



KSDP NEWS

JUNE 2007

Karenni Student Development Programme reg. charity 1108288

NEW BEGINNINGS

This first page is all about new beginnings. Moe Bue our Karenni intern who wrote her life story in the last newsletter is making great headways here. She has become involved in many activities in the UK, speaking at several meetings including a Burmese ethnic harmony meeting in Sheffield.



Above you see Moe Bue (in white) with a delegation of young people from the Burmese ethnic states visiting the House of Commons in May to attend a discussion about the future of the United Nations organized by the Conservative Human Rights group. Moe Bue was joined by two men from Shan State, (security prevents us showing one), a Karenni lady who is doing an MA in Canada, and a

Karenni lady. Moe Bue is unique in probably being the only female Karenni living in the UK.

Concerns have often been expressed about whether the various ethnic groups of Burma could co-exist once democracy returns so it is great to see the young people unifying for peace and harmony.

Following changes in the regulations, Moe Bue has been prevented from returning to the refugee camp in September. Since it is impossible for her to return safely to her village in Karenni State, she is totally stateless and so we are pleased that the Home Office have granted her the right to remain in the UK for up to five years. KSDP will now help her to achieve her ambition of having official education and skills training to enable her to help her people even more when she is eventually able to return.

NEW 'KSDP' FAMILY UNIT

Here are two KSDP students, Say Reh and Priscilla, recent graduates from the KSDP funded Leadership and Management Course (KLMC) in Camp #1. They first met during our Skills Development Programme in Mae Hong Son where we were able to bring their educational level up to the standard required for the Leadership programme.



Not only did we help with their education, but we'd like to think that we've also contributed to a new Karenni family unit. Having met on our original programme, they became student leaders at KLMC and then just a few hours after her final exams, Priscilla produced a beautiful baby daughter, called Say La Paw. Under present camp regulations students have to leave school, even higher education courses, if they marry, so their wedding - planned for the week term ended - had to be postponed until the baby was a month old.

Say Reh and his family have now gone to live in Finland following a resettlement offer and Priscilla and Say La Paw hope to join him later in the year. Say Reh and his father and stepmother have started Finnish classes, his younger brother and sisters have started proper school and everything is "wonderful—it's only a village but we even have buses to go to town". He has been interviewed by the local paper and TV station and he has said he is so grateful to KSDP for opening his eyes to the opportunities available in the world. He is living in a small village with seven other Karenni families, including four ex-KLMC students and they hope to be able to save some money to pay for treats for the KLMC students still in camp.

NEW MULE



KSDP has just purchased a mule for the Free Burma Rangers to help transport aid during their sorties back inside Burma. Our mule's name is Stephanie— (very appropriate since we always said that Steph was as stubborn as a mule!). She will help to transport medicines and other aid to the Internally Displaced People living precariously in the Karenni jungle, hiding from the SPDC. Each mule can carry the same as four men, so she will be a great help for the FBR.

You can now donate on-line to KSDP. Visit [Charity Choice](#), a secure site administered by the Cooperative Bank. You state your donation, Gift Aided if applicable, and it is automatically credited to our bank.

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Graduation day for our 3-villages course students. This is the programme that KSDP ran in Mae Hong Son and on which Bridget and Beryl (and various other volunteers taught). For most of the students this was the first time they had ever received certificates to mark a level of achievement in school. For some it had been a big struggle, as they coped with an English based course, but for all it brought a new dimension into their lives. As they became accustomed to computers and the Internet, opening up new opportunities for contact with the outside world, they discovered facts hitherto unknown to them. We often had to confront cultural myths, especially in areas like astronomy, and we had to completely redesign all our course material to suit students who had no experience of learning beyond primary level. Some are already putting their new found knowledge to good use helping others within their communities.



Proud student MuJon with even prouder mother. Mu Jon had previously only had one year of education but was one of our brightest and most dedicated students.



MaLo with children from Huai Seau Tao where she is running a weekly English Club



MuRi with the new Huay Pu Keng computer (see next page). She will be trying to dispel computer phobias that the pupils and teachers have.



English Club activities—yes that is my nose!



We have bought a computer for Huay Pu Keng, the Kayan village where we fund the KSDP Middle School. There is no mains electricity to this village, so everything must be powered by generator or solar batteries. Sadly until they have satellite communications there will be no internet for them. The teachers will use this computer to help them prepare class materials and exam papers which previously had to be written by hand.

At the moment many of the teachers and pupils are very scared of the computer but MuRi, a recent graduate of the 3-villages course whose home is here, will be teaching them how to use the computer.



CONGRATULATIONS

Just as we go to press we have heard that Mu Shar (above) has passed the entrance test for the academic Post-10 school in camp. She was one of our first pupils in the new Middle School and has just completed two years in High School at the camp, where she lived in the KSDP Future Stars Boarder. She will probably now live in our new Shining Stars Boarder. She is the first 'graduate' of our Middle School in Huay Pu Keng to achieve this honour and it proves how right we were to provide ongoing schooling to these young people. Look carefully at this picture of Mu Shar and in the background you'll see she used to wear the rings.



Some of our Huay Pu Keng Middle School students with Marcus, one of our volunteer teachers



Cleaning up on Friday afternoon after classes



External teachers are not allowed into camp and so KSDP have been running Friday classes for the students of KLMC in a “no-mans land area” just outside the camp. Students have a one hour walk through the jungle to get there and the journey for KSDP volunteer teachers is hazardous as we often have to negotiate swollen river crossings. For the first time the students have English lessons from a native speaker and have also enjoyed access to hands-on computer teaching since we take all our laptops. We encourage current affairs discussions which sometimes challenges their boundaries since they have so little access to the outside world. Gradually they have lost inhibitions and started to open up.

NEW SHINING STARS BOARDER

KSDP now funds four boarding facilities in the Karenni camps. We have just built the fourth — called Shining Stars, with funds that were raised by Bryanston School in Dorset. It will be home to Post-10 students (16+) in Karenni Camp #1 and will combine facilities for students from both the KSDP funded Leadership and Management Course and the academic Arts & Science Programme. 20 students of the latter programme have homes in Camp #2 and following withdrawal of funds by their previous sponsor, without somewhere to live it looked as if they would be unable to complete their studies. The Post-10 girls will be living in Shining Stars and the boys will be sharing the facilities of our nearby orphanage called Rising Stars—seen below. This will have an added advantage because it means that the older Post-10 students will be able to help teach the younger boys in Rising



CONGRATULATIONS
to all the 2007 KLMC graduates



Stars, seen alongside with their new generator that we were able to buy with help from the John Mercer Human Rights Trust. We are hoping that Shining Stars will help to bring the two Post-10 schools closer together since there has always been a certain rivalry between them. Sadly there are still insufficient further education facilities for students in the Karenni camps and many applicants have to be turned away each year.

RISING STARS BOARDER





THANKYOU for your £5

We would like to say a big thank you to all the sponsors of our Karenni refugee students. Your regular donations are our lifeline, knowing that each month we have regular income to support our young people.

£5 per month will provide all the basics for one student such as clothing, toiletries and supplementary food (additional to rice that is). We now have four orphanages and boarding units in the Karenni camps — Future Stars 1, Future Stars 2, Rising Stars and Shining Stars. We provide homes for around 150 students who would all be denied a secure family environment without KSDP’s support. Many of these young refugees have lost their parents or been separated from them for many years and KSDP is the only family they know.

Phone or email us for a sponsor form. With Gift Aid your £5 donation becomes £6.40.

Gift Aid Declaration **KSDP, Laceby Manor, Laceby, N.E.Lincs, DN37 7EA Reg. Charity No: 1108288**

Title _____ Forename(s) _____ Surname _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Telephone _____ email _____

I want KSDP to accept all donations that I have made since February 24th 2005 and those that I make in future, until I notify you otherwise, as Gift Aid. I currently pay UK Income Tax. I confirm that should my circumstances change in the future and I no longer pay tax on my income and/or capital gains equal to the tax that KSDP reclaims on my donations, I will write and advise you to cancel this declaration. I also confirm that I will keep KSDP advised of any changes to my name or address.

Signed _____ Date _____

Frequently Asked Questions:

What is the standard of education like in the camp?

Sadly it seems to be getting worse. No foreign teachers are allowed into camp and all of the Karenni teachers, whilst very dedicated to helping their own people, are poorly educated and trained when compared to Western standards. In addition many of the better educated Karenni who previously benefited from external teachers like Stephanie and other volunteers have now left for resettlement in a third country.

What language do the students learn in?

It is forbidden to teach Karenni in Burma so on arriving in the camp many young people don’t speak Karenni, while the older generation and those who have lived in the camp for some years don’t speak Burmese. Furthermore photocopied text books are often only available in English, so the children have to master 3 languages. Now the Thai authorities would like to introduce Thai in order to aid eventual integration, should this ever be allowed. Naturally the Karenni education authorities are worried that a fourth language will prove an insurmountable handicap dragging educational attainments down even further.

What opportunities do the young people have to work once they complete school?

They are not allowed to leave the camp to work outside, so all work is within camp, helping to run community based organisations. There are insufficient placements for all the young people and many feel inadequate and unfulfilled, and there are increasing social problems, such as school drop-outs, alcoholism, and even suicides as a result. In addition many of the girls endure pressure from parents to marry at a relatively young age to the detriment of their education.

- KSDP provides educational and other support to Karenni refugees living in camps on the Thai/Burma border and elsewhere in the world, following third country resettlement.
- KSDP was founded in 1999 by Stephanie Lee, who was killed in Thailand in a road accident in 2001. KSDP is now run by Stephanie’s family in her memory, and is a registered charity.
- KSDP needs to raise at least £45,000 each year to fund all their on-going projects.
- You can sponsor a student for just £5 per month—contact us for a standing order form.
- KSDP operates a policy of minimum administrative costs. 100% of your donation goes directly to KSDP projects.

Thank you for your continuing support. Please contact us if you have any comments or ideas for fund raising.

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