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Chin Human Rights Organization

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Chin National Day celebration in Mindat, Chin State (above), a building constructed by a Chin Christian pastor stopped by authorities in Yesagyo (below)
(Photo: Sungsung & Rev. Zun Hlei Sum)



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Arbitrary Taxation & Extortion

Govt department officials extort money from locals in Thantlang

06 February 2014:

Unnamed officials in two government departments in Thantlang, Chin State have been accused of extorting money from locals for issuing official documents.

The government employees from the Department of Immigration and Population, and Settlement and Land Records Department demand extra fees for the National Registration Card (NRC), Family Registration Form, and forms related to land-ownership.

A Thantlang resident, who wants to remain anonymous, told the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) that they had to pay 5,000 Kyats for an NRC card although the official fixed fee is 6 Kyats, and 2,000 Kyats for an officially free Family Registration Form-10.

"Up to 10,000 Kyats can be charged for replacement or renewal of an old NRC card, and a completely new card will cost between 30,000 and 40,000 Kyats," added the Chin local.

When asked about the situation, a female employee from the Department of Immigration and Population, said that they didn't charge extra fees besides the official rates, adding: "Only those who can afford give us some money, say 2,000 Kyats, 5,000Kyats, etc., as a gift. It is not what we ask from them."

"Those who do not have don't give. However, we charge 2,000 Kyats

per head to cover our travel costs when we go around villages," she added, without making it crystal clear either that those who didn't have and, therefore, didn't give, actually received the forms they wanted, or that nobody actually had to borrow money in order to "show enough gratitude" to get the forms at the time they needed them.

Meanwhile, a village leader from Thantlang Township said that locals didn't understand why different amounts of fees were asked to pay for Form-103 for a certified map of land, and Form-105 for a legal document of land ownership, both issued by the Settlement and Land Records Department.

In response to questions asked about these matters, the Department Head said that they had never demanded money from people regarding the forms, adding: "Sometimes, people separately give us tips for tea in gratitude."

He did not make it clear, however, that "gratitude" was never shown in advance of receiving the documentation, or that locals were ever given reason to suppose that it was possible for them to receive the documentation in reasonable time even if they did not show this "gratitude".#

...the Department of Immigration and Population said that they didn't charge extra fees besides the official rates, adding: "Only those who can afford give us some money, say 2,000 Kyats, 5,000Kyats, etc., as a gift. It is not what we ask from them."

Freedom of Religion

Govt urged to end violations against Chin Christians

21 January 2014:

The Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) has called on the government of Burma to take necessary measures to stop discrimination against persons from religious minority backgrounds.

Its briefing paper released today highlighted violations of religious freedom against Chin Christians in Burma throughout 2013, calling on Thein Sein's government to prioritize the issue in its reforms agenda.

Salai Bawi Pi, Country Coordinator at CHRO, said: "The main problem is that the government treats Buddhism as the de-facto State religion in the country. That seriously undermines religious freedom for Chin Christians."

CHRO indicates that the government uses state resources for building Buddhist pagodas and monasteries while restrictions remain in place on construction of Christian infrastructure.

It censured the country's high-ranking government officials including President Thein Sein and Speaker Thura Shwe Mann for imposing meetings on Sunday mornings, to clash with local church services.

According to CHRO, this disregard for local custom in predominantly Christian Chin State continues a decades-old pattern and violates the right to assemble for religious worship.

CHRO called on the government to guarantee freedom of religious worship and assembly for all religions, and to replace the Ministry of Religious Affairs with an independent and impartial religious affairs commission with a mandate to address issues of religious discrimination. #

A building construction stopped by authorities
(Photo: Rev. Zun Hlei Sum)



He also said during his testimony at a local church in Hakha that a Yesagyo Township Administration Officer had told him in an official letter issued on 1 January 2014 to knock the building under construction down and to remove all the materials by the end of January.

The Chin pastor said that an appeal letter has been written with the help of Chin MP, leaders and pastors from Hakha and

Chin pastor ordered to stop church building construction in Magwe

03 February 2014: A Chin Christian pastor working as a missionary in Yesagyo, Magwe Region, said that local authorities have issued an order to stop constructing a church building.

Thantlang, and sent to relevant authorities including President Thein Sein and the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

According to local media reports as of today, they have not yet received any response from the authorities.

Chinland Guardian is unable to reach authorities in Yesagyo for comments on this matter. #

Chin pastor in Yesagyo summonsed to court

13 February 2014: Chin Christian pastor Rev. Zun Hlei Sum has been ordered to appear in court regarding matters related to construction of a church building in Yesagyo, Magwe Region.

He said that he received an official letter from the Yesagyo Township Court today and that he was charged with disobeying the order.

"It [letter] says that I am charged according to the Penal Code 188, and have to appear in court on 17 February 2014 to refute the charge," said the Chin pastor.

The letter signed by U Aung Htay indicates that Sum can either be sent to jail for up to six months or be fined 200 Kyats if he is not able to prove that the charge is wrong.

He said that he will deny the charge as he does not violate any law and that he will make preparation in



Rev. Zun Hlei Sum (Photo: CHRO)

consultation with a lawyer.

Earlier last month, the Chin pastor received an official letter from a Yesagyo Township Administration Officer warning him to stop constructing the building.#

Court date postponed for Yesagyo Chin pastor

17 February 2014: Rev. Zun Hlei Sum, a Chin Christian pastor based in Yesagyo town, Magwe Region, said that his court date has been rescheduled for 25 February.

However, the Yesagyo Township Court did not mention the reason for making the postponement.

The Chin pastor was called to go to court today after being charged with disobeying the order in regards to construction of a church building.

The case continues.#

Court date rescheduled for Chin pastor in Yesagyo

26 February 2014: The Yesagyo Township Court in Magwe Region informed Rev. Zun Hlei Sum yesterday that his court date has been rescheduled for

next week.

The Chin Christian pastor told the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) that he was told about the postponement only when he arrived at the court.

He said: "When I got to the court at 10am this morning as scheduled, they told me that the date has been put off because Khaing Htun, Head of the Yesagyo Township Administration Office, was busy."

"They didn't say anything else as to the reason why it was postponed for the second time. So, I went home," added Sum.

Khaing Htun filed a lawsuit against the Chin pastor after accusing him of constructing a building for a church in Yesagyo town.

He is set to attend a hearing next Wednesday.#

"They didn't say anything else as to the reason why it was postponed for the second time. So, I went home,"
- Rev. Zun Hlei Sum.

Questions over plan to construct pagoda in Sami

27 February 2014: Local leaders are totally bewildered by sudden activity recently begun to construct a new pagoda in Sami town, Paletwa Township, Chin State.

An organizing committee for the Sami Township said that a group of people from Arakan State had started construction work on about six acres of land reserved for an extension of No. 2 Ward.

In a letter given to the *Khonumthung* news, they said that the workers were using some machines in land clearing and preparing the building site without consultation with them.

"When we ask the workers about the ongoing activities, they don't say anything to us. The place is on a hilltop overlooking the town," added the Sami committee.

They added in their letter that they didn't know what to do and were not sure if the Chin State government should be informed.

With an area of 3,127.04 square miles, Sami was granted a new status of sub-township in an official ceremony inaugurated in June last year by Chief Minister Hung Ngai.

The newly upgraded town of Sami is still in the process of development and town planning involving construction of government office buildings and houses.

The letter indicated that the official agreement between the local committee and the State government does not include issues related to construction of Buddhist infrastructure in the new area.

A leader from Paletwa town told *Chinland Guardian* that the vast majority of residents in Sami are Chin and Christian.

One of the committee members said: "We are excited about the new development in Sami area, and are happy and hopeful for our children's future. But now that we have seen things happening like this, we feel like we are haunted by fear from the past during the military regimes."

In Chin State, Christians still face difficulties in obtaining permission to construct religious buildings.

A Chin Christian pastor from Thantlang said that their current church buildings are registered and constructed as private houses, not as religious premises, adding: "That's the only way we can have. It means that the authorities can take action against us any time they like."

A 2012 report by the Chin Human Rights Organization shows an increase in the number of Buddhist infrastructure across Chin State while Chin Christians face restrictions.

Chinland Guardian is unable to reach the local authorities in Sami for comment.#



Buddhist pagodas in Paletwa Township (Photo: CHRO)

Other Human Rights Violations

Suu Kyi disappointed over ban on public rallies in Chin State

14 January 2014:

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi expressed her disappointment over the way in which civil servants and students were banned from participating in public events during her visit to Chin State.

She said that she would make a formal complaint to the State authority if it was true, and that she would like to know the names of the officials who had issued the order.

Her responses came as a surprise when she was told that local authorities had given verbal instructions to her supporters not to join mass rallies where she was to give speeches.

The 68-year-old leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD) also said that it was unfair and against the law and that nobody had the right to issue such an

instruction.

According to the Chinland Post, a school teacher in Hakha said that they were asked to sign a document to confirm that they would not turn up at the public rallies.

A Hakha government employee said that they were verbally warned that they had to stay in the office when she [Suu Kyi] arrived and that public servants had to keep themselves away from politics.

Media reports said that the district administration had issued the instruction in Falam town.

Despite this, thousands of supporters and well-wishers in northern parts of Chin State stood in line on the roads and greeted the 68-year-old Nobel Peace laureate upon her arrivals.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi made visits to Tedim, Falam and Hakha towns of Chin State and Chin-populated towns including Kalaymyo in Sagaing Region from 6 to 10 January.#

Complaint over errors in Chin category for Burma census

23 January 2014: Tribal groups of the ethnic Chin complain that there are several errors found in the entries prepared for the upcoming 2014 Burma census scheduled for March this year.

They say that the names listed in the category 'Chin' are inaccurate, incomplete and misspelled especially when written in English, adding that it has created confusion and even misunderstanding among the tribes.

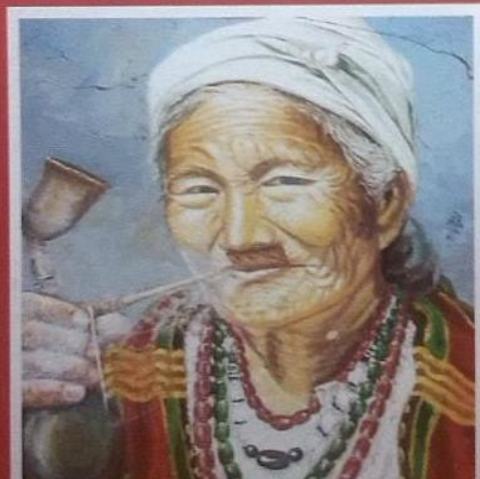
In a statement on Monday, Khumi leaders said that their tribe's name entered under Code 405 was wrong and not, therefore, acceptable.

Sunny Aung, Chairman of the Khumi Literature and Culture Committee, said that it could easily be mistaken for and confused with 'Khami', another tribe mostly living in Arakan State.

Recently, a new body called 'Chin Census Action

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(Photo: MIP)

Key messages for the 2014 Myanmar Census



(Photo: MIP)



Committee' was formed in a meeting held in Rangoon.

Salai Isaac Khen, CCAC member, said that the committee would submit an appeal to the authority to make necessary corrections on tribal names.

The committee suggested the need to organize consultation, training and awareness raising events including distribution of leaflets in order to help the people properly understand the census.

Salai Ceu Bik Thawng, General Secretary of the Chin National Party (CPP), said that there was some doubt about the way in which the questionnaires, forms and processes were designed for the census.

"We have to set out these points and let the authority know our concerns, and one of the best ways to do is through a signature campaign. We will also monitor and try to work closely with those responsible for the census taking," added Thawng, a member of CCAC.

In November last year, the Chin National Conference had agreed to use the word 'Chin' for ethnicity when the nationwide census takes place in 2014.

Salai Bawi Pi, of the Chin Human Rights Organization, said: "The sub-tribes listed must be officially reviewed and mistakes must be corrected. Lack of public consultation in the preparation and process has

now created confusion and there is concern that we will be more divided. Therefore, we would like to urge the government to postpone the month and hold either a press conference or a consultation."

Meanwhile, the ethnic Mon have also made a complaint that they had found more than 80% errors in the census entries, adding that some Mons were wrongly recorded in the past as ethnic Burman while others as ethnic Karen.

The Karen have expressed their concern that Karen sub-groups had been classified under the ethnic category 'Karenni', creating confusion and unnecessary divisions, according to the media reports.#



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ချင်းအမျိုးသားအထောက်အကူပြုကော်မတီ(CNACC)မှ ချင်းပြည်သူ့လူထုကော်မတီရပ်စဲသည့်
တိုက်တွန်းနှိုးဆော်ချက်



- ➔ ချင်းကုတ်နံပါတ်များဖြစ်ကြသော ၄၀၁ မှ ၄၅၃ အထိ မိမိနှင့်သက်ဆိုင်ရာကုတ်နံပါတ်ရွေးတည်ရန်၊
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- ➔ နိုင်ငံခြားရောက်မိသားစုဝင်များကို မေးခွန်းအမှတ်(၄၀)တွင် ပြည့်ပြည့်စုံစုံထည့်သွင်းကြရန်၊

(Photo: CNACC)

Paletwa-Matupi road cuts through paddy fields (Photo: CHRO)



Farmers' land destroyed to make way for Paletwa to Matupi road

07 February 2014: Farmers from Seint San village in Paletwa township have had their rice paddies destroyed to make way for the new Paletwa to Matupi road, a Chin State government project.

Three of the affected farmers, who spoke to the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) on condition of anonymity, described how nobody from the government came to talk to them about the project before it started.

On learning from a neighbour in mid-January that work had started on a road near his rice paddy, one of the farmers went to talk to Nay Myo Aung, the Paletwa Township Assistant Engineer at the project site.

"I told him that they should follow the route of the old road dating back to the British colonial era as that way there would be less damage and our paddy fields would not be so badly affected. I was able to negotiate a little bit, but there was still a lot of damage," he reported to CHRO.

Forestry department officials told the farmers that as the land is owned by their department, there would be no compensation for damaged land. In accordance with Khumi customary land use, the farmers have cultivated rice paddy in the area for several decades. However, many don't hold official land registration documents.

One farmer lost one acre of rice paddy to the project, while another lost two. They told CHRO, "The rice is just to eat, it is not to sell. So for our families, without that land it means we will not have rice to eat for three to six months this year."

According to CHRO, when a second farmer tried to negotiate with Paletwa township officials to safeguard his rice paddy, they scolded him for arguing with them and threatened to confiscate all of his land. He told CHRO, "Our government is untouchable."

Starting from 2007, the rat infestation triggered by the flowering of the *Melocanna baccifera* bamboo had a severe impact on the Paletwa township area. Villagers from Seint San reported to CHRO that they were badly affected for three years, and unable to harvest even a single basket of rice in that time. Many families had to borrow rice and money from friends and relatives at the time. They are still heavily in debt, and face ongoing hardship.

A third farmer, who had some mango trees destroyed as a result of the construction project, also tried to negotiate on behalf of his neighbours at the project site. According to CHRO, he told officials, "You should be kind, because the local people will suffer a lot from the loss of this land. How will they survive?"

In response, Assistant Engineer Nay Myo Aung said, "You should not be so concerned about such small pieces of land. This is the government's plan for the people's development."#

Human rights violations unabated in Burma

12 February 2014: The Network for Human Rights Documentation (ND-Burma) said that human rights violations committed by Burma's authorities continue in the country.

A new report released yesterday by the 13-member organization documented 106 cases of human rights violations inflicted upon civilians between July and December last year.

Salai Bawi Pi, of the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO), an ND-Burma member, said: "The report highlights that there are massive human rights violations in ethnic areas. It is an indication that the authorities still practice discrimination and rights abuses on the basis of religion and ethnicity."

"No doubt, ceasefire agreements alone will not bring improvement on the human rights situation in ethnic regions unless the Union government respects and protects the rights of ethnic minorities," added a Management Board member of the Thailand-based organization.

The report stressed serious human rights violations including extra-judicial killing, illegal arrests and deten-

tion, arbitrary taxation, property crimes, forced labor, trafficking, forced displacement and rape.

At the top of its list is confiscation and destruction of property with 35 cases, followed by torture and arbitrary taxation.

The report admitted that it was not able to collect data from across the country owing to various reasons including security restrictions, ongoing conflict, and fear of retaliation by authorities against victims for providing information.

ND-Burma said that these human rights violations are still taking place not only in conflict zones but also in other ethnic areas where Thein Sein's government has already signed ceasefire agreements or has agreed to negotiation.

"These human rights violations are predominantly happening in areas where the government is implementing massive development projects with foreign investors, extracting natural resources for export. The local people in these areas are suffering a plethora of abuses as a direct result of these projects," it added.

The Network for Human Rights Document released its previous periodic report highlighting 147 cases of human rights violations in Burma between January and June 2013.#

12 Asho Chin farmers jailed in Pegu Region

19 February 2014: A court in Padaung, Pegu Region yesterday gave a prison sentence to 12 Asho Chin subsistence farmers over their protest against land confiscation.

Judge Nan May Yin sentenced the Chin villagers of Kyarinn to between six months and three years in prison following a case related to a land dispute with the National Resources Development Company (NRDC), a business reportedly owned by a high-profile member of the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP).

Families of the victims said that the verdict was unacceptable and that their rights were abused.

They added that they had been living in the place and farming for many generations.

Media reports said that the authorities granted the NDRC 1,500 acres of farmland for teak plantation in 2008, of which about 100 acres belong to the Kyarinn villagers.

Those sentenced by the Padaung court are:

- Ko Maung Lin (3-year imprisonment with hard labour)
- Ko Phu Kya (8-month imprisonment with hard labour)
- Six farmers including U San Pe (1-year-and-9-month imprisonment with hard labour)
- Four farmers including U Tin Hla (6-month imprisonment with hard labour) #

Ethnic groups concern about govt's census taking plan

27 February 2014: In a meeting with Khin Yi, Union Minister of Immigration and Population held in Nay Pyi Taw today, ethnic representatives raise concerns about government's plans to review data after taking census.

They asked questions in regards to how the authorities would conduct the March-April census counting based on the government-approved 135 national races, a number that ethnic nationalities in the country do not accept.

Salai Ceu Bik Thawng, members of the Chin National Action Committee on Census 2014, said that the list of national races would be reviewed afterwards by government-formed ethnic affairs committee, adding: "Each ethnic group should be responsible for designation of their own identity."

Myint Kyaing, Director-General of Population Department, said in the New Light of Myanmar interview that the list of national races was approved in 1973 and 1983, and that no more amendment was made to it.

Ethnic nationalities in the country have criticised the

way in which tribal groups are categorised and classified in codes, saying it creates confusion and unnecessary hassle.

In a statement released today, the Kachin National Organization said that they are extremely concerned over a plan by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to launch a controversial 2014 Population and Housing Census this Saturday, 1 March.

General Secretary Hkanhpa Sadan said: "We recognise the fact that a census should one day be conducted but it is not the right time, owing to the fighting in Kachin state and Northern Shan State."

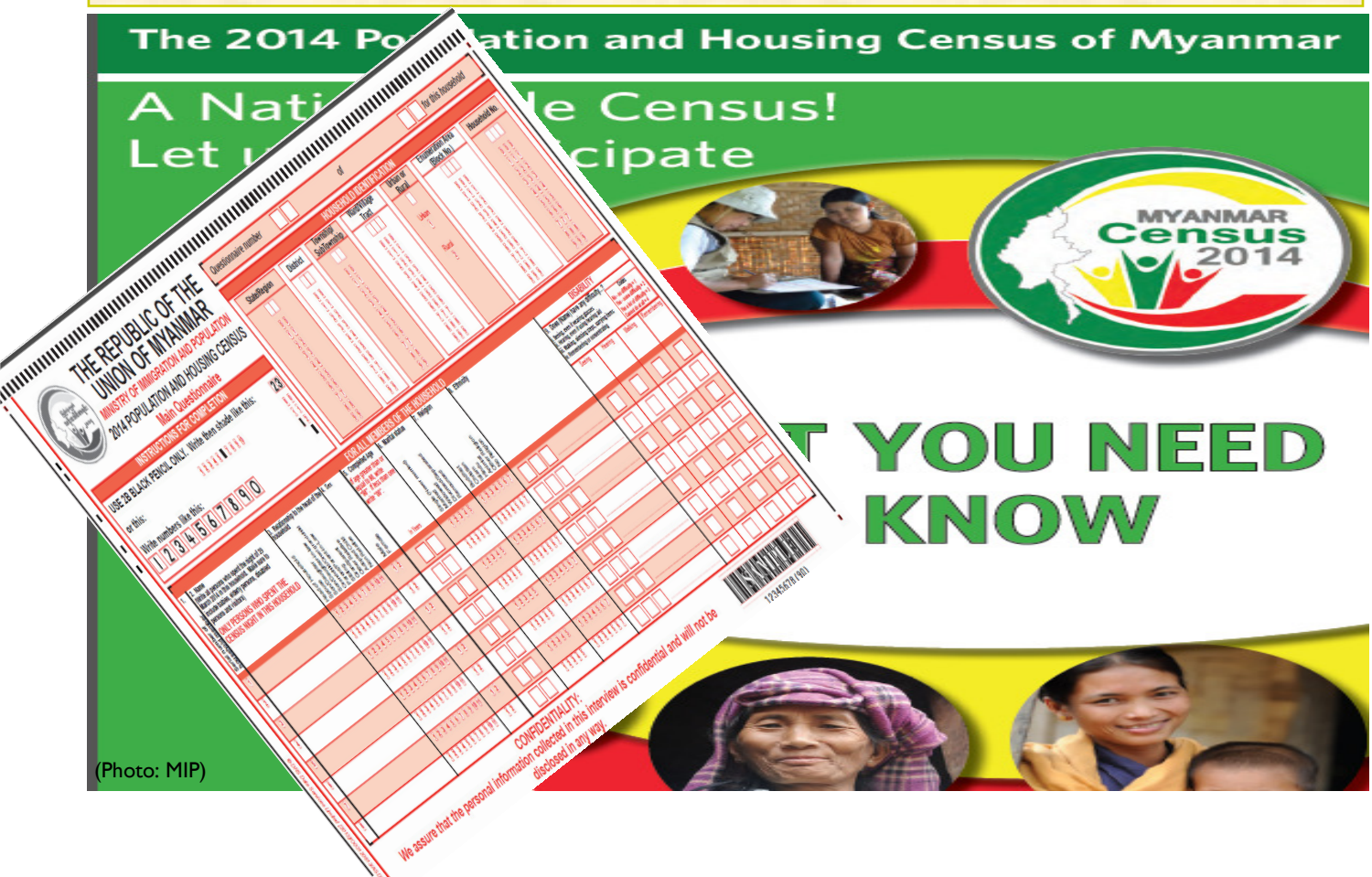
The statement raised doubt about the validity of the government-listed groups of 135 ethnic nationalities, also putting stress on the incorrect coding system and lack of inclusive community consultation and approval in the process.

The Chin National Front (CNF) said in its recent statement that the census should be carried out only after holding discussions with ethnic nationalities in the country, thus calling for the postponement.

The Nay Pyi Taw meeting was attended by 24 representatives from ten different ethnic groups.#

The 2014 Population and Housing Census of Myanmar

A National Census!
Let us all participate



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR
MINISTRY OF IMMIGRATION AND POPULATION
2014 POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS
Main Questionnaire

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETION
USE BLACK PENCIL ONLY. Write then inside the box.

Write number (0-9) in this box: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

CONFIDENTIALITY: The personal information collected in this interview is confidential and will not be disclosed in any way.

We assure that the personal information collected in this interview is confidential and will not be disclosed in any way.

(Photo: MIP)

Humanitarian & Development Situation

India, Burma to complete first phase of Kaladan Project in June

13 January 2014:

The first of the three phases of the 'controversial' Kaladan multi-purpose transportation project will be finished by June this year, according to the Essar Company.

The Indian company said that about 70 percent of the first phase involving the construction of Sittwe Deep Seaport in Arakan State, Paletwa jetty in Chin State, and Kaladan waterway dredging had been completed.

In 2008, India and Burma signed the bilateral venture for which an estimated US \$214million has been provided by the Indian government through its Ministry of External Affairs.

A report released last year by the Kaladan Movement had raised concerns about the lack of government

transparency surrounding the implementation of the project.

The report – based on the findings from field research conducted by the Arakan Rivers Network in Arakan State, the Chin Human Rights Organization in Chin State, and the Zo Indigenous Forum in Mizoram State – pointed out that negative impacts including land confiscation and forced relocation without adequate compensation in Mizoram State, and labour discrimination and destruction of local cultural heritage in Arakan State have already been experienced by people living along the Kaladan Project route.

Salai Za Uk Ling, Program Director at CHRO, said: "Local people in the Paletwa area of Chin State haven't even been informed about the route of the highway in their area. How can they benefit from the project if they know next to nothing about it, or how it might affect them?"

The whole project is expected to be completed in 2015.#

Poppy fields destroyed in Chin State by govt insufficient

20 January 2014: Communities in Chin State have said that the State government should do more to put an end to opium poppy cultivation in Chin State.

Grave concerns are expressed among Chin communities following a recent claim that 672.86 acres of poppy field had been destroyed by the government in collaboration with the army, police force and the Central Anti-narcotic Task Force.

According to a statement by the Information and Public Relations Department, the team had carried out a joint operation in Tonzang Township and Cikha Sub-township in December last year.

A community leader from Falam said that what the government had done was welcomed but they should do more to completely eradicate the planta-



tion, adding: "I am afraid this will end just there again, another mere gesture."

Early December 2013, the Chin State government decided to take the action, according to Dr. Ba Maung, State Minister of Social Affairs.

Reports estimate that the area of poppy cultivation in Chin State could be up to 5,000 acres.#

Landslide-hit Chin villagers in urgent need

27 January 2014: Villagers of Lianrih in Falam township, Chin State, are in great need of assistance as they are relocating to a new place following a series of landslides that have put their village in danger.

The victims, estimated to be 164 people of 28 households, face a difficult humanitarian situation in building a new village near Congkua, about 3 miles away.

According to the Chin World Media, the village's president said in his appeal letter to the Falam District Administration Office that some of the victims were temporarily staying at their relatives' houses.

The locals said that they had not received any assistance from the government, except for 300,000 Kyats given earlier from the Falam District Administration Office.

They are planning to get water from a place about 8 miles away from the village and to connect electricity to the new village from a hydro-power plant.

The village, which had been moved to a new location in 2000 owing to heavy landslides in 1999, was hardest hit again on 8 October last year.

Recently, a group of youths attending the Falam Youth Conference in Falam had made contributions of blankets, second-hand clothes, and other items to the villagers.#

Govt to sign resource sharing agreement with companies in Chin State

30 January 2014: Companies permitted to extract natural resources in Chin State will be allowed to start their projects only after the signing of a resource sharing agreement with the State authority, according to a government source.

Kyaw Nyein, State Minister of Forestry and Mines, said in the Myanmar Freedom Daily that the companies would

start their work only when the agreement was reached.

However, he made no mention of the date of the signing and contents of the agreement, which is believed to be inked in the near future.

Eight mining companies, two from China and six from Burma, have been granted permits to operate in the Gullu Mual mining project in Tedim township, Chin State.

According to media reports, the Gullu Mual project, a joint venture between China and Burma, has been suspended following protests by local communities.#

Students to use computers at schools in Chin State

28 February 2014: Computers provided to state schools in Chin State by the Chin National Front (CNF) in partnership with the Chin State government through the help of the Danish government are ready for use in June this year.

The CNF has been setting up more than 900 computers for about 30 schools in the nine townships of Tonzang, Tedim, Falam, Hakha, Thantlang, Matupi, Mindat, Kanpetlet and Paletwa since late last year, according to the Chinland Post, a weekly newspaper printed in Hakha.

Dr. Sui Khar, a CNF Secretary, said: "The machines would be fully prepared with internet access and printers for students to use at the start of their schools in June as students are taking final examinations and schools are to be closed for the summer."

The CNF had completed installations in northern parts of the country's least developed State and did another installation at the Basic Education High School No. 1 in Mindat town last week.

According to a CNF source, the last installation will be finished in Matupi next month.

It will be the first time computers are made available for students in Chin State to use at schools.

Signing a ceasefire agreement with Burma's government in 2012, it has provided computers for school children as part of its development programme included in the peace deal.

According to the government statistics in 2009, there are 28 high schools and 24 high school branches in Chin State.#

Event & Protest

Chin village in Sagaing Region celebrates golden jubilee

04 February 2014:



Chinsuh village, also known as Haikhawl, in Kalay Township, Sagaing Region celebrates its 50th anniversary of settlement in the village today.

Rev. Run Herh Ling, General Secretary of the Jubilee Celebration Committee, said: "We have been preparing for this celebration for three years and tried our best to share this special occasion with the people, together with Chin leaders and representatives across Kalay township."

Today's event includes an opening ceremony of a new building dedicated as 'Za Hlei Khuai Memorial Hall' to the village's founder, and other activities involving sports and cultural demonstrations in his honour.

Rev. Run Herh Ling also said that a shield is being made with his image and an inscription reading 'HAIKHAWL GOLDEN JUBILEE (1964-2014)' as a tribute to Pu Za Hlei Khuai and his family.

Over 5,000 people are participating in the event, preceded by a celebration of the Chinsuh Baptist Church golden jubilee on Sunday, and to be followed by an-

other anniversary, on February 8 that will mark the establishment of the Presbyterian church 50 years ago in the village.

The Chin village, founded in 1964 by Pu Za Hlei Khuai after his retirement as a soldier of the 2nd Chin Rifle Battalion in 1962, and located about 10 miles from Tahan in Kalaymyo, is home to about 600 households.

With the official permission and acknowledgement of the then Burma's government, it was established on 4 February 1964 as Chinsuh, construed as a place where Chin people in Lairawn areas come and live together.

Yesterday, the tombs and remains of both Pu Za Hlei Khuai who died in 1983 and wife Pi Thal Tin Zing who died in 2004, were transferred to Chinsuh from Hmuntha village.

His children, grandchildren and extended family members found a non-governmental charity organization called 'Za Hlei Khuai Foundation' based in Norway in his memory.

In Indiana State of USA, the 'Chinsuh Childcare', founded by his daughter Lal Run Mawi and believed to be the first Chin childcare centre in the State, is officially opened in a ceremony in which Rev. Dr. Stephen Hre Kio and other Chin leaders as well as pastors attend.#

Training provided to help Chin farmers in Paletwa

05 February 2014: The Network for Chin Community Development (NCCD) and Ethnic Community Development Forum (ECDF) jointly provided a two-day training on agriculture and development to local subsistence farmers in Paletwa last week.

30 Chin participants from 11 villages in Paletwa township, Chin State, discussed issues related to problems facing their subsistence crop cultivation and possible solutions to them.

One of the participants said that their group discussions had resulted in a list of current challenges and most suitable methods to improve their ways of farming practices.

Trainers and leaders of the two organizations said that they would strive to find ways in which problems could be solved either by putting them forward to the State government or by other mechanisms that might be available to them.

They also said that a broader event involving leaders and representatives from each state across the country will be organized after completion of the ongoing training programmes.

Founded in July 2004, the ECDF, with its eight member organizations, serves as a focal point for social and community development groups from ethnic states while the NCCD has worked to empower disenfranchised people and to improve lives of people in Chin State through development programmes since its inception in 2002.#

State govt to hold Chin National Day in Mindat

11 February 2014: The government of Chin State says that it will organize a large-scale event to celebrate the 2014 Chin National Day in Mindat town, Mindat Township.

It has announced that an array of exhibitions will be prepared by various government departments as part of the programme, according to a government source in Hakha.

A staff member from the Depart-

ment of Culture said in the Hakha Post that they were busy preparing for the event and that Chief Minister Hung Ngai would arrange transport for them to travel to Mindat.

It is claimed that the expenses for the upcoming celebration will be shared by the government and local communities although this cannot be confirmed.

Mindat, a District and Township town in the southern part of Chin State, hosted the first Chin National Day celebration held on 20 Febru-

ary 1951 in which U Nu, the then Prime Minister of the Union of Burma, and other ethnic ministers attended.

It was on 9 October 1950 that the Chin Affairs Council agreed to observe the Chin National Day on 20 February each year.

Burma's successive military authorities had banned celebration of the Chin National Day for decades until 2012 and instead, forced the Chin to hold the 'Chin State Day' inside the country. #

Chin National Day celebration renews unity

21 February 2014: Chin communities in Tachileik, Shan State came together and celebrated Chin National Day at a Christian church yesterday.

Different Chin tribal groups from the Thai-Burma border town and nearby places participated in the event marking the 66th anniversary of their national day.

Chin Pastor Morris told Chinland Guardian that they organized the event each year but they had more attendees this year with more than 320 people from different areas.

"Rev. Dr. Thang Za Khim gave a short sermon and Pu Thang Bu delivered a speech on the history of the Chin and Chin National Day," added Morris, who chaired the programme.

He also said that they shared traditional foods and enjoyed cultural songs and dances presented by different Chin tribes, adding: "This really brings us together and makes us more close."

It is estimated that there are between 400 and 500 Chins currently living in Tachileik, previously well known for being a hub in the opium trade from the Golden Triangle.

Chin pastors and leaders in Tachileik put every effort into trying to make

the new generation understand and protect their cultural values, and religious and ethnic identity in a non-Chin speaking and predominantly Buddhist society.

Hundreds of people attended celebrations held by Chin communities and university students in other towns and cities including Rangoon, Nay Pyi Taw, Sittwe, Gangaw and Kalaymyo.

It was only last year, after decades of imposing restrictions, that Burma's authorities allowed the Chin to officially celebrate their national day following a ceasefire agreement signed between the Chin National Front and the government. #

CNF requests to re-designate Feb 20 as public holiday

21 February 2014: The Chin National Front (CNF) has asked the Central government of Burma to make the 20th of February a public holiday in Chin State.

Pu Zing Cung, CNF Secretary General, said that it was officially recognized as a public holiday in the past but it had been banned since the military regimes took power.

"It was only in 2013 that we were officially allowed to

celebrate Chin National Day following an agreement between CNF and the government. At the 66th anniversary celebration, we would like to request the Union government to recognize Chin National Day as a bank holiday," added the CNF leader.

Burma's successive military regimes had banned not only a celebration of Chin National Day but also the use of 'Chin National Day' across the country. Instead, the authorities had forced the event, if celebrated, to be called 'Chin State Day'.

Cung highlighted the fact that Chin leaders and representatives from across the state had come together

and voted in favour of a democratic system against a colonial aristocratic hereditary administration at a Falam conference on 20 February 1948.

"They chose freedom. Chin National Day was recognized by Chin leaders and the Chin Affairs Council as a historic day of transforming the old system into a new one through the force of unity," said Cung, who delivered a speech in the Mindat event.

The Chin public stood united in protest at the rule of hereditary chieftainship under the British colonial administration for reasons including forced labour, slavery, excessive taxes levied upon them, and foreign control.

Yesterday, hundreds attended a grand celebration, organized in Mindat by the Chin State government in partnership with local communities, marking the 66th anniversary of Chin National Day.#

Protest against govt-changed road construction plan

28 February 2014: Villagers of Tlangrua-A in Thantlang Township, Chin State took to the street last Saturday, protesting against a change in road construction plan by the Chin State government.

Over 80 people staged a public rally in Thantlang town, demanding a U-turn to the original plan granted by Union Ministry of Construction in Nay Pyi Taw.

Event leaders said that the State government had changed the initial agreement for road construction between Tlangrua-A and Hriphi villages.

The protesters called for implementing construction of the inter-village road in accordance with the document approved from Nay Pyi Taw, and cancelling the current scheme set by Chin Chief Minister Hung Ngai.

They also urged the authorities to take necessary action against those involved in making an attempt to divert the plan reportedly to start from Tlangrua-B.

According to local media reports, new road construction started early last month, with about 700 feet already completed, has been halted owing to the ongoing dispute following the plan change.

As of today, the State government has not taken any action regarding the issue.#

Situation of Refugees

Chin refugee woman mugged in Delhi

08 January 2014:

A 57-year-old Chin refugee woman lost 11,000 Indian Rupees after being mugged in Delhi, India by an unknown man while she was on her way home around 6pm last Friday.

The victim told the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) that the man on a bike snatched her bag when she was returning to her rented room from selling second-hand clothes door to door to refugees from Burma.

She said that she was walking alone

in a small road between Chanakya Place and Asalatpur Ward, and that the man, who looked like Indian, suddenly stood in front of her and pulled her bag by force.

"There was nobody around. I was so frightened and instantly collapsed on the road. I felt so dizzy and was not able to stand up for a while. The biker immediately ran away with all the money," added the victim, who looks after her family of seven members by earning a small amount of money on commission.

She also said that she has not been able to sleep at night since then and that her heart condition has got worse despite taking medicine.

Last Monday, she approached the

Women's Protection Centre (WPC), run by the UNHCR in Delhi, and informed them of the incident.

One of the Chin refugee community leaders, who visited the victim, told CHRO: "Refugees from Burma have been facing various kinds of attacks and robberies for years. Some were mugged in the streets in broad daylight whilst others got robbed inside their rented rooms."

In October last year, hundreds of Chin refugees from Burma demonstrated in Delhi, saying they had been going through difficult situation in terms of survival, legal protection and other basic human needs.#

Malaysia to crack down on illegal immigrants next week

16 January 2014: The government of Malaysia has announced that it will conduct a major crackdown on undocumented immigrants from 21 January this year.

Home Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said that the operation would target undocumented migrant workers and foreigners living in the country illegally.

He was quoted as saying: "The time has come for us to stop compromising on the matter. Illegal immigrants, including foreign workers, will be arrested and repatriated."

He also said that it would be carried out by the Immigration Department, Royal Malaysian Police and People's Volunteer Corps (RELA).

Reports said that illegal immigrants are from Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia, Burma, Nepal, Laos, Vietnam, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, India, Bangladesh and the Philippines.

According to the UNHCR statistics in Malaysia early last year, there are 101,290 refugees and asylum-seekers registered, of which 92,760 are from Burma, including some 32,260 Chins.

The UNHCR believes that some 49,000 asylum-seekers remain unregistered in Malaysia.#

Hundreds arrested in Malaysian major crackdown

21 January 2013: A large-scale crackdown operation started last night by Malaysian authorities has arrested more than 1,500 people, mostly believed to be undocumented immigrants.

Salai Robert, a Chin refugee based in Kuala Lumpur, tells Chinland Guardian that it is not easy to get the exact number at the moment but over 150 people from Burma have been reported as having been arrested.

He also says that many Chin refugees and asylum seekers don't even

go to work in fear of the arrest, adding: "People are frightened and they couldn't even sleep last night."

According to the Sun Daily, Malaysia's government deploys some 10,000 enforcement personnel from the Immigration Department, Royal Malaysia Police and People's Volunteer Corps (Rela).

Another Chin refugee, mother of a young baby, says they are so worried as many people have been arrested around the area they stay.

Salai Robert adds that the Malaysian personnel not only stop suspected individuals on the streets but also raid houses.

Plans to conduct the nationwide

operation had been announced following the expiration of the three-month special programme that allowed illegal immigrants to get registered by the government.

According to media reports, Malaysian Deputy Interior Minister Junaidi Wan Tuanku Jaafar who led the operation in Kuala Lumpur said that illegal arrestees would be deported to their own countries and that the Malaysian government would not be responsible for the cost.

Sources from Malaysia said that the crackdown exercise could continue for weeks, even months, in the future.#

Chin refugee, 22, beaten to death in Malaysia

23 January 2014: Salai Raymond Van Chan Bik, aka Achan, was beaten to death in an unprovoked attack by a group of thugs in Kuantan, Malaysia last Thursday.

The 22-year-old died on the scene after being attacked reportedly by two men while he and his friend were

on their way to get a phone charger from the shop.

Dawt Cin, Achan's aunt, said in the Chinland Today, that she learned of the death of her nephew only around 11am the next day and that his friend had managed to run away.

One of his friends said that four of them, including Achan, had come home from Kuala Lumpur where they had bought a phone, adding: "The incident happened when the two went out to get a charger which

our friend had forgotten."

Kuantan police have arrested eight suspects comprising five men and three women and an investigation is being carried out, according to sources.

Salai Van Chan Bik, originally from Hakha, Chin State and later from Kalaymyo, Sagaing Region, arrived in

Malaysia in September 2010 and worked in electrical wiring.

A funeral service for the Chin victim, son of Pu Tin Ceu and Pi Ni Khun, was held in Kuala Lumpur last Monday with the help of the Chin Refugee Committee, Alliance of Chin Refugees and Chin Christian Fellowshipship.#

2-yr-old boy and uncle fall to death from 14th floor in Malaysia

27 January 2014: David, 2, and his uncle Khen Hrang, 35, died after falling from an apartment on the 14th floor of the Taman Sungai Besi building in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on Saturday.

The 2-year-old Chin boy fell to his death while attempting to reach one of his toys from the balcony, and his uncle died on the spot as he jumped to rescue his nephew.

It was around 10am in the morning that the incident took place while Hrang and David were visiting their relatives from their rented apartment on the 8th floor of the same building.

Hrang, brother of David's father Van Thang, was looking after the boy while Thang was at work and his wife was going to a nearby market, according to local media reports.

A funeral service for both of the Chin victims is scheduled to be held today.#

10-yr-old Chin refugee girl hit by bicycle in Delhi

03 February 2014: A bicycle driven at high speed by an Indian man hit a Chin refugee girl, Lal Rin, in Delhi, India yesterday, badly injuring her head.

The incident happened around 4:30 pm in the evening while Lal Rin and her friend were heading to attend a church service held by the Chin Christian Fellowship in Janakpuri of India's capital.

She told the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) that the bicycle had crashed her from the front and that she had instantly collapsed with her head bleeding, adding: "My head was badly hurt, I felt so dizzy and couldn't get up."

Her friend, who was shocked and frightened to see what was happening to Rin, rushed to the church, and informed other refugee fellows of the accident.

"Immediately, four people from my church took me to a private clinic in Chanakpuri, New Delhi and got my wound stitched," added Rin.

Information about the cyclist is unknown as he immediately ran away from the scene on Sunday.

Lal Rin is still on medication and unable to get up, according to her mother, Hram Zing, who said that what had happened to her daughter is giving her problems with her heart and making her feel worried.

Lal Rin has three younger brothers and they are looked after by their single mother in Delhi.#

Chin refugee family move out in fear after attacks in Delhi

17 February 2014: A Chin refugee family of four including two children have fled their rented room after attacks by a group of youths, presumably Indian, aged between 16 and 19 in Delhi, India last Friday.

The family told the Chin Human

Rights Organization (CHRO) that they had to move out as a gang of three or four youths stoned their room, shouted abusive words at them, and locked their door from outside.

Their father said: "We don't know the reason why they did this to us. There was a knock on the door in the evening and when I tried to open it, I found out it was already locked from outside."

"I made a call to our community mem-

bers and they opened it for us. Now, we are afraid to go back to our room," added the Chin father.

According to Mr. Naing from the Zotung Community in Delhi, the family is currently staying at a friend's house with the help of the community.

Last year, one of his daughters was sexually assaulted by a local Indian boy outside their rented room while she, 2, was playing on the staircase.#

Chin refugee father injured in unprovoked attack in Delhi

19 February 2014: Michael Khual Suan Lian, father of a 1-year-old daughter, was injured in his head while being beaten up in an unprovoked attack by a group of thugs in Uttam Nagar, Delhi, India.

The victim told the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) that he and his Chin friend were suddenly rounded up and attacked by six people, believed to be Indian, while they were walking to a 24-hour pharmacy to get some medicines last night.

"Our friend's daughter got fever and was in a serious condition. So, my friend Dominic and I went out to buy medicine around 2am at night. Six people sud-

denly surrounded us and asked money and alcohol from us. We said we didn't have money and don't drink alcohol. While we were talking, one person hit my head from behind with a stone," added the 31-year-old victim.

"And they started punching and kicking my body. My friend was very frightened and started running away. I managed to run away, too and escape although some of them followed me for a while."

He said that his head was bleeding and his body in pain, and he finally got home around 3am in the morning.

Currently, Lian is staying in a rented room together with his wife, 22, daughter, mother aged 62, and elder brother in Delhi.#

Opinion

Chin Affairs Minister of Sagaing Region on 'Chin'

08 February 2014:

John Khaw Kim Thang, aka No Than Kap (pictured), who is the ex-presidnet of the Chin National Front (CNF), and currently Chin Affairs Minister of Sagaing Region, speaks out on matters related to the term "Chin".

It is not a matter of what the term "Chin" originally meant and literally means, but what it signifies. The significance of the term "Chin" is that in it all clans of "Chin" i.e., "Zomi", "Laimi", "Asho", "Kuki", "Lushai", etc. are included and united.

Naturally, a person from Hakha, Falam and Matupi areas would prefer "Laimi" to "Zomi", and a person from Tedim, Tonzang, and Thukhlai areas would prefer "Zomi" to "Laimi". But he/she should go and look beyond his/her own sphere and accept the best and most widely used term by which the outside world call and know us, and that is Chin.

It is good if someone makes an in-depth study on the words "Laimi",

"Zomi", "Asho", "Kuki" etc., and comes out with the best one. But, he/she can never deny the fact that the term "Chin" is the most convenient, shorthand term that can be used with pride by all clans.

We will lose nothing by accepting and using the name "Chin" no matter what it connotes or who used it first. Rather, it can save us from our rabidly parochial stance which is the cause of disunity and misunderstanding among us.

The fact that "Chin" is not claimed as a clan name by any clan of "Chin" is the very reason why it should be accepted as the official name for all clans as a whole because it prevents each clan from sticking to its own term dogmatically.

Only narrow-minded rabid parochialists will always insist on his favorite term (for instance, "Zomi" or "Laimi" or "Asho" or "Kuki" or "Mizo" or any name his clan uses) and that person can rightly be called a black sheep or a chauvinist.

The term "Chin" might mean basket or companion in Burmese or it might have come from the Chin or Chin dynasty of China. This might have been a name given to us by the Burmese. Whatever it is, I still accept it as the only and best name by which all clans of Chin are known as one and unique people.

It is not wise for me to expect or persuade you to use "Laimi" just because it is what I use. Likewise, it is not wise for you to expect or persuade me to use "Zomi" just because that is what you use. Otherwise, we will/can engage in a futile and unprofitable debate that will take us nowhere.

Using the name "Chin" as a common and official name does not mean a complete rejection and abolition of other generic terms such as Lushei, Zo, Lai, Kuki etc. Of course, these terms should be used at local level as we do now but for unity's sake, let us use and accept "Chin" as a common name at least till we find a better term. After all, we are of one ancestor.#

Subsistence farms on the banks of the Kaladan river in Paletwa township, with military base built on confiscated land in the background (Photo: RF/CHRO)



Poverty: a pressing human rights issue for the Chin

Rachel Fleming has spent the past four years working as Advocacy Director at the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO). She recently visited Paletwa township, her first trip to Chin State. Here, in the first of a series of articles for Chinland Guardian, she writes about the issue of poverty from a human rights perspective.

It is a well-known fact that people in Chin State are officially the poorest in Burma, and by a wide margin. The majority of people in Chin State are subsistence farmers; 73 percent of people in live below the poverty line. Rakhine State is the next poorest with 44 percent of people living in poverty, according to UN statistics.

Less well-known is the widening disparity between levels of abject poverty in Chin State and the rest of Burma. 25 percent of people in Chin State live below the 'food poverty' line, meaning they spend

ALL of their income on food. This level of extreme poverty is five times higher than the national average, compared with four times higher the last time statistics were compiled, in 2005.

So why is poverty such a huge problem in Chin State?

Discrimination as a root cause

Any sound analysis should adopt a human rights approach. According to the UN Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, "Poverty is an urgent human rights concern in itself. Not only is extreme poverty characterized by multiple reinforcing violations of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, but persons living in poverty generally experience regular denials of their dignity and equality."

At the heart of the matter is discrimination. Discrimination and poverty are inextricably linked, as emphasized by the UN Special Rapporteur on racism. The Chin experience many intersecting forms of State-sanctioned discrimination,

based on their ethnicity (Chin), religion (predominantly Christian), language (for most Chin, Burmese is their second or third language), and socio-economic status (the poorest in Burma).

State-sanctioned discrimination manifests itself in a myriad of ways. Firstly, it is evident in government neglect, as noted by Mr. Quintana, UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Burma. Basic road, electricity, and communications infrastructures are still woefully inadequate, leaving Chin State isolated from the rest of country. There are not enough schools or healthcare facilities to meet the basic needs of the population, and they remain chronically understaffed.

Secondly, discrimination is evident in the lack of effective participation in public and economic life for Chin Christians in particular, with very few holding senior government positions in Chin State or elsewhere in Burma.

Thirdly, over the past two decades State-sanctioned discrimination has

manifested as a pattern of pervasive human rights violations perpetrated against the Chin by State actors.

Pervasive human rights abuses

During my time at CHRO, I have interviewed well over one hundred Chin refugees in different contexts in Malaysia and India. As a root cause of flight, the pattern of human rights violations at the hands of the military and other State actors is crystal clear to me. But over the past four years I have also encountered many prejudiced attitudes towards the Chin, from other Burmese. “Oh, the Chin are just poor. They’re not genuine refugees, just economic migrants,” is a remark I have heard all too often.

It’s true that when I ask a Chin refugee about the main problem they faced in Burma, usually they start by saying they are poor. The head of a household will explain he couldn’t harvest enough rice to feed his family. When I dig deeper, a disturbing pattern emerges. Land confiscation, reducing the available land for a family to cultivate; portering or other forms of forced labour several times a year, preventing family members from tending to their farm as often as needed to maximize crop yields; and soldiers misappropriating rice, chicken, or livestock at gunpoint, leaving families going hungry. Typically, a person will reach a tipping point, and decide to flee. For many I have interviewed, that point came after the third, fourth, or tenth experience of portering or other form of forced labour.

A 2011 Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) report - based on a quantitative survey of human rights violations experienced by Chin households between 2009 – 2010 - found that almost 92 percent of Chin households surveyed were victims of forced labour within that year. On average

that year, each household was subjected to forced labour three times. PHR concluded that this, and other grave human rights violations perpetrated against the Chin by State actors, amounted to crimes against humanity.

The role of the State

Poverty has been created, perpetuated, and exacerbated by acts and omissions on the part of the State, underpinned by discrimination.

On the one hand, the government is failing Chin people in its obligations to provide basic infrastructure and services to ensure that Chin can enjoy their rights to an adequate standard of living, adequate food and nutrition, water and sanitation, education, and the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. Such failure – rooted in State-sanctioned discrimination - has both created and perpetuated abject poverty.

On the other hand, in the case of Burma and Chin State in particular, pervasive human rights abuses committed by State actors - particularly forced labour and land confiscation - have seriously undermined Chin livelihoods over the past two decades, and undoubtedly exacerbated levels of extreme poverty.

Thankfully, the overall prevalence of human rights abuses committed by the military and documented by CHRO since President Thein Sein’s government took power in 2011 has declined. However, CHRO continues to document serious violations, including land confiscation without adequate compensation, and violations of freedom of religion or belief. As long as such abuses are ongoing, the cycle of poverty and discrimination will continue. At the same time, communities are still dealing with the long-term economic, social, cultural, and health consequences of pervasive past

Poverty has been created, perpetuated, and exacerbated by acts and omissions on the part of the State, underpinned by discrimination.

violations, with no access to justice or forms of redress available to them at present.

Ending poverty in Chin State

Solutions for tackling poverty in Chin State must be rooted within the human rights framework. It goes without saying that human rights abuses must stop; but this will only happen if positive steps are taken to end recurrence. These include wide-ranging measures to end all forms of discrimination against the Chin. Accountability for past violations is also a highly effective deterrent; but at present impunity remains deeply entrenched in Burma. It is for the Chin people themselves to debate and potentially pursue different elements of transitional justice, with support from organizations like CHRO. These could include the restitution of land confiscated by the military and other reparations for the harms suffered.

Massive investment in basic infrastructure and services is urgently required in Chin State. But any strategy or development programme aimed at poverty reduction in Chin State – be it led by government, international donors, UN agencies, INGOs, NGOs, or civil society organizations – must be implemented in accordance with the UN Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights. These include: effective and meaningful participation; equality and non-discrimination; and transparency and accountability.

Only with the full enjoyment of their basic human rights, including the right to effective participation in public life - plus access to justice for past violations - will the Chin have a chance to break the vicious cycle of poverty and discrimination and determine a brighter future for themselves.#

Cartoon

Democracy in Burma 2014



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