¹. 20,000 Kokang refugees have been unable to return to their homes due to the continued Burma Army presence and gross human rights violations.

THE NATIONWIDE CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT – PART OF A FLAWED PEACE PROCESS

The Government and Burma Army have not demonstrated commitment to a genuine and inclusive peace process. Ceasefires attained have not been accompanied with withdrawal of troops. Instead, ceasefire creates opportunities for the Burma Army to strengthen their position and even build up troops, particularly around large-scale development projects such as hydroelectric dams and mining sites.

The Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement was signed by only eight ethnic armed groups (half of those invited) in October 2015. This illustrates that it is far from being an inclusive agreement. The signing of the agreement has resulted in new divisions between ethnic armed groups and is being viewed by civil society groups as a ‘divide and rule’ tactic. These new tensions have manifested in new fighting between the Ta’ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and the Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army (RCSS/SSA).

INTERNATIONAL INVESTMENT IN LARGE-SCALE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

HART remains deeply concerned by the large-scale development projects, such as dams on the culturally-significant Salween and Namtu rivers, with international investment that are taking place without proper environmental and social impact assessments that fully consult with local people. Many of these projects are taking place in active conflict zones in Shan and Kachin states. There is an international rush to exploit Burma’s natural resources due to the present process of democratic reform. The international community must however recognise that this reform is a transitional process that has not yet reached a point where the ethnic national states are living in a state of peace nor one in which they have proper political representation. Local people will be displaced and will not reap the profits nor outputs of such resource exploitation projects. Development sites are also being protected by Burma Army battalions and landmines, adding to the insecurity felt by the local population.

THE NEW NATIONAL LEAGUE FOR DEMOCRACY (NLD) GOVERNMENT

As the NLD have only been in office since 30th March 2015, it is too soon for civil society organisations to predict how they will perform. However, many did not have confidence that Aung San Suu Kyi fully understands or prioritises the issues faced by the ethnic nationals or women. It is encouraging that she has mentioned federalism in her speeches. The civil society representatives with whom we met made clear that they see federalism as the only route through which a political solution to the issues faced in the ethnic national states can be achieved.

DE-POPULATION OF ETHNIC SHAN PEOPLE FROM SHAN STATE

In Thailand, HART met with a number of ‘economic’ migrants from Shan state who had been forced to relocate across the border due to the intense poverty in Shan state, which is exacerbated by the Burma Army frequently taking their money and food. A number of economic factors and a general feeling of insecurity is leading to a population drain of Shan state. Additionally, land expropriation of refugees who fled the fighting before the era of land documentation means that many simply do not have a home to return to.

CIVIL SOCIETY

We were impressed with the strength of civil society groups and all that they are doing to empower and mobilise the local populations in the ethnic national states, as well as their ability to provide supporting services in restricted access areas. It is troubling that such groups are now losing international funding as many donors shift towards supporting government initiatives, which are not yet inclusive of ethnic national peoples.

¹ The Irrawaddy (2016), ‘Burma Army Airstrikes Bombard Kachin, Shan States’: www.irrawaddy.com/burma/burma-army-airstrikes-bombard-kachin-shan-states.html



RECOMMENDATIONS

TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

- Stop investing in a peace process that is not inclusive of the entire population of Burma. The international community should be using its influence to apply pressure to the relevant stakeholders to engage in a comprehensive and genuine peace process, rather than propagating an exclusionary process that is not moving towards a political solution to the conflict.
- All investment in large-scale development projects must cease until there is a federal political system and local perspectives are represented in decision-making.
- Consider continuing financial support of civil society organisations which play an essential role in supporting the ethnic national people, who are not yet provided for by their own government. Recognise the essential role that these groups play in human rights monitoring and enable this essential work to continue.
- Apply pressure for the amendment of the 2008 Constitution in order to bring the military under the control of the civilian-elected government.

TO THE NEW GOVERNMENT

- Immediately halt exploitative investment projects that have begun during a time of conflict and without consultation with local people.
- Ensure that the peace process is amended to become inclusive of all ethnic armed groups and civil society organisations.
- Strongly crackdown on all forms of hate-speech and religious intolerance against minority groups, including the Rohingya and the Kokang peoples.
- Prioritise gender equality and inclusivity of women in politics and the peace process; put into practice the obligations agreed to under the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).
- End the impunity with which the Burma Army are able to commit human rights abuses against civilians. Ceasefire should be accompanied with a withdrawal of Burma Army troops.



Figure 1: Map of Burma showing the states and divisions.
N.B. Kayeh is also known as Karen.
Source: www.myanmars.net



1. INTRODUCTION

The 2015 Elections in Burma resulted in unprecedented global media attention on the country. The world was watching as Aung San Suu Kyi's party the National League for Democracy (NLD) won a landslide victory, sparking renewed hopes for the country's democratic transition.

With the international gaze firmly on the election however, the Burma Army intensified attacks on Shan State, where HART's partners the Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN) are delivering a community-based healthcare programme. In November, the Burma Army attacked Mong Nawng town with shelling and aerial bombardment. The use of MiG fighters and helicopter gunships demonstrates enhanced military offensives in civilian areas. Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF) were able to give details of several other attacks which occurred with complete impunity over the election period.

In these active conflict areas, international investors are injecting resources into large-scale development projects to exploit the rich natural resources in the ethnic national states. Without appropriate local consultation and impact assessments, these projects show absolute disregard for the local populations who are being forcibly displaced and suffering the brunt of the impact without adequate, if any, compensation. The profits and product of hydroelectric dams and mining sites bypass local communities entirely, instead leaving them to deal with the realities of environmental degradation, flooding and great loss of culturally significant natural resources.

Meanwhile, international donors shift their funding away from civil society organisations working with the ethnic national communities towards funding a peace process which does not include half of the ethnic armed groups involved in the conflict. Local groups call for a political solution to the conflict, but in practice are only seeing a military solution as Burma Army troops continue to build-up in the ethnic national states. We were told, *"They [the Burma Army] are not interested in peace. They are interested in ceasefire and this is so they can remove the weapons from the ethnic armed groups and advance their own positions."* Trust has been damaged, and new tensions are building between the ethnic armed groups.

The civil society representatives with whom we met suggest that the solution to this problem is federalism. This is the only way in which the ethnic national peoples can have their voices heard in Burma's political system. The ethnic national peoples must be granted equal rights, a peaceful settlement that includes all stakeholders and a say in how the natural resources in their environment are used.

1.1. VISIT OBJECTIVES

Aid

- a) To discuss with HART's partners their priorities for aid, as a basis for fundraising and ensuring the most appropriate use of funds.
- b) To obtain evidence of the use of funds previously provided by HART, supplementing monitoring reports and accounts provided by partners, and to enhance accountability to donors.
- c) To ascertain the availability and adequacy of aid for the populations in the areas visited, and to identify priorities for future aid.

Advocacy

- a) To obtain up-to-date information and first-hand accounts of the situation in Burma, with a particular focus on continued fighting and human rights violations, the political and humanitarian situations, and the challenges faced by migrants forced to flee into exile in Thailand.
- b) To discuss with representatives of the ethnic national communities their concerns and priorities for support, and to record their messages for members of the international community.



1.2. ABOUT HART

HART (Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust) was established in 2004 to help local people create practical and lasting change in areas where human rights have been violated. These are often in hard-to-reach areas affected by conflict, where larger aid organisations and the media are unable to reach due to restrictions imposed by the sovereign government.

HART relies on first-hand evidence of human rights violations, using this as a basis for a twin-track programme of advocacy and aid. Through advocacy in national and international arenas, we can provide a platform for our partners' voices and we strive to present their problems with integrity and sensitivity. We provide resources and support in order to enable local partners to address their own priorities.

Contact HART:

T: +44 (0) 20 8204 7336

E: office@hart-uk.org

W: www.hart-uk.org

Visit Delegation:

Corinna Loges – Chief Executive Officer

Caroline (Baroness) Cox – President and Founder

David Thomas – Projects and Logistics

Samantha Hudson – Advocacy and Communications



1.3. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

HART wishes to offer our warmest thanks to everyone who shared their stories and insights with us, and who gave their time, hospitality and logistical support. Particular thanks go to our partners at SWAN, for their support on this visit and for all of their inspirational work for maternal and child health, peace and development. We are also deeply grateful to Doh Say, Kachin Women's Action Network (KWAT), Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF), the committee of Loi Sam Sip camp and those who wish to remain anonymous who shared so much in meetings during our visit.

1.4. TERMINOLOGY AND QUOTATIONS

Except where the name Myanmar is used in official titles, the name Burma has been used throughout the report, as it is preferred by the peoples of Burma with whom HART works.

All quotations in this report have been placed in *italics*. Where necessary, quotations have been anonymised to protect identity.



2. FINDINGS

2.1. CONTINUED MILITARY OFFENSIVES BY THE BURMA ARMY

Conflict intensified in Shan, Kachin and Rakhine States around the signing of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) and the 2015 Elections. Fighting in October and November included the use of airstrikes by the Burma Army. Recently, troops have been further building up in central Shan State. The new government cannot control the military because of the power afforded to them in the 2008 Constitution, which also grants them an effective veto on future constitutional amendments.

Shan human rights activist, Charm Tong, told us:

*“The last year has been very bad for Shan state. Despite the NCA the fighting continues. There has even been **aerial bombing by MiG35 and helicopters. 4,000 troops moved in. 10,000 were displaced in the fighting in October and over 2000 people are still in hiding now. There have been many rape cases, most of which have not been able to be documented for the safety of the women. All this was happening as the elections were going on and the international community said nothing. There was a shooting on election day** [details on p. 10].*

Now, in the last two weeks, 200 [Burma Army] trucks were seen moving towards the conflict areas. The situation very tense between the SSPP [Shan State Progressive Party] and the Burma Army – new fighting will break out. It is strategic, the SSPP headquarters and operations are located in the central Shan State area and the Burma Army want them to withdraw. They want to wipe the SSPP out. The Burma Army are constantly advancing, they now control seven out of ten divisions of Shan State. Often when troops build up we start to see sexual violence cases, like the rape and murder of the two Kachin teachers in Shan state last year – that was right before the fighting broke out in the Kokang region.”

The Burma Army continues to commit sexual violence with impunity. The Women’s League of Burma (WLB)² documented over 70 cases of rape of Kachin women by the Burma Army between June 2011 and January 2015.³ In Shan State, the Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF) documented eight cases of rape and sexual assault between April and November 2015 by the Burma Army.⁴ Representatives of the SHRF told us that there had been significantly more cases than this but that they had only been able to publically document eight cases for the safety of the women involved.

As a joint report by Burma Partnership and Forum Asia states:

“The military remains constitutionally immune from prosecution by civilian courts and the lack of political will from military leadership to find those responsible perpetuates this decades-long practice. In doing so, it renders meaningless international standards and legal obligations such as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Geneva Conventions, Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict and UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.”⁵

ATTACKS IN CENTRAL SHAN STATE, OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2015

In October and November 2015, the time of the elections, there was intense fighting in central Shan State, resulting in the displacement of around 10,000 civilians⁶. The violence meant that many civilians in these areas were unable to vote, significantly affecting the outcome for Shan representation in the state government. It is estimated that 6 seats were lost as a direct result of closed polling stations due to insecurity. Furthermore, the Burma Army used

² www.womenofburma.org

³ Women’s League of Burma (2015), ‘Ongoing Sexual Violence Highlights Urgent Need for Burma Army to Stop Offensives and Pull Back Troops From Kachin Areas’: womenofburma.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/WLB-statement-Kachin-murders-English.pdf

⁴ SHRF (2015), ‘Sexual violence by Burmese government troops continues despite ceasefires in Shan State’: www.shanhumanrights.org/index.php/news-updates/236-sexual-violence-by-burmese-government-troops-continues-despite-ceasefires-in-shan-state

⁵ Forum Asia and Burma Partnership (2016), ‘Human Rights Situation in Burma/Myanmar’: www.burmapartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/HRC31_Burma_Myanmar-Briefing_Paper-1.pdf

⁶ Al Jazeera (2015), ‘Thousands displaced by Myanmar military offensive’: www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/11/thousands-displaced-myanmar-military-offensive-151128094125426.html



this period of tension to significantly advance and increase their military presence in this strategic area for the SSPP/SSA [see map below].

Map of Burma Army troop expansion during offensive in central Shan State

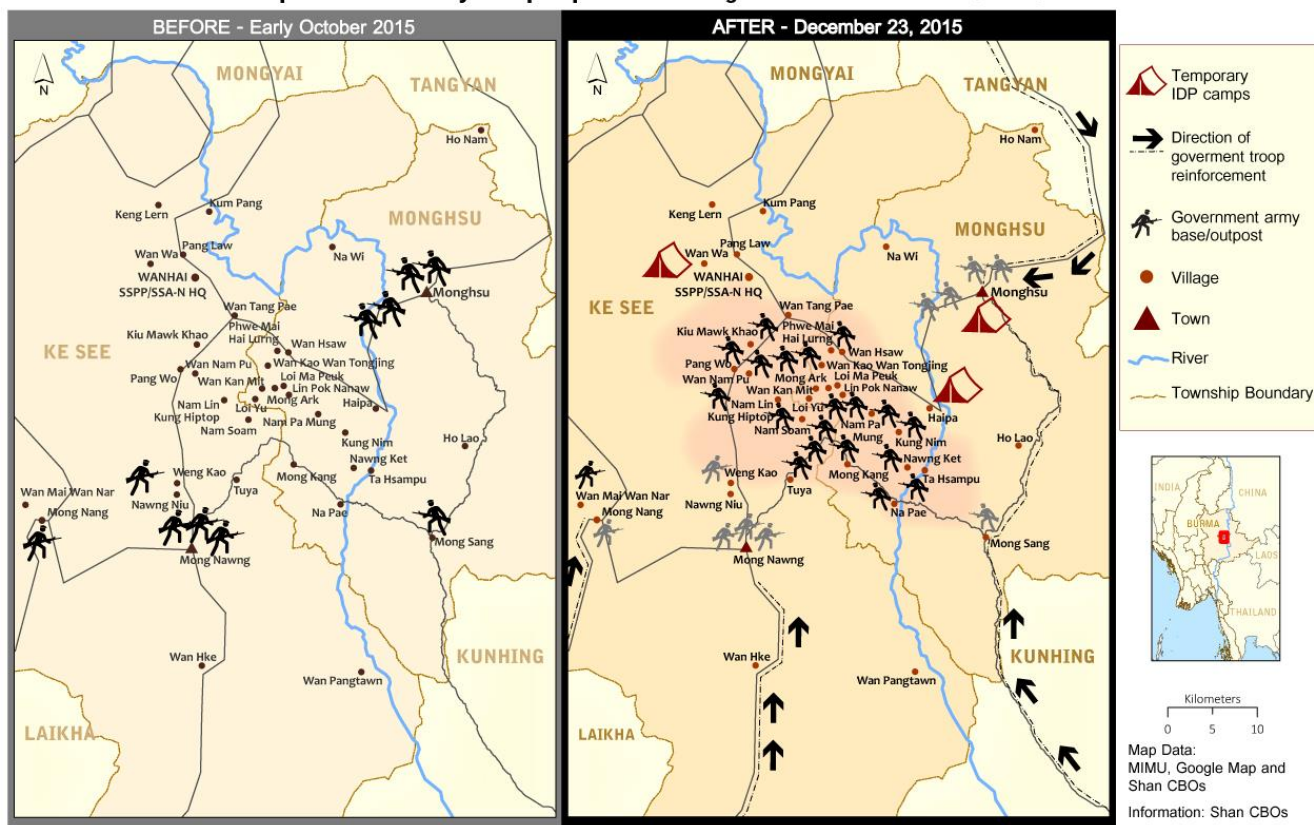


Figure 2: The Burma Army significantly increased its presence in central Shan State during unrest in October and November. Source: SHRF⁷

Shan activists whom we met on this visit informed us that during this period many families disappeared and were tortured. Pregnant women were particularly in danger:

“In the fighting, who is the most effective target? It is the women and the children. Last year, five women gave birth during the fighting, a few of them while running away. Some IDPs [internally displaced peoples] give birth in the caves because they went into hiding, some delivered their baby in the forest and then had to travel far to the IDP camp. There is no safe place for these women to give birth and they feel very afraid.”

CASE STUDY: Attacks on Mong Nawng Town

Mong Nawng is a government controlled town, with a civilian population of 6,000. It is situated 20km south of Wan Hai, the headquarters of the SSPP/SSA⁸.

From 9th – 12th November 2015, Mong Nawng town was attacked by the Burma Army with shelling from their Military Operations Command in the north-west of the town and by aerial bombardment. Landmines were dropped and planted in the outskirts of the town.

⁷ SHRF (2015), ‘Burmese government troops must withdraw to allow IDPs to return home in central Shan State’: <http://www.shanhumanrights.org/index.php/news-updates/240-burmese-government-troops-must-withdraw-to-allow-idps-to-return-home-in-central-shan-state>

⁸ SHRF (2015), ‘Burma Army shelling and aerial bombing of 6,000 civilians in Mong Nawng town are war crimes’: <http://shanhumanrights.org/index.php/news-updates/235-burma-army-shelling-and-aerial-bombing-of-6-000-civilians-in-mong-nawng-town-are-war-crimes>



Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF) conducted the following interview with a displaced civilian following the aerial attack on Mong Nawng town:

*“Most people fled their homes when they heard the shelling and bombing. We fled and did not have time to take anything, even our clothes. We can’t count how many bombs and shells fell. It was a lot. We were so afraid, and we were just trying to find our way out. We were in shock and we didn’t know what to do. **They shelled at night. And the Burmese helicopters came and bombed Mong Nawng in the day. Tens of bombs were dropped from the helicopters.**”⁹*

Further civil society accounts of incidences of violence by the Burma Army that took place around the elections:

“Around Hipa Camp, in Mong Hsu Township, the Army is still stationed at villages and so 2,000 people are not able to return. They have no property or belongings left, their rice crops and corn storage houses were burnt down: everything was destroyed. A shell hit the middle of Wan Saw temple where the villagers were taking refuge. Thankfully no one was killed because they got a feeling that they were not safe and escaped at 3am to hide in the forest”

Shan Human Rights Foundation Representative

“During the elections, 30 people were shot at while trying to attend to their farms. Help was denied to the wounded. They had to travel 90 miles to hospital only to find that there was no doctor, and then another 90 miles to the military hospital. They were made to go to the military hospital so that the case could be covered up.”

Anonymous Source

Further information, including photographs, on this incident in Wan Hoong Kham village is available from the SHRF.⁷

During this period, international focus appeared to be entirely on the elections and the international community did not condemn the airstrikes. On 3rd December, the U.S. State Department stated:

“These allegations, if true, are reprehensible, and we urge the Government of Burma to undertake a credible, independent investigation into these allegations, and to hold perpetrators accountable for their actions.”¹¹

However, only a few days later U.S. trade sanctions were lifted, which can be perceived as an acceptance of the military status quo in Burma. Instead, the international community should be making robust condemnation of possible war crimes and calling for **independent** investigation.

⁹ SHRF (2015), ‘Burma Army shelling and aerial bombing of 6,000 civilians in Mong Nawng town are war crimes’: shanthumanrights.org/index.php/news-updates/235-burma-army-shelling-and-aerial-bombing-of-6-000-civilians-in-mong-nawng-town-are-war-crimes

¹⁰ SHRF (2015), ‘Burma Army troops shoot at farmers in central Shan State on election day, seriously injuring a woman and boy’: shanthumanrights.org/index.php/news-updates/234-burma-army-troops-shoot-at-farmers-in-central-shan-state-on-election-day-seriously-injuring-a-woman-and-boy

¹¹ Reuters (2015), ‘U.S. calls for probe of reports of Myanmar military atrocities’: www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-violence-usa-idUSKBN0TM2AN20151203



ATTACKS AND ABUSES IN THE KOKANG SELF-ADMINISTERED ZONE

On 17 February 2015, President Thein Sein declared a state of emergency and martial law in the Kokang Self-Administered Zone as heavy fighting between the Burma Army and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) broke out on 9th February.¹² During this fighting, the Burma Army used helicopter gunships against the population and committed severe human rights abuses, including rape, beheadings, disappearances and more, that caused the displacement of an estimated 100,000 civilians to China.¹³

We heard how continued violence and the ongoing presence of the Burma Army camped near their villages is preventing an estimated 20,000 refugees from returning home. Landmines have been planted along the border and many refugees who attempted to return home have disappeared. These people are living in make-shift camps in Yunnan Province in China, without support because official camps have already been closed. Hate speech has been incited on social media, influencing public opinion and create a sense that the Kokang people, who are ethnically Han Chinese, do not belong in Shan State despite their historical population of the region.

A representative from SHRF told us:

“The media and the Army are creating hate speech [to influence public opinion of the Kokang people]. The civilians are being shot, women raped, elderly shot. This is our home! They are killing civilians, and then building hate speech, not stopping the conflict. The people are dying, they are starving, they do not have food. The Kokang are Chinese but they are living in Shan state for hundreds of years. They have not been allowed proper IDs, instead they have these threefold IDs. Without solving the political problems, how can we solve all of these things?”

The SHRF collected the following interview and photograph of the Kokang ID cards, which are not equivalent to Burmese citizenship cards¹⁴ [see Figure 4]:

“I don’t have a proper Burmese ID card. I just have a green “three-folding” document. It was issued to me in May 2009. Actually, my parents had proper Burmese ID cards, so I should have been given one too, but the authorities aren’t granting proper ID cards to Kokang people. We are not treated equally. This is one of the reasons for the war now.” - Male farmer, 73

Forced depopulation of Kokang area (March 2016)

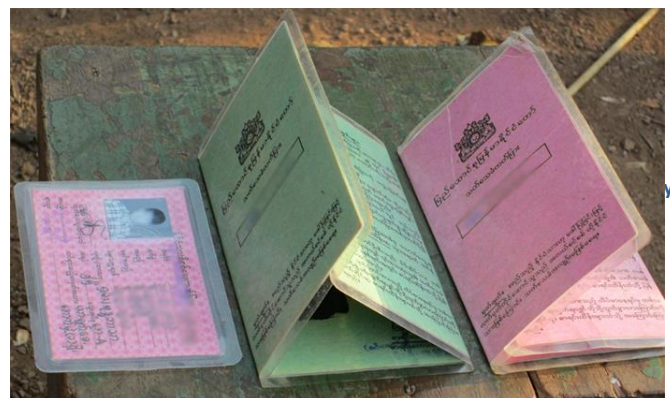
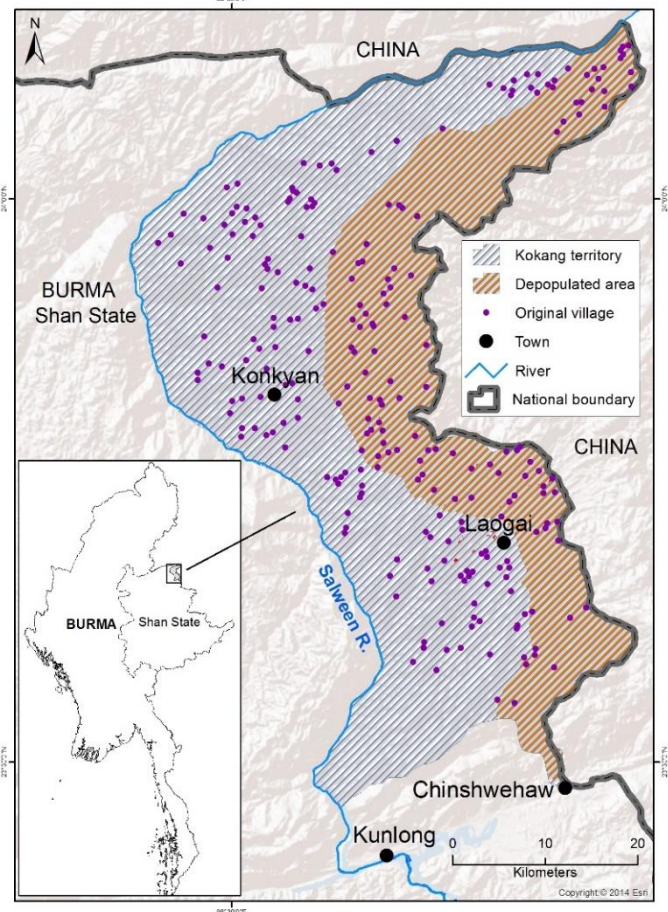


Figure 4: Photo by SHRF with the following explanatory note, ‘Green “three-folding” cards are issued to men, and pink “three-folding” cards to women. The cards state that the holders have no guarantee of citizenship. Restrictions and penalties for violation are printed on the cards. Card holders must report to authorities if they travel for more than one month. Violators are liable to two years of imprisonment.’

¹² Kuppaswamy, C.S. (2015), ‘MYANMAR: The War with the Kokangs’, South Asia Analysis Group: <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/node/1714>

¹³ SHRF (2016), ‘Burma Army expansion, abuses along Kokang-China border creating scores of “ghost villages”’:

<http://www.shanhumanrights.org/index.php/news-updates/245-burma-army-expansion-abuses-along-kokang-china-border-creating-scores-of-ghost-villages>

¹⁴ *Ibid.*



The systematic depopulation of the Kokang Self-Administered Zone and subsequent prevention of return had a significant impact on the election result in the region.

We were told,

“In the Kokang area, so many people have been unable to return to their homes. Therefore, there were only 10,000 votes in the region. The USDP literally took off their Army uniforms and ran for election. The voting population that were left meant that they could win. They had driven the local population out with severe violence and killing and then were able to hang up their uniforms and win an election in this same region. It’s outrageous!”

2.2. THE PEACE PROCESS

For over six decades, the ethnic national states of Burma have been in a state of non-international armed conflict. However, since the elections in 2010, which were not free or fair, the international community has been optimistic that Burma is on the road to peace. Negotiations have centred around bilateral ceasefires between the Burma Army and the ethnic armed groups. This culminated in the signing of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement by only eight of the ethnic armed groups (half of those invited to sign) on 15th October 2015. The current peace process is not genuine as it does not work towards a political solution. Ceasefires have historically been used by the Burma Army to advance their military standing by building up troops in ceasefire regions. Our partner, Doh Say, told us:

“We want peace and federalism. A genuine peace with a political solution. We want our own right to govern our own state.”

A message to the International Community from Kachin Women’s Association Thailand (KWAT)

“There is a need for inclusive dialogue to move towards peace. At the moment they shake hands smiling but this will only last for a short time. Look at the Kachin 17 years ago they had ceasefire and were very happy but now there is serious fighting again.”

A vast amount of international aid and investment money has been poured into a peace process which is not inclusive. Civil society activists highlighted to us that:

“Peace must be talked about in a political context, not just in terms of ceasefire. During the ceasefire the military troops expand. They must pull back their troops and stop attacking. The British Government is not calling them out on it. There is no genuine agreement, it is all coerced.”

By investing so much into this flawed peace process, the international community is diverting funds away from civil society organisations, such as Shan Women’s Action Network (SWAN) and Kachin Women’s Association Thailand (KWAT), who are supporting the civilian population.

For many in the ethnic national areas, the present political system has meant that they are completely unrepresented in political decisions impacting their lives. They argue that in order for there to be inclusive political change, Burma must adopt a federal system which will enable ethnic nationals governance of their own state. In Loi Sam Sip IDP camp within Shan State, we were told:

“We want to see change and that a genuinely federal system is imposed. We want to see ceasefire and an improvement of the peace process. We also want to see change. Change is only coming for the people in the centre of Burma. For Shan State, even our local government are Burman. There is corruption everywhere and this needs to change. Ethnic rights should be the same as Burman rights.”

The present political system cannot change with the current 2008 Constitution in place, which enables the military to veto any political decision not in their favour. Aung San Suu Kyi has made previous mention of a federal system in her speeches. However, it remains to be seen what this would look like in practice for her party. At present, reform of the 2008 Constitution looks to be a sticking point as it is not in the interest of the Burma Army to allow



amendments that reduce their power and give the ethnic nationals their rights. Continued pressure on this point must be maintained to support the country in its transition to democracy.

2.2.1. THE 'NATIONWIDE' CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT

The Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) was rushed through under the Thein Sein government, with only eight ethnic armed groups signing. The agreement is therefore not inclusive and does not represent the views of many ethnic armed groups, nor the civilians within the states in which they operate. We were told:

"The Government peace process is not genuine. We cannot say it is a nationwide ceasefire agreement at all."

Another source said:

*"There is a serious problem with inclusiveness. How can we move towards real peace without inclusive negotiation? Some groups signed as they were under pressure from the Thein Sein government and were concerned that there may not be another opportunity for another peace agreement. **The negotiation terms were all outside of ethnic national priorities. Countries who support the current peace process have investment interests – for example EU countries such as Norway, Switzerland, Denmark and Germany.**"*

The NCA has had a negative impact on relations between ethnic armed groups, causing divisions between those who signed and those who did not sign. We were told by a SWAN representative:

"The peace process has been one of divide and rule which has created tensions between the ethnic armed groups. They encourage fighting between the EOAs and then use this as a reason to send the Burma Army in – furthering human rights abuses."

As a result, recent months have seen the emergence of new tensions, such as the fighting between the signatory SSPP and the non-signatory TNLA in Shan State. The SWAN representative added:

"Before the NCA the fighting was only between the EOAs and the Burma Army. Now they Government has created conditions under which the ethnic armed groups are turning against one another."

Shan activist Charm Tong explained:

"The Burma Army must take action. Instead, they divide and rule. They are using this fighting as an excuse to advance their own position. We need to bring the military under the civilian controlled government. It is time for change."



2.3. 2015 ELECTIONS IN SHAN STATE

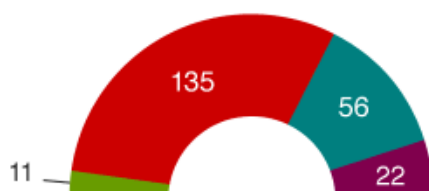
On 8th November 2015, Burma held elections that were congratulated by other international leaders for being ‘free and fair’; an accolade that is widely disputed by the ethnic national communities and other advocacy groups. Aung San Suu Kyi’s party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), won a landslide victory of just under 80% of contested seats (see below¹⁵).

Myanmar election results 2015

■ USDP ■ NLD ■ Army ■ Others ■ Cancelled seats

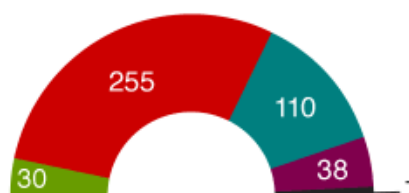
Upper House

224 seats



Lower House

440 seats



Source: Myanmar election commission

BBC

However, as 25% of seats are reserved for the military giving them effective veto on any constitutional reform, it is debatable how much power the NLD have to effect positive change or to bring the military under the control of the elected government. Furthermore, civil society representatives are concerned that Aung San Suu Kyi has not spoken out about their plight nor the situation of women within Burma, indicating that she may also be weak on these issues.

The NLD took office on 30th March 2016 and so, while it is too early to say how they will perform, the international community should seize this opportunity to apply pressure on the NLD to improve the situation for the ethnic national peoples and to include them in dialogue about their future.

Shan State Civil Society Responses:

“Many election zones in Shan state were closed due to insecurity. 6 Shan MPS were cut due to the way in which voting was constructed. In Shan State, the USDP hold most of the seats. Millions of Shan people do not have the right to vote because they have been displaced and cannot travel back to their homes.”

“The election result has been manipulated. Shan are still very under-represented at both Union and State level. There is a symbolically chosen Shan representative, but one who has fought alongside the Burma Army, not someone who can be said to represent us.”

“It is too early to say how the new government will perform. The NLD appointed their own people at State level instead of the Shan. Aung San Suu Kyi is not making a break with the past. The Army is doing exactly the same as they always have, there is no change yet. Aung San Suu Kyi has said nothing.”

“In central Shan State 200,000 people were not able to vote just in the fighting area. Voting was also cancelled in other areas. This had a significant impact on the results and allowed the USDP to win in our local area.”

“The new government can make a difference in terms of education and health in central Burma but they cannot solve the ethnic problem because the military have more power, due to the 2008 Constitution.”

¹⁵ BBC (2015), ‘Myanmar’s 2015 landmark elections explained’: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-33547036>



REPRESENTATION

The 2015 Election demographics revealed deeper social issues of discrimination against women and religious minority groups, who were not adequately represented by the candidates who ran.

Women:

- In the 2015 elections, only 13% of 6074 candidates were women. However, this is the highest percentage that there has ever been since independence in 1948. Of the NLD's candidates, 15% were women.
- Overall, 10% of seats went to women.
- Women make up only 0.25% of village tract administrators.¹⁶

Religious diversity:

- While there was some increase in Christian representation in these elections (three out of the fourteen regional ministers appointed by the new President U Htin Kyaw are Christian), no Muslim candidates whatsoever were able to run for either the USDP or the NLD.

CIVIL SOCIETY VIEWS OF AUNG SAN SUU KYI

Although most groups whom we met expressed that it was too soon to say what the new government will bring for the ethnic national peoples of Burma, many of them did have an opinion on the NLD leader, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi:

"The NLD have power as a civilian government but Aung San Suu Kyi does not yet seem to talk about the ethnic conflict nor womens' issues. Now that the NLD is in Government we will wait to see how much Aung San Suu Kyi will say."

"She doesn't understand the CSO [Civil Society Organisation] movement. She does not know what is really going on inside Burma as she was under house arrest for so long. We lobbied for her freedom but now she will not give us time to meet. She says that if CSOs want to be heard in politics we should form a political party."

"Aung San Suu Kyi cannot say anything for herself now that her party is in Government"

"She has a Nobel Peace Prize but no real background in politics."

"She has a Nobel Peace Prize, we hope that this will influence her political leadership."

¹⁶ Yanghee Lee (2015), 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar': www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/.../A_HRC_28_72_en.doc



HART remains deeply concerned about the ongoing large-scale development projects which are being initiated in conflict zones, without consultation of local stakeholders. The Thein Sein Government rushed through a number of long-term investment contracts (70-100 years) before the NLD came into power. Many of these contracts will result in large scale expropriation of local people's land, destruction of the local environment, including environmental features of cultural significance, and will enable the build-up of Burma Army troops in the ethnic national states as they move in to 'protect' the site. Thirty Burma Army battalions are stationed around the Mong Ton Dam site on the Salween River.

"Investment is not transparent and there is no benefit for the local people. They use investment as a pretence to send troops as they say they have to secure the area, and so we see more and more troops. This is destroying the trust between the government and the ethnic armed organisations. The situation is getting worse. Since the ceasefire they have never withdrawn their troops."

Shan Human Rights Foundation Representative

"It makes me feel very angry – why are you destroying all the most beautiful things that God gave you? If I give you one billion dollars can make me a river like this? No, they do not see the things that are valuable around them."

Doh Say

Many of the ethnic national states, including Shan and Kachin States, are rich in natural resources. However, these projects will not result in increased services or wealth for local people. The proceeds of such projects will only be felt in central Burma and abroad, with local people taking the brunt of the heavy localised costs. We were told:

*"In some cases, local townships will not even get 24 hours of power, they might only get 4 or 5 hours and will have to pay for it, most will go to Naypyidaw and big towns. Some thought they would get power, they have the line going through where they live but no electricity. They say, **'We have electric cables but have to use candles.'**"*

Last year, local people experienced severe flooding in areas of heavy deforestation that had never flooded in living memory.

Local communities groups have resisted these development projects. For example, more than 100 people gathered in Hsipaw Township to hold a press conference coinciding with the launch of a report by Shan community-based groups called *Save the Namtu River*.¹⁷ The report exposes a lack of transparency around plans to construct a further four dams which **"will block half the length of one of Shan State's most well-known rivers, irreversibly impacting its ecology and the lives of tens of thousands of people relying on it."**¹⁸ No comprehensive environmental or social impact assessments have taken place that incorporate the views of local people who will be affected by the projects.

A representative from SWAN told us:

"In Shan State, everything that belongs to us belongs to them [the Burma Army], our resources and even our time and labour."

Charm Tong told us:

"We believe that the NLD can stop these unethical projects because the contracts have been signed based on no real consultation. And, these projects are starting in areas where war and conflict continue. They do not have an MOU for the building, just the initial consultation."

¹⁷ Shan Community-Based Groups (2016), 'Save the Namtu River':

https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0qKxR2_IsiUejdBb3FZeXZ6Y2s/view?pref=2&pli=1

¹⁸ *Ibid.*



One anonymous civil society actor told us that,

“Federalism should be a precondition of investment to ensure that the ethnic national voices are heard. There should be a federal settlement in which power is devolved and the affected people can be properly represented at local government level.”

Earlier this year, Burma published its first public report under the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), a voluntary global standard in which countries report revenue from extractive industries. This first report revealed the dominant role that extractive industries play in Burma’s economy. However, the report was not sufficiently transparent in revealing how this revenue is stored. Global Witness estimates that only about half of the public money from oil, gas and mining makes its way into the official state budget.¹⁹ Furthermore, there was an absence of reporting on the country’s jade industry which appears to have been grossly undervalued in the report.

The full EITI report is available for download here: eiti.org/report/myanmar/2013






 Name of Dam	 Location	 Installed capacity	 Status	 Foreign countries with companies involved
Dee Doke	Kyaukse, Mandalay	66 MW	MOU signed in Nov 2014	Austria
Yeywa	Kyaukse, Mandalay	790 MW	Completed in 2010	China, UK, Switzerland, Germany
Middle Yeywa	Nawng Khio, Shan State	700 MW	Pre-feasibility study underway	Norway (state-owned co.)
Upper Yeywa	Kyaukme, Shan State	280 MW ⁱⁱ or 308 MW ⁱⁱⁱ	Under construction, due to be completed in 2018 ^{iv}	China, Germany, Switzerland, Japan
Namtu	Hsipaw, Shan State	100 MW	MOU signed; Road construction to dam site underway	Not known

Figure 5: Proposed Dams on the Namtu River²⁰

2.5. ‘ETHNIC CLEANSING’ BY ATTRITION

On this visit, we were concerned that Shan State is losing much of its native Shan population. On the Thai side of the border we encountered a number of Shan migrants who had been forced to leave Shan State for predominantly economic reasons. This was mostly due to the heavy taxes (of both goods, including food, and financial) that the Army frequently collects from them which is highly costly to subsistence or very small-scale farmers.

¹⁹ Mendoza, N. (2016), ‘What to know about Myanmar’s first EITI report’, Devex: <https://www.devex.com/news/what-to-know-about-myanmar-s-first-eiti-report-88147>

²⁰ Shan Community-Based Groups (2016), ‘Save the Namtu River’: https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0gKxR2_IsiUejdBb3FZeXZ6Y2s/view?pref=2&pli=1



Many of the migrants or forcibly displaced people whom we met in Thailand who will never be able to return to Burma because their land has been expropriated and they do not have the documentation to prove their ownership. For many, their land has been sold off or given away and so they do not have a home to which to return. This means that Shan State has permanently lost a significant portion of its population.

“To stay in our homeland is important so that we can maintain our identity.”

Lung Tay Ya
Community Leader at Loi Sam Sip IDP Camp

In addition, restrictions on education, including whether or not the Shan language can be taught during school hours, indicates a possible policy of cultural dilution by the Burmese Government:

*“To teach the Shan language communities must fight for it themselves. They must present a curriculum to the Government – who will be able to do this? They do not allow dialogue on it, instead **they just say that there are 115 ethnic groups in Shan state and it will be too complicated, instead everyone should learn one language, Burmese.**”*

*Local communities have often organised education for themselves in conflict areas. But now 100 Shan schools are being converted to government schools. Why doesn't the government let them build these systems up and then merge them? The community must be able to organise themselves. This is a very worrying time, **instead of building the ethnic social systems they are crushing them.** This is top down and centralised system that is taking over. This is why the ethnic people want a federal system.”*

Over the last two years, the Burma Army has also been encouraging the relocation of people from central Burma to Shan State, repopulating the region with non-ethnic Shan. There is not yet sufficient evidence to infer whether this is a systematic tactic, however there does appear to be a pattern. We were told:

*“The Burma Army are bringing hundreds of thousands of people from central Burma to settle in Shan State. They are bringing Burman teachers, nurses and residents. It is very systematic. Burman monks telling people to go to Shan state because it is cooler and the land is more fertile. They come along the Asia Highway number 5, and are settling as villagers by the river. This has happened over the last two years. **It is repopulation with non-Shan people.**”*

Another concern in Shan and Kachin States is the alarming increase in drug abuse and addiction due to the increasing availability of opium and methamphetamines. A representative from SWAN told us:

*“**This is systematic destruction by the government. They are earning money from drug use** – you can grow opium and have to pay tax on it. If the government wanted to crack down on drug use then they could. Instead, they are supporting opium growth and militia are producing it. It causes huge problems within the community, including exacerbating domestic violence. The government is not supporting anti-drug use work by communities.”*

In the IDP camp at Loi Sam Sip, we were told, *“It is a battle that we are losing our ethnic culture and people. Drugs are a big problem.”*



2.6. THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

Seemingly positive developments in Burma have led to a significant shift in international foreign policy to Burma. Many donors are shifting from funding the civil society movements to funding the government in Naypyidaw's highly flawed peace process and viewing Burma as an investment opportunity. However, it is important for these donors to recognise that while change is beginning to come to central Burma, there is still active conflict in parts of Shan, Kachin and Rakhine states.

“Behind the mask of democracy there is ongoing fighting and human rights abuses.”

A Shan Human Rights Activist

We were told:

“There is a real need for advocacy at the international level to make sure that people know that it is not all positive change at the moment. The international community has not spoken out against the war crimes committed against civilians, they have stayed silent, even when these crimes have been committed during the elections. This is a wrong signal to give when the ethnic people are living in conflict areas.”

It is necessary to consider the peace process critically and take into account the exclusion of a number of ethnic armed groups, as well as civil society voices in the ethnic states. We urge the international community to use its influence in Burma to apply pressure for there to be a genuine peace process, rather than injecting significant funds into a flawed process that is not inclusive.

We were concerned to hear from Kachin Women's Action Network that:

“The advocacy space is closing because the international community want to invest, take resources and do business with the government – they are now less open to criticism of the government.”



3. HART'S PARTNER PROJECTS

3.1. SHAN WOMEN'S ACTION NETWORK (SWAN)

HART supports SWAN's *Community, Maternal and Child Health Project* that provides community-managed, participatory reproductive health interventions and crisis support for vulnerable and displaced populations in rural areas of Shan State, Burma and Thailand.

"SWAN is a network of Shan women active in Shan State and Thailand. It was founded on 28 March 1999. Its mission is to work on gender equality and justice for Shan women in the struggle for social and political change in Burma through community based actions, research and advocacy."

SWAN is working with 12 community health workers plus 7 social workers who are able to bring healthcare to rural areas deep inside Shan State. Health workers are trained to treat the most common health issues, including diabetes, hypertension and wounds that need suturing. They are also undertaking maternal and child health programmes. SWAN runs sessions to educate communities and schools about basic healthcare and hygiene practices, as well as family planning and sexual health.

www.shanwomen.org

Awareness-raising of the services that they provide means that SWAN is increasingly being approached to support women involved in sensitive cases, such as in cases of rape and sexual violence. Confidence in SWAN is growing within the community which is enabling them to support more women in crisis situations.

SWAN's health workers have been trained to collect public health data from their patient groups which are analysed once a year at their offices in Chiang Mai, with the assistance of medical doctors especially qualified health in remote and developing areas. SWAN puts emphasis on updating and continuing the training of the health workers so that they can deliver quality care. They run retraining and update sessions at least once a year and the health coordinator visits health workers annually. SWAN has plans to further extend their health workers' reach into new villages over the next year.

On the Thai side of the border, SWAN are providing advice and financial support to individuals and families who need assistance to access services, particularly healthcare, within Thailand. Please refer to Appendix 1 for patient case studies.

SWAN is also running holistic programmes on education, documentation of human rights abuses and women's empowerment. HART is also seeking donors who may be able to support this other work in 2017 and beyond.

3.2. DOH SAY'S MOBILE HEALTHCARE CLINICS

For seven years, HART has been supporting the work of Doh Say in southern Karenni State. Doh Say's work includes a mobile backpack team and support for two clinics based more permanently in villages. These clinics are the only healthcare provision in the rural areas in which he works. Other NGOs are beginning to work in Karenni state, but only in the cities. HART covers the staff costs for his 5 workers; medicine costs are covered by the Karenni Ministry of Health.



Figure 6: Doh Say

Doh Say also works with Free Burma Rangers (FBR), who report on and provide support to communities suffering persecution by the Burmese Army in Kachin, Shan, Karen, Karenni States.



4. APPENDIX

4.1. SWAN PATIENT CASE STUDIES

SWAN provides practical assistance to unrecognised Shan refugees and migrants within their Community, Maternal and Child Health Project, which is supported by HART. This programme provides Shan refugees and migrants with crucial medical care in Thailand, where the costs of healthcare service, language barriers and issues with access mean that many of these cases would otherwise be unable to access the care they urgently need.

CHIANG MAI

In Chiang Mai, the HART delegation met with four patients that SWAN supports and their families.

SAN MOR OO



“Life would not be easy without the help of SWAN. When I arrived at the hospital before SWAN I was very worried. I did not understand the language and really needed help with translation.”

San Mor Oo was in a car accident in Burma when she and four other passengers, all of whom were refugees in Mae La camp, were returning from visiting relatives. Of the five people in the car, two died and the other three were seriously injured, including San Mor Oo.

San Mor Oo and the other passengers were admitted to Mae Sot hospital. After her initial treatment, her right leg healed well however her left leg became severely infected. At that point, she was referred to Chiang Mai hospital. She has now been in Chiang Mai for two years.

SWAN provides San Mor Oo with an interpreter and assistance for medical fees (2000 THB, which roughly equates to £40). San Mor Oo must attend monthly appointments, yet each hospital visit costs 860 THB (£16).

However, the total cost of her medical fees are 1,000,000 THB (roughly about £20,000) – which is a fee she cannot afford. Bonae, San Mor Oo’s husband, cannot work because he takes care of her and their son full time.

San Mor Oo previously received some support from MAP (Migrant Assistance Programme), but this has now ceased. Accommodation costs her 1800 THB/month. A friend of her husband helps them to pay these fees.



The couple have two children – one girl who lives with grandparents in Mae Sot and an 8 month old boy who lives with the couple. San Mor Oo got pregnant and had the child after the accident.

The doctor says that the metal brace should be able to be removed when she is weight bearing and strong enough.

WATO (14 YEARS OLD) AND MALEE (MOTHER)



“When I got married, my husband worked in construction and life was much better. We had two children and then my husband died. I need to work to send money back home for my daughter, but now my son is ill I cannot afford to.”

Wato was born a healthy child, although mute. However, he got diarrhea, a bad fever and cough which escalated into his current more serious health issues because he did not get proper treatment or an accurate diagnosis. It is also believed that he was malnourished and therefore suffered more seriously.

He is now very thin and has severe bed sores. He cannot eat.

They have been in Chiang Mai for 2 months. Before that, they lived in Mae Sot city with Malee’s mother and are originally from Karen State. Malee has now been in Thailand for 16 years.

Malee works at the hospital and comes back frequently (every 2 hours) to check on Wato and feed him nutritious liquid food. Malee has to get approval from the hospital to take this time off. Malee’s husband died 8 years ago and so she cares for Wato alone. She also has a daughter who lives in Mae Sot. When possible, Malee tries to send her 1500 THB per month for her living and school costs.

Urgent need:

- Food – the cartons of nutritious powder have run out and Malee cannot afford to buy more.
- Medical fees & room fees

SWAN helps with medical fees and nutritious food. SWAN also rents out the room (3000 THB/month), which has a very convenient location near the hospital.



POY, PON (9 YEAR OLD TWINS) AND PIM (MOTHER)



Pon (middle) has fluid on the brain and nerve problems. She has had an operation to correct a nerve that was out of place, but she will need another one very soon. She also has a hormonal imbalance that is causing her to develop breasts and body hair prematurely. Pon can no longer walk, but she is able to speak slowly and understand what is happening around her.

Pon was rejected by local schools because of her special care and transport needs. Pon often asks where her sister is when she is at school. She is often sad to be left alone and wants to be the same as other children her age. Although she cannot walk, she has some sparkly pink shoes which she asked for because all of the other children got to wear shoes and she wanted to be like them.

Pim is Pon's primary carer and is therefore unable to work. Although Pim's husband works and earns 300 THB per day, it remains a struggle for the family. Poy's school fees are 3000-4000 THB per term and accommodation amounts to 2000 THB per month including bills. In addition, the family must pay for Pon's medical fees.

Pim found out about SWAN through another SWAN patient who has a son with polio, who noticed her carrying Pon to hospital every month. SWAN is able to help Pim with the medical fees and purchasing the health ID card. Pon needs physiotherapy once a week and her mother is also learning how to do it.

Pim's mother passed away when she was 10 years old. She had to run away from the fighting when she was 13 years old, fleeing to Thailand with her aunt.



WAN PEN (PEACH) - 18 YEARS OLD



"I will study until Grade 12 but then I really want to go to university so that I can help people. I want to study Psychology."

Peach's parents fled Burma and she was born in Thailand. When she was two years old her parents separated and she lived with her father and his new wife. Since then Peach has had no further contact with her mother. Her father told her that she had passed away. Peach stayed with her father until 5th grade and was supported through school by her father's friend. But, her father passed away and she became ill. After that, her father's friend abandoned her, which is when SWAN were contacted.

Peach has had two heart operations, including a valve replacement. These operations mean that she is 27,000 THB in debt for medical fees. She needs another operation as she has a hole in her heart. Peach is completely reliant on SWAN for support with her medical fees.

During the school holidays, she stays at the SWAN Foundation and the rest of the time she stays at school. Child's Dream Foundation awarded Peach with a scholarship which covers her school fees and some living costs. This includes 2,100 THB per month, which pays 1,500 THB rent and leaves 600 THB for her personal expenses and food. They also pay 5,000 THB per year for school fees.

Peach spent seven days in hospital last week with anaemia. When we met she said that she still feels very tired and weak all of the time, but she is optimistic about the future. Peach would love to go to university. Yet, university costs amount to 22,000 THB per term. Each course has two four-month-long terms in an academic year and each course lasts four years, which would amount to a total of 176,000 THB annually and therefore Peach cannot afford to go.

She also has the added complication that her identification documents have expired and she is unable to renew them. This is because her birth certificate has been lost and her mother didn't put her father's name on the birth certificate, it is impossible to replace. Nonetheless, Peach believes it could still be possible for her to go to university without the documents, seeing as the application process is very lengthy.

She sometimes volunteers with SWAN and also helps with their accounting. She would like to work for SWAN long-term.



NANG MART AND THA KON (1 YEAR, 4 MONTHS)



Tha Kon suffers from Hirschsprungs disease which is a rare condition that affects the intestines and the digestive system, caused by missing nerves in the bowels, resulting in frequent blockages.

In Shan State they had a farm on the mountain where they grew rice and corn (for subsistence). Yet, at the moment, no one from the family can work because there is no water on the farm in Fang. The family came to Thailand in 2004, fleeing fighting in their village in Southern Shan State. Everyone there had to flee, although some have since returned.

Many people were shot by the Burma Army when they were forced to move out of the village in one day. The Burma Army killed some of Nang Mart's relatives, arrested the men and bodies were butchered and put in the toilet pit. Six bodies were put in one pit, two of whom were put in there alive. The Burma Army also arrested a pregnant women whose husband was killed, although she was later released. Seven or eight women were arrested and all of their husbands killed. The whole village was burned down.

In Shan, there are no jobs and no ways of making enough money to survive. The Shan State Army takes a lot of their income. Nang Mart told us, *"Here we can work and we don't have to run."*

Nang Mart's husband's work permit has expired. Last month he could only work 5 days, paid 200 THB/day. The minimum wage is 300 THB/day but seeing as he has no permit, there is also no regulation for his work and the family's income is very unpredictable.

Although their rent is free, earning that amount is still not enough to support the family. They do not have enough money for food, and are 800 THB in debt for rice. They also need documents for their children which will cost 5,800 THB, and in addition, the family are trying to save 1,000 THB per month for their daughter's schooling.

It is unsafe for them to be in Fang because they do not have permits, but on this small farm, where there is only one family, they are unlikely to be bothered by the police.

They heard of SWAN through word of mouth. The clinic where they take their son is near the SWAN Centre. He needs a medical check at least every two months. SWAN supports them with supplementary foods, transportation and medical fees.



SOKA (CHILD) AND NANG MAHT (MOTHER)

Soka (above) and Nang Maht (right) are from Nambo Sai in southern Shan State.



Soka originally had an umbilical cord infection at birth but had no health issues after that – he was able to walk and talk. Then, approximately 6 months ago, he got a cerebral infection (viral infection of the brain) and had a severe fever. He also had an obstruction to his breathing and had to have a tracheotomy.

Soka needs nutritious milk four times a day but at present he is only receiving it two times a day. Nang Maht is unable to work and her husband has left her. Currently, they look for leaves from the forest to sell. The family came to Thailand a year ago in hope of work opportunities but have not been able to find any yet. Soka and Nang Maht have moved three times in the last year.

SWAN supports their transportation and medical fees and also some supplementary foods.



PHON (DAUGHTER) AND NOO (FATHER)



Noo recently had an operation to remove a tumour from his stomach. He often feels dizzy and cannot lift any weight, and is therefore unable to work. His wife, however, is able to work and earns 200 THB a day working on a farm.

Phon is also ill. She suffers from anaemia. Her health card needs renewing in September which will cost the family 2700 THB for a one year extension. She also needs an ID card, which will cost 5700 THB. *“It is a very difficult problem with ID cards in Thailand. They are very expensive”*, she explained.

The family has been in Thailand for 5 years now. They are originally from the Kheg Kham township. They were a farming household and he worked for other people on their paddy fields. However, they often had to give a lot of their rice to the Army. Noo had to do forced portering twice a month and was sometimes away for a whole month.

They were forced to relocate from Kheg Kham by the military and moved to Keng Tawng, because of Noo’s health problem. The different hospitals had trouble diagnosing Noo, until he eventually went to Loi Lem Hospital (a government hospital), which takes over a day by car to get to.

SWAN helps with medical fees, transportation and food while in hospital. SWAN visits all patients once a month bringing them food parcels.

