

## AROUND 6,000 VILLAGERS RALLY AGAINST PROPOSED YE TOWNSHIP COAL-FIRED POWER PLANT

HURFOM, May 6, 2015: Ann Din, Ye: On May 5, 2015, approximately 6,000 residents from a number of villages gathered to protest against a proposed coal-fired power plant, to be built in Ann Din Village, Ye Township.

In April this year, Toyo-Thai Corp. signed an agreement with the Department of Hydropower Planning,

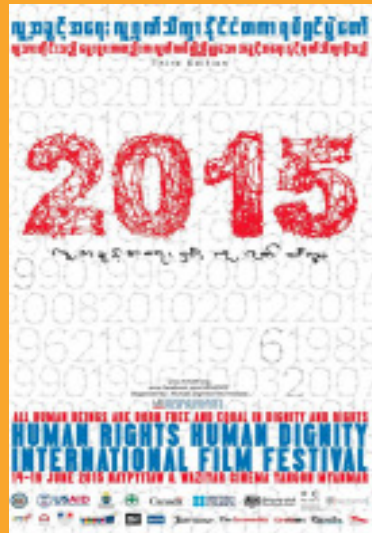
outlining plans to develop a 1280-megawatt coal-fired power plant in Ann-Din Village. According to a company statement, the project will total investment of US\$2.8 billion.



Those who gathered on Ann-Dinn’s football pitch to protest against the project included monks, Htuttaw representatives, civil society organizations, environmental activists, youth groups and local villagers. Together they released a statement, accusing the government and Toyo-Thai Corp. of failing to be fully transparent with local people about the project.

[Read more on page10>>](#)

### HURFOM-PRODUCED HUMAN RIGHTS FILM RECEIVES DAW AUNG SAN SUU KYI PRIZE



### HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES AND VIOLATIONS REMAIN UNREPORTED IN MON COMMUNITY



June 9, 2015

Nai Ji Joon, a member of the Mon Youth Educator Organization (MYEO), knows that it is too uncommon for human rights violations to be reported in Mon communities and so has enacted a plan to address this issue by arranging a

public forum to promote and discuss human rights education.

Nai Ji Joon said. “It is clear that there are human rights violations in our current Mon situation, but it is very rare for these to be reported because Mon people do not have enough confidence to present these violations to human rights organizations or news outlets.”

Echoing these sentiments was Nai Hong Sar, who in a recent 18-minute sit-down with *Guiding Star*, a Mon-language new journal, said: “I have also struggled to raise awareness for human rights and the critical situation of abuses and violations across Mon Staten.

[Read more on page12>>](#)

**Commentary**

# No Change of Behavior on Human Rights for President U Thein Sein's Government

After over four years of so-called “political transition” to democratization in Burma (Myanmar), there has been no improvement in human rights protection in ethnic areas. Indeed, an increasing number of gross human rights violations have been committed in Kachin and Shan States.

President U Thein Sein came to power after moving away from the military regime he had worked under previously and transforming himself into a civilian leader. In his time under the military regime he served as General Secretary of the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) and also as Prime Minister. While he was in these positions serious human rights violations were committed, in particular by the Burmese Army:

➤ The Burmese Army confiscated thousands of acres of land in various parts of the country, particularly in ethnic regions. Land was seized to serve the purposes of new military base deployments and to boost military business projects; the latter became necessary due to the Army's policy of self-reliance for military battalions.

➤ Thousands of ethnic people were displaced due to armed conflict and gross human rights violations. Abuses included the killing, arbitrary arrest, and inhumane torture of those suspected of supporting rebel groups. People fled from their homes and were displaced. Some families moved to form refugee and migrant communities in Thailand, while others fled to various other neighboring countries.

➤ The SPDC sold the country's rich natural resources to foreign countries and created serious livelihood, social, economic and cultural problems for local people.

In his era of Presidency, U Thein Sein has failed to uphold and protect human rights, allowing similar patterns of human rights violations to occur.

Land is still being confiscated or “grabbed”, now by cronies and foreign direct investors (FDI). The 2012 Land Law, approved by the Union Parliament, has been well-used by cronies and foreign investors to acquire unregistered land, often including land that has been informally passed down to villagers through generations. Companies have gained an advantage over local farmers by obtaining land registration documents from corrupt government authorities. The nation's history of land problems remains unresolved.

Despite “civilian” government, the army remains the key player in Burma's political landscape. Sr. Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, the Burmese Army's Commander-in-Chief, is the most powerful man in Burma. President U Thein Sein has failed to influence the Burmese army's conduct in the peace process, with the nationwide ceasefire agreement (NCA) being delayed. There are no real plans to resettle and offer development programs to internally displaced persons (IDPs), nor has the country's refugee problem been resolved. Moreover, the number of IDPs in Kachin state has increased, in addition to thousands of Kachin people fleeing to China as refugees.

Finally, like under the former military regime, U Thein Sein's government has invited FDI in many sectors. Investment in some sectors has



supported people's daily lives, for example investment in telecommunication. However, investment in the energy sector risks serious negative impacts on villagers' social, economic and cultural lives. Local people have gradually mobilized to widely and strongly oppose coal power plant and dam construction projects across the country.

In four years, nothing much has changed. The only changes have been in the gestures and words of President U Thein Sein. The government's behavior – failing to respect civilians' human rights and ethnic people's right to self-determination – has remained the same. The evidence suggests that human rights protection and promotion is not even on the government's agenda.

**IN THIS ISSUE**

- **Commentary:** No Change of Behavior on Human Rights for President U Thein Sein's Government
- **Report Brief:** Inaccessible and Under-Resourced
- **HURFOM Activities** within three months
- **News:** Violation of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Woman & Child Rights, Health & Education

## HURFOM Activities

# COMMUNITY INFORMATION ASSESSMENT TRAININGS



From January to May 2015 HURFOM conducted two rounds of 'Community Information Assessment Trainings'. The trainings, each lasting approximately three weeks, were attended by 21 community activists from Mon State's Ye, Kyiakmayaw and Chaungzon Townships, and from Yebyu Township in Tenasserim Division. In each training participants were taught courses on:

- **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)**
- **Women and Child Rights**
- **Social, Economic and Cultural Rights**
- **Investment Laws, in particular Foreign Investment Laws**
- **Rule of Law and Justice**
- **Community Organization and Mobilization**
- **Advocacy for Community Rights.**

Following the workshops, the HURFOM Training Coordinator took the newly trained Community Assessment Team to the field for a number of community visits. In these visits, participants collected information from local communities about prominent concerns, which included political developments, ceasefire agreements and militarization, human rights abuses, investment from domestic companies and foreign direct investment (FDI).

**The Assessment Team collected the following information:**

## TRIP 1: Social, Economic and Cultural Rights Assessment in Ye Township

12 members of the Assessment Team sought information about social, economic and cultural rights concerns in Ye Township and about locals' efforts to protect their communities. Information was gathered in the following communities:

1. **Asin Village:** An Indonesian company is planning to build a 600 Megawatt coal power plant in this village, in collaboration with a local electricity company.
2. **Aru-Taung, Mor-Kanin and Lamine villages:** The Burmese Army confiscated land in this village in 2003. Local farmers are still struggling to claim back their land.
3. **Ann-din village:** A Japanese-Thai joint venture company, Toyo-Thai Public Company Ltd., is planning to build a 1280 Megawatt coal power plant in this village. Most of the power produced will be sold to Thailand.
4. **Khaw-Za village:** The Burmese Army confiscated land from residents in this village in 2007, while in 2011 the village's headmen seized land from the community. The village also has a Mon National Middle School, which operates without government support; the community have had few struggles in supporting the school's Mon teachers.
5. **Mangay village:** The Mon State government recently signed a contract with a domestic company, Aurun Company, to create an 'eco-tourist zone' near this village. The company will use 8 miles of the coastline to build

approximately 200 resorts and hotels. The Assessment Team agreed with HURFOM staff that there is a need to learn more about this project's impacts.

- 6. **Magyi village:** The Mon State government has contracted a Chinese company to extract rock from hills surrounding this village in order to build new local roads. The company uses explosives to gather rock from hills in this area. The project has had a serious impact on the community, destroying its beautiful rocky hills.

### TRIP 2: Impact Assessments in Yebyu Township

12 members of the Assessment Team conducted Impact Assessments in areas of Yebyu Township that are known to have previously suffered from social, economic and cultural rights violations. First, they travelled to areas affected by the Yadana gas pipeline, which was built to transport off-shore gas resources, connecting through the Thai-Burma border, Ban ei Thaug, and finally to Thailand. The Assessment Team also visited Kwe-Tho-Nyima and Min-Tha Village Tracts, in order to find out about how policies of escalating militarization have impacted local people in these areas. Finally, the Assessment Team visited the Dawei Seaport Area, seeking information about the progress of development projects and impacts on local residents.

#### a. Impacts of the Yadana Gas Pipeline Project

**Land loss and no compensation:** The Assessment Team talked to 14 villagers from 5 villages along the pipeline route, all of whom had lost their plantations and orchid gardens during the pipeline's construction. These landowners were not given new plots of land in exchange for their lost land, nor were they compensated.

**Displacement:** The Assessment Team also talked to village elders and former village heads in the area, who discussed how some families fled their homes during the pipeline's construction, due to gross human rights abuses committed by pipeline security forces; abuses included killing and beating of those suspected of supporting rebel groups, massive forced labour and unpaid portering, and forced relocation. Families who migrated did not return. The Team learned that those who migrated from the area are now mostly living as refugees or migrant workers in Thailand.

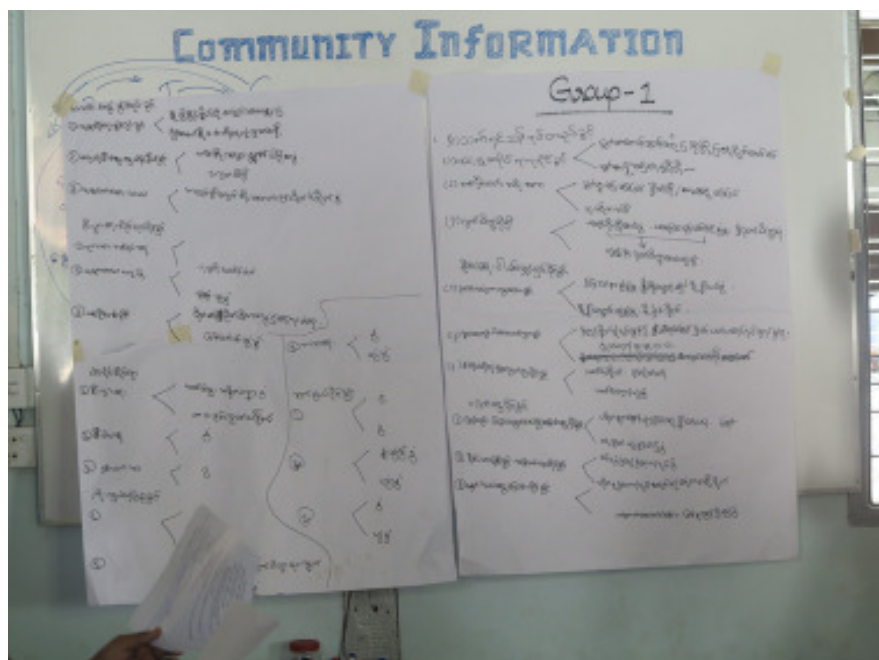
**Forced relocation:** Many former village heads explained how the Burmese Army employed forced relocation during the construction of the pipeline. Families were forced to abandon their former villages, which had rich resources, to move to relocation sites along the Ye-Tavoy motorway. It was indicated that, now, the children of those who were relocated are settling down in their new homes.

#### b. Impacts of militarization in Kwe-Tho-Nyima and Min-Tha Village Tracts

Navy Forces at Kadaik Village, close to Min-Tha Village Tract, have claimed approximately 80,000 Acres of land as theirs, sending written orders to Village Heads in around 15 villages to transfer the land to them. Community members are unhappy with these orders.

**Concerns about land confiscation:** In 2011 the Navy confiscated around 800 Acres of land from farmers in Kwe-Tho-Nyima Village, with villagers losing land that contained rubber trees that had taken years to mature. Communities in this area are concerned about further land confiscation, given that the Navy has now raised an interest in a further 80,000 Acres of land.

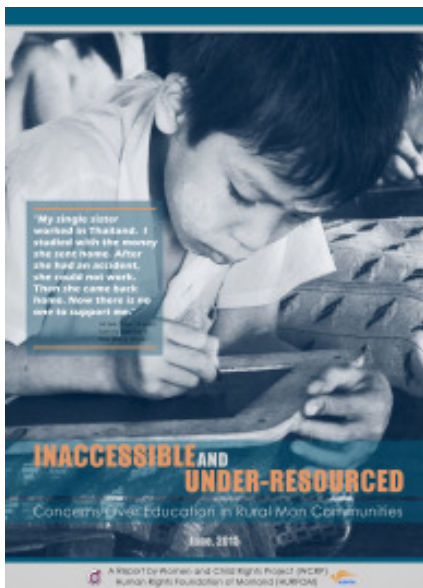
**Protection against land confiscation:** Although land rights consultants from HURFOM and other CBOs have provided training about land rights and the land registration process to villagers in this area, the village heads and villagers are afraid to register their land, due to fears of intervention by the Navy.



**Report Brief**

# INACCESSIBLE AND UNDERRESOURCED

## Concerns Over Education in Rural Mon Communities



In *Inaccessible and Under-Resourced* the Women and Child Rights Project (WCRP), a project of the Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM), draws on interviews with 146 individuals, largely in 17 predominantly Mon villages of Ye Township (Mon State), Kyar Inn Seik Kyi Township (Karen State), and Yebyu Township (Tenasserim Division), to present an exploration of education challenges in Burma/ Myanmar’s rural Mon communities.

**Figure 1: Distribution of interviewees by position**

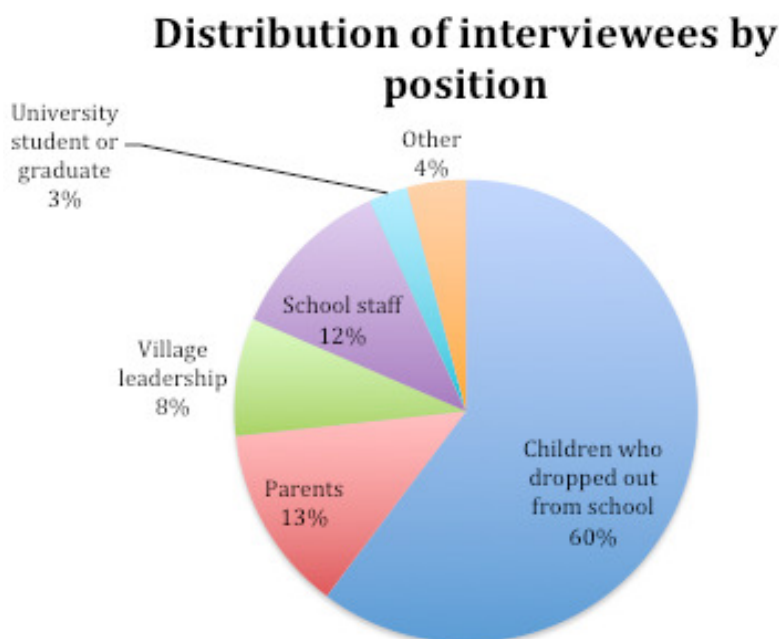
(WCRP Interview Data).

### I. Survey Demographics

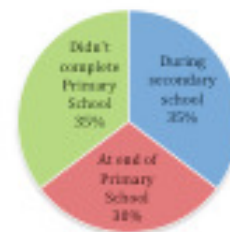
WCRP’s research covered a mixture of education structures, with surveyed villages containing 3 government-run Basic Education Schools, 10 predominantly government-led ‘Mixed Schools’, and 10 non-state Mon National Education Committee (MNEC) operated Mon National Schools.<sup>1</sup>

As shown by *Figure 1*, the majority of interviews were conducted with children who had dropped out from education, while wider data included interviews with parents, teachers and village leadership.

### II. Education Dropout



**Stage of drop out among children who provided data**



**Figure 2: Stage of drop out among children who provided data**

(WCRP Interview data).

WCRP’s first area of focus was a study of education dropout.

#### *Stage of dropout:*

51 children interviewed by WCRP stated the level at which they had dropped out from school. As *Figure 2* shows, **over a third of these children dropped out before the end of Primary School**, while just under a third dropped out directly after completing Primary School, failing to make the transition to Secondary Education. Statistics showing problems with Primary School completion suggest that the Burmese/ Myanmar government’s commitment to UN Millennium Development Goal No. 2 (Universal Completion of Primary Education) remains unfulfilled in the surveyed townships.

#### *Livelihood concerns:*

73 children interviewed by WCRP detailed their reasons for dropout. As *Figure 3* shows, family livelihood concerns were cited by over three quarters of these children as the predominant factor. WCRP’s wider interviews with parents, teachers and village leadership supported this claim; of 135 total interviews, 87 discussed family livelihood concerns as a major cause of education dropout. For example, one teacher from Wae Thar

Lee (East) village, Kyar Inn Seik Kyi Township, detailed:

“There are around 280 children who could attend [Wae Thar Lee (East)] school but only 235 go to school. The other children don’t go to school because their parents face difficulties with livelihood problems.”

Research suggested four main routes through which livelihood difficulties led to dropout:

**1) Poor families were unable to afford costs related to education:** unaffordable school fees were reported at both Primary and Secondary level. Meanwhile, an insufficient network of Middle and High Schools in rural regions meant that students often had to travel long distances to access Secondary Education, creating high costs to cover transport to other villages or fees for children to board at their school.

**2) Children from poor families needed to work to supplement their family’s income,** with children leaving school to join the workforce.

**3) Livelihood difficulties created a need for families to migrate,** with parents taking children out from school in order to do so.

**4) Figure 3: What was the main reason you left school? (As % of**

**dropout interviewees who gave a reason) (WCRP Interview Data).**

**Poverty affected community perceptions of education’s value:** parents took their children out from school because education was considered an expensive luxury, unnecessary for survival.

*Other key factors behind dropout included:*

☐ **Difficulties with transport to school:** respondents indicated problems with irregular public transport, rainy season flooding and security concerns regarding routes to school. Transport difficulties were reportedly most acute at Secondary level, given the fact that many children

had to travel far outside their village to access a Middle or High School.

☐ **Children needing to board at school** due to long distances between home villages and Secondary Education. Aside from financial concerns, this meant that some children didn’t continue to Secondary Education due to worries about missing their families, while in other cases parents voiced concern about children living away from home.

☐ **Children being required to take on domestic responsibilities,** such as cooking and childcare. In these cases children left school to look after the household.



☐ **Bad experiences of education:** experiences detailed to WCRP ranged from children being bored in lessons and falling behind, to excessive use of disciplinary methods.

### III. Resource Constraints in Rural Village Schools

School resource constraints consisted WCRP’s second area of focus. Notably, resource problems were reported in 14 of 23 village schools surveyed.<sup>2</sup> As Figure 4 shows, the greatest number of resource complaints concerned MNEC Mon National Schools.

**Figure 4: Number of complaints over resource difficulties, by type of complaint and type of school (WCRP Interview Data).**

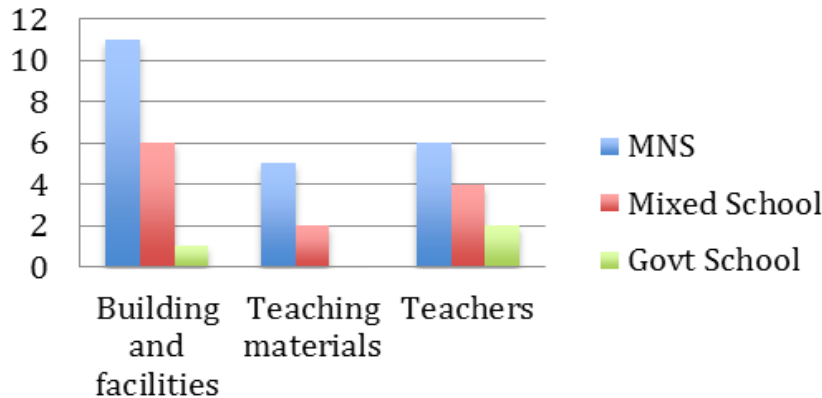
*Types of resource constraints:*

**1) School buildings and facilities:** concerns ranged from one Mon National Primary School that had no permanent school building, to schools where buildings were too small, in disrepair, or did not have private teaching rooms. Other key concerns included chair/desk shortages and poor water supply.

**2) Teaching materials:** schools were reported to lack stationery, school books and other teaching materials.

**3) Teachers:** concerns included insufficient numbers of teachers, teachers being taken away from the classroom by other commitments, high teacher turnover, insufficient teaching experience and low standards of qualification among teachers.

## Complaints over resource difficulties



one village administrator stating, “We would rather be poor than accept their support”. While such claims may appear extreme, they must be understood within the context of ethnic conflict and entrenched mistrust of central government from which MNEC’s autonomous school system was born. For the benefit of all children and teachers within MNEC schools, for whom additional support is urgently required, the Burmese/Myanmar government must consider that such strict pre-conditions for support may be asking for greater concessions from village and school leadership than they may reasonably be expected to make; a less ‘all-or-nothing’ approach may be more likely to engender cooperation.

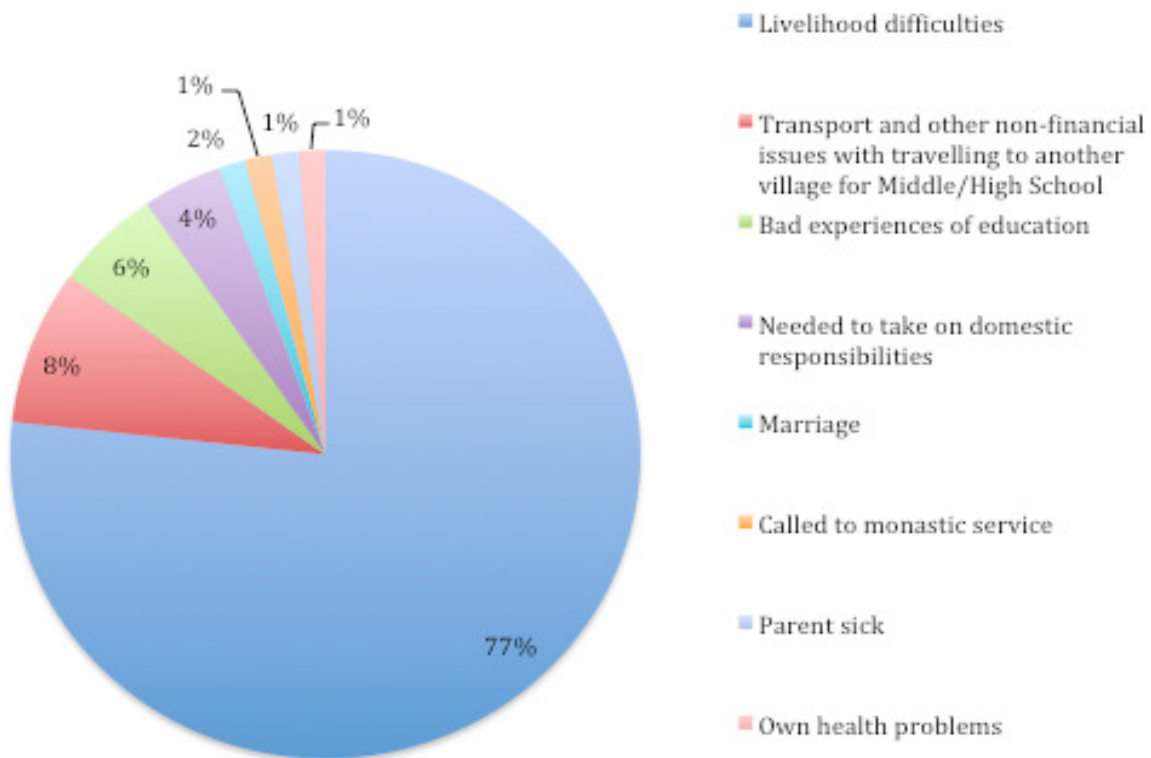
### Government offers of support to MNEC schools:

In the context of severe resource shortages in MNEC schools, multiple interviewees told WCRP that the Burmese/Myanmar government had approached individual MNEC schools with offers of financial support. However, support was noted to come on the pre-condition of schools largely relinquishing their autonomy from government structures. In particular, in order to receive support the government reportedly required schools to limit teaching in Mon to just one hour per day, while also introducing government teachers into their school and enforcing the use of government school uniforms. While some schools were reported to have accepted offers of government support, others vehemently rejected them, with

### IV. Recommendations

WCRP hopes that the above findings may be used as both a call to action, and as an evidence base for stepped-up engagement and further research. WCRP calls for all parties concerned with education in Mon regions, including the Burmese/Myanmar government, MNEC and international aid organisations to take the following immediate actions:

## What was the main reason you left school?



**To consolidate education reform in the light of WCRP’s findings:**

1. For the Burmese/Myanmar government to increase education spending, targeting measures outlined below.
2. For the New Mon State Party (NMSP)/Mon National Education Committee (MNEC) to develop an education reform policy fitting the needs identified here.
3. For the Burmese/Myanmar government and ethnic armed groups to include discussions on education reform in the peace process, in particular regarding the concerns expressed here.

**To minimise the effects of poverty on education prospects:**

1. For the Burmese/Myanmar government and international aid agencies to collaborate on poverty reduction initiatives targeted towards rural Mon villages.
2. For the Burmese/Myanmar government and MNEC to implement a system to collaboratively track school attendance rates among school-age children in rural Mon communities, to allow comparisons with national trends and for the design of targeted interventions.
3. For the Burmese/Myanmar government, MNEC and international aid agencies to work to reduce costs attached to education in rural villages: ensuring that pre-existing policies of free Primary Education are fully implemented, widening legislation to extend free education to the end of Middle School and opening up scholarship opportunities for children attending Secondary School far from home.
4. For the Burmese/Myanmar government, MNEC and international aid agencies to provide possibilities for children to undertake further education and training while also in employment e.g. through non-formal and distance education programmes.
5. For the Burmese/Myanmar government and MNEC to facilitate easy transfer between schools to enhance access to education for children from migrant families.
6. For the Burmese/Myanmar government, MNEC, international agencies and Mon CBOs to renegotiate community attitudes to education, through capacity building, advocacy, and graduate employment opportunities.

**To tackle other access concerns:**

1. For the Burmese/Myanmar government and MNEC to initiate a collaborative mapping and strategic planning initiative, to map all schools in Mon regions and in doing so expand access to education by determining if and where new schools should be built.



2. For the Burmese/Myanmar government and NMSP to strengthen infrastructure and security on all routes to school.

**To address resource deficiencies:**

1. For the Burmese/Myanmar government and MNEC to undertake resource-focussed needs assessments in all schools within their respective authorities.
2. For the Burmese/Myanmar government and MNEC to take action to resolve human resource problems, by increasing teacher salaries and enhancing teacher training opportunities.
3. For MNEC to conduct a comprehensive review and analysis of current budget expenditures and deficits, in order to establish a strategic organizational development plan that outlines funding requirements and specific organizational development needs.
4. For the Burmese/Myanmar government to renegotiate its pre-conditions for support to MNEC schools, allowing government resources to be accessed without requiring MNEC schools to completely sacrifice their autonomy. International donors should maintain funding for non-state systems until such an arrangement can be guaranteed.

**(Endnotes)**

<sup>1</sup> Mixed Schools are government schools that teach courses on Mon language and culture, through cooperation with MNEC.

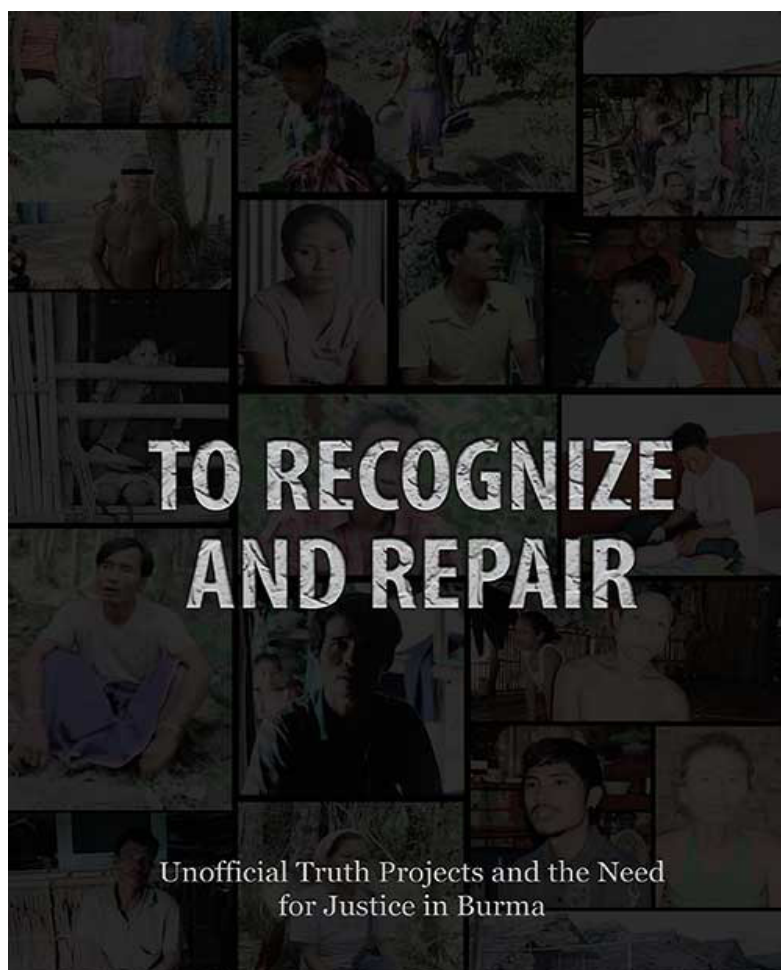
<sup>2</sup> A village-by-village account of resource constraints can be found in *Appendix 1* of WCRP’s full report.





## News

## TO RECOGNIZE AND REPAIR: UNOFFICIAL TRUTH PROJECTS AND THE NEED FOR JUSTICE IN BURMA



June 11, 2015

The Network for Human Rights Documentation – Burma (ND-Burma) today released its new report, titled “To Recognize and Repair: Unofficial Truth Projects and the Need for Justice in Burma,” focusing on the need for acknowledgement of human rights violations victims’ experiences and for addressing their needs through reparation policy.

This 78 pages research paper focuses on the extrajudicial killings, torture and land confiscation by government forces those are widespread in Burma. These three areas demonstrate the need to begin concrete discussions on how the government should be taking responsibility for reparations programs and taking steps to acknowledge and apologize for the crimes of the present and of the past.

In this paper, ND-Burma suggests that the first step towards making this a meaningful transition and beginning to build trust is for the Government of Burma to publicly acknowledging past violations and recognize its responsibility to make amends for the suffering caused.

This report is a part of the Unofficial Truth Project, called “unofficial” because ND-Burma and its members are doing it themselves, not as a government-backed project.

## HURFOM’S STATEMENT ON TOYO-THAI COMPANY’S PLANS TO BUILD A POWER PLANT IN ANN-DIN VILLAGE, YE TOWNSHIP, MON STATE

May 5, 2015

The Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) is very much concerned about the decision of Toyo-Thai Corporation Public Company Limited (TTCL) to construct a 1,280 MW coal-fired power plant in Ann-Din Village, Parlain region, Ye Township, Mon State.

Since TTCL proposed the project in Ann-Din, there has been concern and instability among local inhabitants living in the project area. The investment has created disunity and power struggles between religious groups, political parties, and ethnic communities in Ye Township.

The government needs to review their energy policy and immediately put a stop to the power plant project, which has already created negative impacts for local people in the region.

HURFOM urges the Mon State government to respect and protect the economical, social and cultural rights of the community and plan for action to protect the environment in Mon State.

HURFOM urges political parties and community leaders in Mon State to help protect their environment, to advance the rights of the next generation and to help put a stop to this foreign investment project, which has already caused social conflict and detrimental division in the community.

HURFOM calls on the Mon State community to protect the beauty, unity and stability of Mon State by opposing the power plant construction project, which will impact thousands of people’s livelihoods and social-economic conditions, as well as the region’s environment.

News

News from page no.1

**AROUND 6,000 VILLAGERS RALLY AGAINST PROPOSED YE TOWNSHIP COAL-FIRED POWER PLANT**

May 6, 2015

Ann Din, Ye: On May 5, 2015, approximately 6,000 residents from a number of villages gathered to protest against a proposed coal-fired power plant, to be built in Ann Din Village, Ye Township.



Mon State locals protest the planned construction of a 1280-megawatt coal-fired power plant at Ann Din village on Tuesday. (Photo: Tin Htet Paing / The Irrawaddy)

In April this year, Toyo-Thai Corp. signed an agreement with the Department of Hydropower Planning, outlining plans to develop a 1280-megawatt coal-fired power plant in Ann-Din Village. According to a company statement, the project will begin in 2016 and span 30 years, with a total investment of US\$2.8 billion.

Those who gathered on Ann-Dinn’s football pitch to protest against the project included monks, Htuttaw representatives,

civil society organizations, environmental activists, youth groups and local villagers. Together they released a statement, accusing the government and Toyo-Thai Corp. of failing to be fully transparent with local people about the project.

Protestors detailed that they had come to join the rally because they were aware of the negative impacts that the proposed power plant would have on local people, especially given that local populations are unlikely to receive significant benefits.

Residents have petitioned against the project since last year, yet one protestor expressed that they have been given no further information about the project’s progress. Protestors claim that this shows a lack of transparency, which local people cannot accept.

Protestor Mi Myint Maw told HURFOM, “We will keep opposing this project, that threatens our lives and livelihoods, in all possible ways”.



**News**

News from page no.1

**ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS**

**MINISTRY OF FORESTRY ACCUSED OF ENDANGERING LOCAL HERITAGE**

June 15, 2015

Residents of the ancient city of Wagaru in Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State, have accused the Ministry of Forestry of threatening their community’s heritage, following the creation of new Eucalyptus plantations in the ancient city.

Last year the Ministry of Forestry planted a thousand Eucalyptus trees in the historic site, with preparations made by the military for another thousand trees to be planted this year.

Residents have expressed frustration that, while local landowners have been stopped from planting rubber trees in the historic area, military personnel, under the remit of the Ministry of Forestry, have nevertheless been permitted to plant trees without restriction.

Moreover, residents have detailed concerns that the new Eucalyptus trees were planted without prior warning or consultation of local residents.

Nai Manot Rot, Chairman of a group championing the city’s ancient heritage, explained his concerns that these new plantations represent a threat to the effective preservation of Wagaru’s history and culture.

He said, “This land is our villagers’ heritage, to understand and to get to know their history. We have to protect it. It seems that what they are doing now is destroying our history and heritage”.

expected to affect approximately 20,000 Mon individuals in Kyainnseiky Township, Karen State, in addition to residents in 27 villages in Mon State’s Moulmein District and various villages in northern Ye Township, Mon State.

These concerns were made clear on June 7, when the national register for this year’s elections was released. Alongside errors with names, due to citizens’ failures to check their details on the proposed list, it also became apparent that many names were absent from the register. In some cases whole families were noted to be missing.

Nai Soe Nai said, “In Tenasserim Division there are over 60,000 Mon people on the list to vote. In this coming election we hope to have one Mon representative in the region”. However, in contrast, areas where significant numbers of Mon nationals remain unregistered may risk losing out on Mon community representatives in parliament.

For those who were missing from the list, in particular those denied the right to vote due to failure to possess official ID, Nai Soe Nai stated, “They won’t have the right to vote. Do the government know about this matter, or do they know but don’t want to solve it?”

**FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS**

**NATIONALS WITHOUT ID CARDS TO BE DENIED VOTE IN 2015 ELECTIONS**

June 16, 2015

Nationals without identity cards are to lose the right to vote in the upcoming 2015 election, according to Moulmein District Administrator Nai Soe Nai. This is



**UNOFFICIAL BORDER CROSSING CAUSES CORRUPTION, SAY LOCAL RESIDENTS AND SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS**

May 12, 2015

Local residents and small business owners in the Thai-Burma border town of Three Pagodas Pass have expressed frustration with excessive taxation levied in border regions by corrupt authorities, which they say results from the fact that the border point of Three Pagodas Pass remains an unofficial crossing.

Local business allege that the unofficial border crossing at Three Pagodas Pass enables border authorities to use their

News

News from page no.11

UNOFFICIAL BORDER CROSSING CAUSES CORRUPTION, SAY LOCAL RESIDENTS AND SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS



own discretion in charging taxes, both from people travelling and business transporting goods across the border. One local resident elaborated, "If this border remains unofficial, taxes levied

by local government will continue. This tax collection does not go towards national finances, but goes to the corrupt border authorities. This tax issue is a big burden for passengers and

local small business owners".

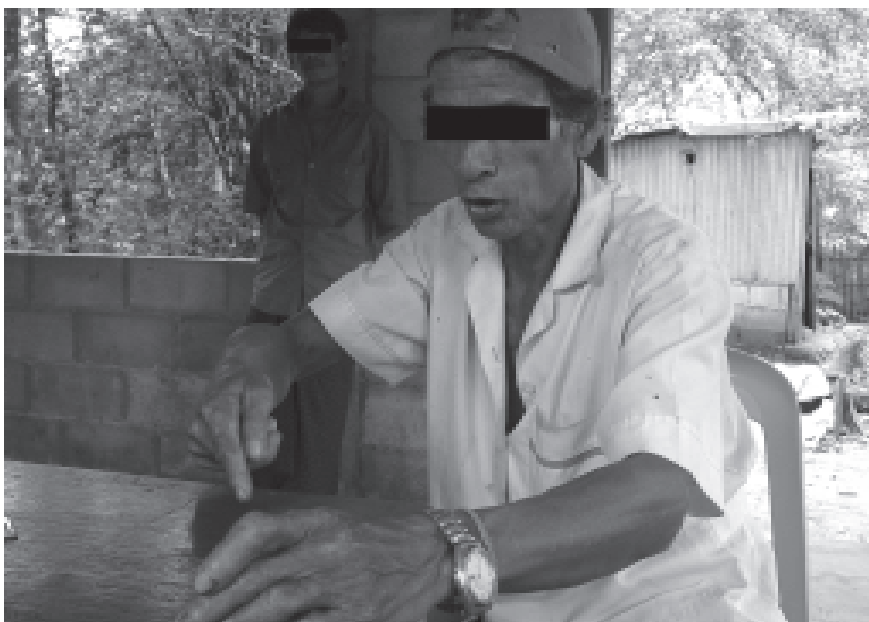
Every year residents of Three Pagodas Pass and local businessmen urge local authorities for an official opening of the border. This April during the Karen State Chief Minister visited Three Pagodas Pass to discuss regional border development, local trade and transportation, local residents and entrepreneurs urged to find a way to resolve Three Pagoda's Pass' tax issues. However, state authorities have consistently given excuses and delayed plans to create an official border crossing.

"The tax they collect is shared between local and State authorities," said Ko Aung Win, "State authorities are involved in this corruption. That is why they ignore people's wishes to open the border officially".



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News from page no.1



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Nai Ji Joon said. "It is clear that there are human rights violations in our current Mon situation, but it is very rare for these to be reported because Mon people do not have enough confidence to present these violations to human rights organizations or news outlets."

Echoing these sentiments was Nai Hong Sar, who in a recent 18-minute sit-down with *Guiding Star*, a Mon-language new journal, said: "I have also struggled to raise awareness for human rights and the critical situation of abuses and violations across Mon State. From my perspective, everyone must cooperate to increase activism on these issues."

"We want the public to know their rights, and we need to empower them to report on any violations to local and national governments and news organizations. We will address this through our discussion forums," he revealed. "Moreover, we will present the public with current cases that are happening in local areas, which will raise community-to-community awareness of current violations," said Nai Ji Joon.

**News**

**Information on HURFOM and Invitation for Feedbacks from Readers**

Dear Readers,

Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) was founded in 1995, by a group of young Mon people, The main objectives of HURFOM are:

- ☐ Monitoring the human rights situation in Mon territory and other areas in southern Burma
- ☐ Protecting and promoting internationally recognized human rights in Burma,

In order to implement these objectives, HURFOM produces the monthly “Mon Forum” newsletters. If publication is delayed it is because we are waiting to confirm information, and it comes with our heartfelt apologies.

We encourage you to write to us if you have feedback or if you know someone who you think would like to receive the newsletter.

Please email or mail a name and address to:

HURFOM, P.O. Box 35, Sangkhalburi Post Office,  
Kanchanaburi, 71240 Thailand

E-mail: [info@rehmonnya.org](mailto:info@rehmonnya.org)

Website: <http://www.rehmonnya.org>

With regards,

Director

Human Rights Foundation of Monland

**WOMAN AND CHILD RIGHTS  
MON WOMEN’S PARTY TO COMPETE IN 2015 ELECTIONS**



May 31, 2015

On 28 May, 2015 the Women’s Party (Mon), a political party representing the interests of Mon women, received official registration. Formed in October 2014, the Women’s Party was founded by Mi Than Shin, a former member of the *Shin Saw Pu Mon Women*

empowerment *Association*.

Mi Than Shin explained that, in forming their own political party, the group of women hoped to create a neutral third force that would unite existing parties, while also giving primacy to women’s concerns.

Mi Than Shin explained to HURFOM that the main goal of the Women’s

Party is to achieve equality, establishing equal rights between men and women, and amongst women of different ethnic backgrounds.

According to Mi Than Shin, now that the Women’s Party has received official registration and it will compete in this year’s upcoming elections.

**News from page no.14**

The Human Rights Human Dignity International Film Festival was held from June 15 to 19, organized by prominent filmmaker Min Htin Ko Ko Gyi, and with the patronage of human rights icons Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and Min Ko Naing. The festival saw wide competition from 67 national and international films, covering issues surrounding political, economic, social and cultural rights. The film festival’s award ceremony was held on June 19, in celebration of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s birthday.

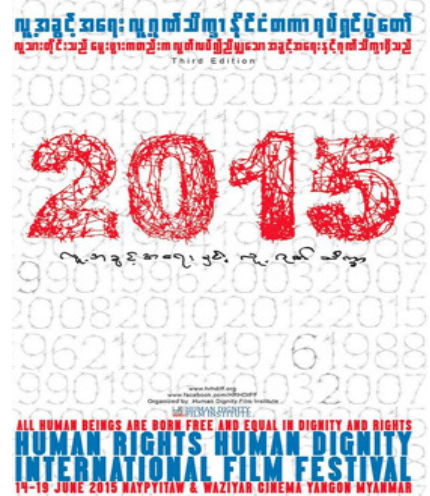
# HURFOM-PRODUCED HUMAN RIGHTS FILM RECEIVES DAW AUNG SAN SUU KYI PRIZE



24 June, HURFOM

A human rights film entitled "Touching the Fire", directed by Min Than Oo and produced by the Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM), has won the Aung San Suu Kyi Prize at the 2015 Human Rights Human Dignity International Film Festival, Burma/Myanmar.

The film, recorded in Mon with subtitles in Burmese, details the concerns of residents in Anndin village, Ye Township, in Southeast Burma's Mon State, over plans by foreign direct investment (FDI) company Toyo-Thai to construct a coal-fired power plant in the village. Since Toyo-Thai Company arrived in Anndin village in April 2014, the company has also announced plans to buy 500 acres of farmland just 500 meters away from Anndin, to build a deep seaport to import coal to fuel the plant. Additionally, the company plans to bring 20,000 migrant workers to Anndin to work on the project. The film's Director Min Than Oo, also known as Nai Asorn Vi, spent almost three months collecting and editing footage from Anndin village, supported by funding from HURFOM.



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