

# Children's Opportunity to Learn in the Ethnic Nationality Areas in Burma

Thein Lwin, Barnabas and Nan Lung  
April 2001

## 1. Introduction

This paper is based on the findings of the local education workshops, which were conducted by the national health and education committee. The workshops were held at (1) Mon area, (2) Karen area, (3) Karenni and Shan areas, (4) Central area where ABSDF is based, (5) Kachin area and (6) western part of Burma. The following topics were discussed: (1) children's opportunity to learn, (2) Curriculum, (3) the teaching of mother tongue at school, (4) teaching methodology and (5) teacher education. The data in this paper does not include information from Arakan area and Shan area. Shan teachers could not attend the workshops and the NHEC (west branch) could not access to Arakan area due to various constraints.

## 2. Method of the Local Workshops

The dates and places of local education workshops are: Region one, Mon area: 8-9 December 2000 at Sankhalaburi in Thailand, Region two, Karen area: 20-21 December 2000 at Mae Sot in Thailand, Region three, Karenni and Shan area: 8-10 January 2001 at Mae Hong Son in Thailand, Region four, ABSDF and Central area: 12 January 2001 at Mae Sariang in Thailand, Region five, Kachin area: 5-7 February 2001 at Mai Ja Yan on the China-Burma border and Region six, western part of Burma: 5 March 2001 at Aizawal and 9 March 2001 at Inphal in India. The participants of the workshops were local teachers and officials from education department of the ethnic organizations. The total number of participants were 166: Region one 27; Regions two 23; Region three 30; Region four 16; Region five 21 and Region six 49. The delegation of the NHEC who organized the workshops were Thein Lwin, Saw Barbanas, Nai Soe Than and Nan Lung for region one to four, Nai Soe Than and Daw Bauk Taung for region five and Dr. Aung Kyaw Oo and Ko Non Kyone for region six.

In each workshop, the NHEC delegation explained the background of the NHEC its educational aims (see NHEC's Education Programme December 2000 - July 2002) and activities. The participants discussed the educational situation and difficulties in their areas, and gave suggestions. There were also interactive questions and answers between the NHEC delegates and the participants. The topic discussed were children access to education, the subjects taught in schools, indigenous vernacular languages, teaching method, teacher education and perception of parents on education of their children. The discussions were recorded in tape, handwriting and photo. The names of areas and persons in this report are real.

## 3. Findings

### 3.1 Children's Opportunity to Learn

### 3.1.1 Region (1) New Mon State Party (NMSP) and Ethnic Organizations and Democratic Forces located in the Ye, Meik and Dawei Areas

U Tin Shein from Meik Dawei United Front (MDUF) stated that the reason that children lost opportunities for schooling was primarily their family's economic situation. For instance, they had to help their parents in harvest season so as a result, they were not able to go to school that time.

U Shwe Thway from People Defense Force (PDF) stated that most of the children not only had to help their parents before and after their classes but some, in their holidays, even had to sell different kinds of Burmese snacks in the market.

U Baw Kyi, a teacher from Kyar In Seik Kyi Township, mentioned that no one (neither children nor adults) from his village was literate and the health conditions of children were deteriorating.

Mi Zin Mon Win, a teacher, stated that parents of children in the school where she was teaching did not want their children to be in school much. For instance, whenever a fishing boat reached the land while children were studying they would have to work to fetch fish and then go back to classrooms.

Ko Htoo Htoo from *All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF)* said that parents did not believe in education very much and that was why they did not let their children go to school.

Saw San Htway, a teacher, stated that economic decline affected education and parents could not afford to send their children to schools, as they were struggling for survival.

Nai Banya Mon from Education Department of NMSP mentioned that poverty of parents, constant help in parents' works, looking after younger siblings while parents were away for business, etc. caused children in the Mon Territory not to have access schooling.

### 3.1.2 Region (2) Karen National Union (KNU) and Ethnic Organizations and Democratic Forces located in the Karen Territory

U Htun Min Aung from *All Burma Muslim Union (ABMU)* stated that Muslim children had to help their parents sell food and different kinds of Burmese snacks to compensate for the destitution that they faced. He also mentioned that it had been helpful to include the Karen language in the curriculum for Muslim children, but it was difficult for the children to understand. As an unfortunate consequence, children did not want to continue their schooling after they had failed in their exams.

U Win Naing from ABMU also stated that parents did not even know that they should encourage their children's education (*may be because they had been living under severe repression*) and they whenever they were asked for children's tuition fees they just kept their children out of school.

Pado Ba Thin, Chairperson of KNU, suggested expanding the number of schools inside Burma. He said that by doing so children would have greater access to education inside and at the same time it would prevent *the flow of children to various refugee camps to look for education.*

### 3.1.3 Region (3) Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), Shan National People Liberation Front (SNPLF) and Ethnic Organizations and Democratic Forces located in the Karenni and Shan Territory

Shay Reh, Headmaster of High School in Camp (3), stated that the instability of parents' economic situations and the education policy of the military regime severely affected children's education.

U Kaung Haung stated that the Lahus usually married at the age of 14 –15 years so they were not very interested in education. Their attitude was that they could find food to survive without education.

Kyi Shwin, a teacher, suggested sending mobile teachers to internally displaced villages.

### 3.1.4 Region (4) All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF) and Organizations located in Papon, Taung Oo, Nyaung Lay Pin and Tha Ton Districts

Naw Si Po Yar Sein, Secretary of Karen Women Organization (KWO), stated that some children were not available to go to school whenever their parents became sick.

U Thein Hsaung, a teacher from ABSDF, said that some parents were not literate so they did not value education and they just asked their children to work for them and take care of household matters.

### 3.1.5 Region (5) Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) and Organizations located in Northern Burma

U M Gyaw Li, headmaster of a high school, said that in the Kachin area although the attendance rate for children under 15 years old was high, most of them never reached the middle school level. Parents had not yet been ideologically ready to let their children seek a high level of education. Some children could not even finish the primary level, as their parents did not have the financial resources for their education. There were children who spent time cutting wood for fuel, playing cards and using drugs while others under 15 were in school. Using drugs was prohibited in the Mai Gyar Yan area but it seemed to be spreading from the Lwe Gyel area. Circumstances in which education was not accessible to children were -

- a. Surrounding conditions were not supportive;
- b. Economic situation of parents was not stable;
- c. No supplies such as uniforms and stationery were available to children;
- d. Dependence on relatives after their parents had sacrificed for the nation.

Children out of school were not those who did not want schooling but those who just could not afford to be there. There were many children standing at the gate of the school and gazing at students in classrooms, and there were children standing outside classrooms looking longingly at those who were inside.

### 3.1.6 Region (6) Western Burma and Arakan, Chin, Kachin and Other Organizations located along the Indian-Burmese Border

U Htan Hauk, a retired headmaster, stated that only about 50% of children living in Pan Hmywar village and surroundings in Ti Tein Township of Chin State had access to primary education. Only a small number of those who had passed the primary exams could continue to middle school because many families could not afford it. Parents who were not financially capable had to dismiss their children from school instead.

U L Laung Sar, Secretary of Naga National League for Democracy (NNLD), stated that parents of students were responsible for paying the teachers in each school so those who could not pay the teachers were not able to send their children school. As a result, only one fourth of the children in the whole area were in school. Furthermore, many children could not attend school regularly as they had to serve as substitutes for their parents who bred animals when the parents were forcibly taken as laborers or porters.

U Kan Min from All Burma Students League (ABSL) stated that most children could not attend school beyond the primary level. To be able to hire four teachers for a middle school, each student had to provide about 130 kilograms of rice. However, because of the military's forced purchase of rice with very low and unfair prices, most could not provide the rice quotas to the school. As a result, many children's education had been terminated halfway through.

Ko Steven Sonn Marn, In-charge of Foreign Affairs for Zomi ----- (ZRO), stated that according to 1995 statistics, only 16% of all children in the country had access to formal education. However up to 25% of the children in Chin State managed to pursue formal education and even in Ti Tein Township, ZRO's territory, about 22% of children were able to do so.

The paper submitted by ABSL, which U Ko Thet read aloud, stated that most children did not even have the opportunity for basic education as they had been working for their survival. In addition, parents often did not support their children's education and did not work harder to provide it. Also, schools closed whenever teachers had other obligations as they belonged to revolutionary organizations. Children's education thus had become intermittent.

U Aung Tin Moe, a teacher from Dawn Yin Khwin Primary School in Ai Zaw Township, mentioned that children had not been able to attend their classes when their parents fled to the Burma side of the border during the Mizoram government's operation to arrest Burmese migrants in August 2000.

All teachers participating in the discussion in Ai Zaw agreed on proposing legislation for the development of education, the elimination of child labor and the right of children under 15 to have access to education.

### 3.2 Curriculum

#### 3.2.1 Region (1) New Mon State Party (NMSP) and Ethnic Organizations and Democratic Forces located in the Ye, Meik and Dawei Areas

U Min Maung from People Progressive Party (PPP) said that the History lessons were one-sided, as they had been written by the military regime, and needed to be rewritten. The National Health and Education Committee (NHEC) should write a new curriculum by consulting with ethnic organizations.

U Baw Kyi, a teacher from Kyar Ain Seik Kyi Township, mentioned that he had been teaching children and youth in his village English, Burmese and Thai languages.

U Aung Ko, a teacher, stated that a curriculum should include civics, as well as cultures, traditions and customs of all nationalities. Besides that, the subject of History should be rewritten and while writing, people needed to consider the fact that those who wrote the curriculum were those in power and put what they wanted to put in it.

Nai Banya Mon, Education Department of NMSP, reported that all subjects in the primary level were taught in Mon language and in middle school, all subjects except History and Mon language were taught in Burmese.

#### 3.2.2 Region (2) Karen National Union (KNU) and Ethnic Organizations and Democratic Forces located in the Mae Sod Area

General Saw Tar Malar Baw, Commander-in-Chief of KNU, said that History should include revolutionary concepts and ideas and thus promote nationalism.

Saw Ba Thin, Chairperson of KNU, mentioned that the curriculum at schools organized by the KNU and monastery schools was based on KNU's curriculum.

Saw Char Lay Tar Dar said that curriculum had already been written twice, in May and November, and the third re-writing of the curriculum would be finished in January.

Daw Lay Lay Phyu from Burmese Migrant Workers' Education Committee (BMWEC) said that BMWEC needed to write the curriculum for the primary level.

U Htein Lin from National League for Democracy - Liberated Area (NLD-LA) mentioned that children in Noh Po refugee camp were being taught according to the KNU curriculum, and Karen and Muslim children were being taught History in Karen and Burmese languages, respectively.

### 3.2.3 Region (3) Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) and Ethnic Organizations and Democratic Forces located in the Mae Hong Son Area

Augustino, Director of Karenni Education Department, explained the Karenni curriculum in KNPP-controlled areas. He said that it included Karenni Literature and some subjects written by the Burmese military had been in use. In History, which normally includes both national and world histories, children were only being taught world history. In 1996, the Karenni Education Minister had all subjects except Burmese translated into English. Community Management Course should be included in the curriculum but it needed to be adapted for teaching in the schools. The current Karenni curriculum was not final, as it had been written in the midst of the movement.

Kyi Shwin, a teacher from High School in Camp (3), said that all nationalities should participate in the curriculum writing process so as to produce a curriculum suitable for everybody.

Khun Tat Lu from Pa O National Liberation Organization (PNLO) explained that History and Culture would be taught by using Pa O literature. Other subjects would be taught in both English and Burmese. Speaking, reading and writing lessons should be equally included in the curriculum. *History subject materials should also be written based on true and acceptable facts and figures.* Moreover, it was important to know each and every nationality's history and be familiar with each other.

Kya Kaw, In-charge of Education Department of Wa National Organization (WNO), said that the education level of Wa people was still low so it would be better to teach with a curriculum written by the NHEC.

### 3.2.4 Region (4) All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF) and Organizations located in Papon, Taung Oo, Nyaung Lay Pin and Tha Ton Districts

Naw Si Po Yar Sein, Secretary of KWO, mentioned that Health Education should be included in curriculum.

U Nyi Nyi, a teacher, said that a curriculum should be in line with international standards.

U Nwe Aung, a teacher, asked whether it was possible to have the same curriculum for everyone and said that it would be difficult to teach if there were different curricula.

### 3.2.5 Region (5) Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) and Organizations located in Northern Burma

U Hswam Lut Gam, Deputy in-charge of KIO Central Education Department (CED), said that curricula are not written carelessly, as they are tools for implementing the educational policy of a country. Curricula are based on the political and economic situations of a country so they should include social ideology and customs. The KIO had been operating schools in the Kachin area since 1963-64 and curricula were not the same for every school. Some

schools did not teach Burmese language and some were reluctant to do so but all taught in Kachin language. Mathematics and Science subjects were difficult in terms of vocabulary. Schools under control of the KIO had been using the SPDC's curriculum and examination guidelines. The SPDC had given training to teachers, and all headmasters and township education *heads* had participated in consultation to write the curriculum. Education had changed because of political changes. The reason that the KIO used the SPDC's curriculum was not that they did not love the Kachin people. KIO considered it necessary for education and that's why KIO Headquarters decided to make this educational policy. CED just followed KIO's policy and it should not be misunderstood. It is essential to preserve one's own culture carefully. Students were taught Burmese history (domestic affairs) just for their exams and not because they were supposed to abandon their own ethic. This was a period of preserving peace so proposed changes to the curriculum should be suspended. There was nowhere for students to continue further studies after graduating from the KIO high school. *However, they would be able to continue if students were taught according to SPDC curriculum.* The first priority was for the students to pass the exams. Making the curriculum similar to another did not mean copying everything. Students would be taught Kachin history in order to promote nationalism. Teachers would be taught KIO's political stance and policies while studying SPDC's curriculum at the teachers' training school.

#### 3.2.6 Region (6) Western Burma and Arakan, Chin, Kachin and Other Organizations located along the Indian-Burmese border

U Htan Hauk, a retired headmaster, mentioned that the current curriculum was the SPDC's curriculum and all subjects except English were taught in Burmese.

U Lan Khan Htan, Headmaster of Dawn Pho Khinn Primary School, said that in his school Burmese and History subjects were based on the SPDC curriculum and English 1, English 2, Science, Social Study and Mathematics were based on the Indian curriculum.

A paper submitted by ABSL asked the NHEC to initiate their own publication of text books for students starting from the kindergarten level, as a school in Ai Zaw was using text books published by the Burmese military.

U Aung Tin Moe, a teacher from Dawn Yin Khwin Primary School, said that all the children in his school were Burmans so they were taught in Burmese. Teaching subjects were English, Burmese and Mathematics; English was based on the Indian curriculum and Burmese and Mathematics were based on the SPDC's curriculum.

U Wong Nga, General Secretary of Chin National League for Democracy (CNLD), suggested that Geography and History as currently taught in Burma should be replaced with Social Studies. Current History texts in Burma were written in favor of Burmese feudalism and the military junta so it was not real history. Having many subjects would cause students to become less active in study so a curriculum should be concise and effective with only a few subjects.

### 3.3 The Teaching of Mother Tongue at School

### 3.3.1 Region (1) New Mon State Party (NMSP) and Ethnic Organizations and Democratic Forces located in the Ye, Meik and Dawei Areas

U Tin Shein from MDUF stated that the mother language should be taught in schools and every nationality should preserve its own literature, as part of its defense against chauvinism.

U Aung Ko suggested that many schools were not teaching mother languages and they were about to disappear so ethnic literatures needed to be promoted. If Burma continued with centralization, ethnic languages would disappear because the central government's official language (e.g. Burmese) would intrude on others.

### 3.3.2 Region (2) Karen National Union (KNU) and Ethnic Organizations and Democratic Forces located in the Mae Sod Area

Saw Ba Thin, Chairperson of KNU, explained that every Karen had to be literate in Karen language and the second language would be English. Burmese was also used as a common language.

### 3.3.3 Region (3) Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) and Ethnic Organizations and Democratic Forces located in the Mae Hong Son Area

Khu Reh, a mobile teacher, mentioned that a firm policy instituting a five-year plan regarding the mother language was initiated in the year 2001. According to the plan, all subjects taught were being translated into Karenni language and the process would be evaluated in the year 2005 to analyze and amend it.

### 3.3.4 Region (4) All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF) and Organizations located in Papon, Taung Oo, Nyaung Lay Pin and Tha Ton Districts

U Nyi Nyi, a teacher from ABSDF, suggested that while Karen children were taught by a Karen volunteer teacher, other (e.g. Shan, Mon) children should be taught by volunteers from respective ethnic organizations.

### 3.3.5 Region (5) Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) and Organizations located in Northern Burma

U Htein Nan from TTS said that it was good to use the mother language to teach and he supported it. However, there were Kachins, Shans and Chinese in the area and children at schools were surprised to hear the different languages. In particular, they had never seen Burmans even though they were learning Burmese. Children even became scared when they studied English.

U Swam Lut Gam, Deputy in-charge of KIO Central Education Department, stated that it would be better to teach all subjects in mother language but it was not the right timing yet.

### 3.3.6 Region (6) Western Burma and Arakan, Chin, Kachin and Other Organizations located along the Indian-Burmese border

U Htan Hauk, a retired headmaster, said that before 1995 the Government had arranged to give children up to fourth grade (fourth standard) the opportunity to learn mother languages. Zo language was taught in Ti Tein Township. According to a government order in 1995, children could learn their mother language only until the third grade. It was possible then to teach Zo language only once in three development periods per week. Therefore, students lacked learning their mother language and become unaware of their traditional proverbs, stories and tales.

U L Laung Sar, Secretary of NNLD, stated that it was prohibited to teach local Naga language at schools and the authorities ordered schools to prioritize teaching Burmese language. An arrangement by local volunteer teachers to hold 'Night School' to teach children their mother language was ongoing.

Ko Kan Min, a former teacher from ABSL, mentioned that at a middle school in Kamma Gyi village in Kabaw Valley, students could study Kuki language during the last period on Friday, which was a development period. In addition, students could learn at Sunday School in church.

U Lan Khan, Headmaster of Dawn Pyo Khinn Primary School, said that the mother language could be taught only to fourth grade students. Even though most of the students were Kukis, they were not able to learn their own language as there was only one teacher who could teach Kuki language. They therefore were being taught instead at Sunday School while attending church routinely.

Ko Steven Son Marn, In-charge of Foreign Affairs for ZRO, said that Chin people had more opportunities than other nationalities to learn their mother language. Three languages – Har Khar language (Lai), Palarm language (Laizo) and Ti Tein language (Zo) – had been approved and formally taught at schools in Chin State from 1925 until 1988. The situation of students had improved as they had been taught in Chin language. However, there was a restriction on teaching Chin language in schools since the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) seized power in 1990. At the moment, churches and religious organizations were arranging to teach the mother language.

U Aung Tin Moe, a teacher from Dawn Yin Khwin Primary School in Ai Zaw, mentioned that teaching in Mezo language was not allowed and there was an order to use only Burmese language to teach even though most of the students and teachers were Mezo.

## 3.4 Teaching Methodology

### 3.4.1 Region (1) New Mon State Party (NMSP) and Ethnic Organizations and Democratic Forces located in the Ye, Meik and Dawei Areas

U Tein Shein from MDUF said that there should be a conversational pattern between

teachers and students instead of a teacher-centered system.

U Min Maung from People Progressive Front (PPF) pointed out weaknesses of a student-centered teaching system, such as students' disrespecting teachers.

U Aung Ko, a teacher said that a student-centered system was good as it would increase students' self-confidence.

#### 3.4.2 Region (2) Karen National Union (KNU) and Ethnic Organizations and Democratic Forces located in the Mae Sod Area

Saw Ba Thin, Chairperson of KNU, mentioned that teachers from Australia and America had come to help but they had different teaching system.

#### 3.4.3 Region (3) Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) and Ethnic Organizations and Democratic Forces located in the Mae Hong Son Area

Saw Htoo Law Hsaw, an interpreter from Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), stated that the teaching system in the Burmese military-controlled areas was teacher centered. Under that system, students could not think creatively but just had to receive the notes their teachers gave them and memorize them by heart. There were only theories and no practice was included in the system. However, the teaching system in the KNPP-controlled areas was different from the SPDC's system. Under the KNPP's system, students could exercise creative thinking in addition to memorizing notes they were given. They could also practice what they learned by using teaching aids. The only difficulty was that this system could not yet cover ninth- and tenth-grade students due to lack of language skill.

#### 3.4.4 Region (4) All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF) and Organizations located in Papon, Taung Oo, Nyaung Lay Pin and Tha Ton Districts

Naw Si Po Yar Sein, Secretary of KWO, said that the teaching system needed to change in order to promote education. A teacher-centered system was not appropriate and it was necessary to replace it with a student-centered one so children would be able to participate and gain the ability to think beyond the subject matter. The difficulty was that there were not sufficient teaching aids at schools so teachers could not utilize what they had newly learned in their training. She also suggested that there should be a Burmese language teaching guide for non-Burmans.

#### 3.4.5 Region (5) Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) and Organizations located in Northern Burma

U Ma Lan Bran Taung, Head of Education for Southern Division, stated that they could not yet practice teaching methods from the Teacher Training School and were still using old teaching guides.

#### 3.4.6 Region (6) Western Burma and Arakan, Chin, Kachin and Other Organizations located

## along the Indian-Burmese border

U Htan Hauk said that the Caps System was being used at Pan Hmwar Affiliated Middle School. Under this system, students had to learn chapter by chapter and then sit for an exam after completion of every chapter. They could pursue another chapter only if they were considered qualified- meaning that they understood at least 50% of the previous chapter. If they were not qualified, they would have to study the previous chapter again.

U Lan Khan Htan, Headmaster of Dawn Pyo Khinn Primary School, said that a teacher-centered system was still in use in his school. There were five different classes but only three teachers so two teachers had to teach two classes at the same time.

A paper submitted by ABSL stated that children's education had not improved, due to the teacher-centered system. A teaching guide that encourages creativity in children should be used.

U Aung Tin Moe, a teacher from Dawn Yin Khwin Primary School, explained the guidelines they received from the authorities. According to these, teachers had to work with students until they passed their exams. Subjects were divided into three sections and students had to take a pre-exam for each section. Students also had to sit for a final exam and all grades that students held for both pre- and final exams would be combined to determine whether or not a student was qualified. If a student failed an exam, teachers had to teach that student during the summer holiday and provide Supplementary Tests until he or she passed.

U Htan Khan Htun, a teacher from Chin National Congress (CNC), stated that a student-centered teaching system with sufficient teaching aids should be in place instead of using a teacher-centered one that blocked the creativity, capacity, development and happiness of students. Students should not only be busy with their textbooks. Education should go far beyond those and combine with practice.

### 3.5 Teacher Education

#### 3.5.1 Region (1) New Mon State Party (NMSP) and Ethnic Organizations and Democratic Forces located in the Ye, Meik and Dawei Areas

U Aung Ko, a teacher, stated that teachers were in need of training and teaching aids.

#### 3.5.2 Region (2) Karen National Union (KNU) and Ethnic Organizations and Democratic Forces located in the Mae Sod Area

Pado Man Shar, General Secretary of KNU, suggested that the educational status of teachers needed to be upgraded.

Saw Ba Thin, Chairperson of KNU, said that there was a need for more Teachers' Freshmen Course and teachers currently were given only short trainings during the summer break.

#### 3.5.3 Region (3) Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) and Ethnic Organizations and Democratic Forces located in the Mae Hong Son Area

Kyi Shwin, a teacher from a high school in Camp (3), stated that teachers were not qualified enough and needed more education. That was also the case for those who were inside Burma as they had never been able to seek any training.

U Khaung Haung, In-charge of Education of LDF, stated that it would be difficult for Lahus to take Teachers' Freshmen Courses because their education level was very low (third to fourth grade).

#### 3.5.4 Region (4) All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF) and Organizations located in Papon, Taung Oo, Nyaung Lay Pin and Tha Ton Districts

U Kyaw Thu Rein, In-charge of Education Department of the ABSDF, said that by providing training to teachers, they would not only be able to know each other but also learn from and share their experiences and thoughts. Teachers could teach children only if they had knowledge and qualifications.

#### 3.5.5 Region (5) Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) and Organizations located in Northern Burma

U Maji Bran Taung, *Administrator* of Eastern Division, mentioned that there were over 50 schools and 400 teachers in three Districts in Eastern Division. Teachers were not qualified and it was difficult to train them as their education levels were not the same.

#### 3.5.6 Region (6) Western Burma and Arakan, Chin, Kachin and Other Organizations located along the Indian-Burmese border

U Htan Hauk, a retired headmaster of Pan Hmwar Affiliated Middle School in Ti Tein, said that teachers were not qualified and needed to upgrade their skills. There used to be Refresher Courses during the summer break, but there had been no such training since the SLORC took power and the qualifications of teachers had deteriorated.

U L Laung Hsar, Secretary of NNLD, said that as there were communication constraints and other difficulties with securing food and accommodation, graduated teachers were reluctant to come to the area. Therefore, local people who graduated from middle school were hired to be teachers even if they were not qualified.

Ko Kan Min, a retired teacher from ABSL, pointed out the reasons for teachers not being qualified: they were teaching subjects which they had not majored in, they lacked English skill, and they had no opportunity to take Refresher Courses.

U Lan Khan Htan, Headmaster of Dawn Pyo Khin Primary School, said that as the teachers had been chosen from the movement, they still needed more training.

Ko Steven Son Marn, In-charge of Foreign Affairs for ZRO, said that many teachers working at government schools were not qualified.

U Ro Zaw Htan, a teacher, referred to a proverb “*Good Beginning Leads to Good Ending*” to talk about qualification requirements for teachers. He said that only graduated teachers should be assigned as primary school teachers as this level was a fundamental step of education. Refresher Courses should also be arranged annually. In addition, teachers should be provided with social welfare and sufficient salaries in order for them to actively focus on teaching.

U Htan Khan Htun, a teacher, said that teachers should be capable of motivating their students and if they were not, they should not be appointed as teachers. If there was a shortage in the number of graduated teachers because of the government’s situation, those who had graduated from high school could take positions as teachers only after taking a one-year Teachers’ Training Course. An influence of any political party in power should also be avoided in the process of appointing teachers, because otherwise unqualified teachers might be assigned. Teachers should also try to make themselves well rounded and reliable.

Ko Law Mar, a teacher, suggested that all teachers should attend a Teachers’ Training Course, with salary, within the first two years of taking the job. And they all needed to join the annual Ten Days Enrichment or Refresher Courses.

#### 4. Discussion

##### 4.1 Children’s Opportunity to Learn

Children in the ethnic nationality areas have little chance to learn at school. The most vulnerable areas are Karen, Karenni and Shans where only 10% of children can join school. Children in the areas of Mon, Kachin and Chin have more chance to get education compare with other areas. Some 25% of children in Naga area and 50% in Titain can join school. However, secondary school enrolment rate is very low. Poverty is a common reason. Parents cannot effort to pay for books and dresses for their children’s schooling. Children help parents for family income. Some children are out harvesting and fishing. Some other children become drug addict. Children who lose their parents with several reasons are neglected for schooling. The tragedy is that these orphans come near school and look at children studying in the classroom through windows. They wish to learn but they need opportunity.

One of the reasons that children drop out of school is language problem. For example, Burmese-Muslim children quit Karen schools because they do not understand Karen language. Early marriage at the age of 14 and 15 in Lahu area stops their schooling. Poor health condition is also a common reason. Some schools ask for fees and parents do not reach it. For example, children in a Karen school disappear when the school asks for fee.

##### 4.2 Curriculum

Curricula and syllabuses are varies in the ethnic nationality areas. Some areas use the curriculum prescribed by the regime. Some areas re-write their own curriculum. Some schools in Chin area use Indian curriculum. Medium of instruction in Mon schools is Mon language and all primary school textbooks are translated into Mon. Karen is now re-writing

a new curriculum. Karenni schools use regime's curriculum except Burmese history. A Kachin teacher reveals that although they do not want to use the regime's curriculum, they use it because Kachin students need to sit state exam. Another Kachin teacher says that they are not willing to teach Burmese history written by the military regime. Chin teachers also have the same idea that they do not want to teach history syllabus prescribed by the regime.

The suggestions regarding the curriculum issue are:

- Curriculum reform with the consultation of all ethnic nationality groups (cf. Karenni; ABSDF);
- A curriculum should be reflect cultures of all ethnic groups (cf. Mon; Pa-O);
- To restore Kachin culture (cf. Kachin);
- To re-write history syllabus (cf. Mon; Karenni; Kachin; Chin);
- Revolutionary ideology and nationalist spirit should be include in history syllabus (cf. Karen);
- Civic education should be re-introduced (cf. Mon area);
- Health education should be a part of school curriculum (cf. Karen).

#### 4.3 The Teaching of Mother Tongue

Every ethnic group suggests that local ethnic language should be taught at schools. The ethnic vernacular languages are gradually disappeared by the fact that Burmese language is dominant for many years. According to the KNU education policy, Karen language is given priority in order that every Karen people masters the Karen language. English is a second language in Karen schools and Burmese is taught as a common language. The Karenni education committee has launched a five year project 2001-2005 that medium of instruction will be Karenni language in all Karenni schools.

The ABSDF school teaches Karen language as a subject where the majority are Karen students. An ABSDF teacher asks for help to other ethnic nationality groups to send language teachers to teach the children such as Shan and Mon studying in their school. Kachin schools teach Burmese language but they do not have enough teachers - Kachin children have never seen a Burmese. In Chin state, Hakha language (LAI), Phalam language (LAIZO) and Titain language (ZO) were allowed to teach at schools since 1925. However, it was limited by the regime in 1990. The religions groups have been trying to preserve these languages. In Naga area, Naga language is not allowed at all to teach at school.

#### 4.4 Teaching Methodology

Teaching methods are varies school to school. Some schools (e.g. ABSDF and Karenni) practice a new teaching method, which encourages children's active learning and critical thinking skills. Many schools are still using traditional way of rote learning and teacher centered method. Sometimes American and Australian teachers help Karen schools, but they present different teaching methods. Teachers reveal that they do not have enough teaching aid materials. A Karen teacher Naw Si Po Ra Sein, who has twenty years experience in teaching, suggests that Karen schools need a teaching method of Burmese language for children whose mother tongue is not Burmese. In Kachin area there is a serious shortage of

teachers. For example, three teachers teach five different levels for all subjects.

#### 4.5 Teacher Education

Every region suggests that teachers training are needed to promote teaching skills. In Karen area, there is only short training in summer vacation. A teacher from the ABSDF's school suggests that teachers can share knowledge and experience during training. In Naga region, qualified teachers do not want to work there because of the poor transport and shortage of food. Naga schools can recruit local teachers who have completed only junior secondary school. Lahu schools are facing serious shortage of teachers and the people who finished only third or fourth standard work as teachers. A teacher from Chin state suggests that primary education is very important and qualified teacher should teach in that level. A teacher also suggests that political party should not influence teacher recruitment.

#### 5. Conclusion

The local education workshops significantly found that children in the ethnic nationality areas in Burma had little chance to learn at school. The children in refugee camps have more chance to study with the help of the international NGOs – according to data provided by the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), 90% of children in refugee camps can join schools. A UNICEF report also shows that 60% of children in central Burma go to schools. However, children in the ethnic nationality areas are vulnerable due to civil war and economic deprivation. A KNPP data shows that only 10% of ethnic Karenni children can learn at school.

The issues of curriculum development, the teaching of children's mother tongue at school, teaching methodology and teacher education will be discussed in the forthcoming seminars in September and November 2001.

Figure 1: Findings on Local Education Workshops

	<b>Children's Opportunity to Learn</b>	<b>Curriculum</b>	<b>The Teaching of Mother Tongue</b>	<b>Teaching Methodology</b>	<b>Teacher Education</b>
<b>Region 1 Mon Area</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of opportunity</li> <li>• Poverty</li> <li>• Children help parents harvesting and fishing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different school different subjects</li> <li>• Medium of instruction is Mon in Mon Primary schools</li> <li>• To rewrite history syllabus prescribed by the regime</li> <li>• To reflect culture of every ethnic groups in school curriculum</li> <li>• To re-introduce civic education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every ethnic nationality has rights to develop their own language</li> <li>• The teaching of mother tongue at school</li> <li>• Dominant of Burmese language over other languages</li> <li>• Assimilation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interactive child centered teaching method instead of teacher centered</li> <li>• There is a lack of respect to teachers by pupils in child centered method</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers have lack of training</li> </ul>
<b>Region 2 Karen Area</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of opportunity</li> <li>• Poverty</li> <li>• Child hawkers</li> <li>• Muslim children in Karen schools do not understand Karen and drop out</li> <li>• Parents do not send children schools when school asks for fees</li> <li>• To build more schools inside Burma</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revolutionary ideology and national spirit should be included in history syllabus</li> <li>• Burmese-Muslim children should be taught in Burmese while Karen children are taught in Karen language</li> <li>• To re-write Karen school curriculum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Karen should be literate in Karen language</li> <li>• Second language is English</li> <li>• Burmese is taught as a second language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers from Australia and America help Karen schools, however they have different teaching methods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers in Karen schools get only short-term training in summer</li> <li>• Teachers need to increase their capacity</li> </ul>
<b>Region 3 Karenni and Shan Area</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of opportunity: only 10% of children</li> <li>• Poverty</li> <li>• Parents have lack of interest in education</li> <li>• In Lahu area, early marriage (age 14; 15) prevents children's schooling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Karenni schools use the regime's school curriculum except history syllabus</li> <li>• Medium of instruction is English</li> <li>• To re-write a new curriculum with the consultation of all ethnic nationalities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A five year project (2001-2005): the medium of instruction will be in Karenni language in all Karenni schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regime's schools use rote learning without practical experience</li> <li>• Karenni schools encourage children's thinking skills and use teaching aid materials</li> <li>• Rote learning is still taking place in Karenni schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers have lack of skills</li> <li>• Newly recruited teachers inside Burma has no teacher training</li> <li>• Lahu schools have shortage of teachers and people who finished third and fourth standards work as teachers</li> </ul>

<b>Region 4 ABSDF and Central Area</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of opportunity</li> <li>• Poor health prevent children to attend school</li> <li>• Parents are illiterate and lack of knowledge in education</li> <li>• Children help parents for family income</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health education should be included in school curriculum</li> <li>• There should be a curriculum which guarantees a common ground for all ethnic nationalities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Karen language is taught as a subject at ABSDF high school</li> <li>• Ethnic groups should send teachers to teach Shan, Mon languages etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School should encourage children to develop thinking skills</li> <li>• To use teaching aid materials</li> <li>• The method of the 'teaching of Burmese language for children whose mother tongue is not Burmese' should be use for Karen children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers can exchange knowledge and experience each other during training</li> <li>• Teachers need knowledge and skills which help children's development</li> </ul>
<b>Region 5 Kachin Area</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many children join primary schools</li> <li>• Only few students continue secondary education</li> <li>• Children help parents for family income</li> <li>• Drug addicts</li> <li>• Children who lost their parents during war cannot join school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School curriculum is link with politics and economics</li> <li>• Kachin schools use the regime's curriculum for Kachin students sit regime's exam</li> <li>• Kachin teachers do not want to teach regime's history syllabus</li> <li>• Kachin history should be taught</li> <li>• Teachers wish to preserve Kachin culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers wish to use Kachin language as a medium of instruction. It is impossible at this Moment</li> <li>• Kachin children learn Burmese language without experience seeing any Burmese people</li> <li>• Children have learning difficulties in English</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kachin schools are still using traditional teaching method</li> <li>• Although new teaching methods are taught at teacher trainings, it does not apply because of lack of teaching aid materials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The three districts of the eastern region of Kachin state have 50 schools and 400 teachers. But teachers have lack of qualification</li> <li>• Teaching and learning are not effective because of the lack of teaching skills</li> </ul>
<b>Region 6 Western part of Burma</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In Titain, 50% of children join schools</li> <li>• In Naga region, 25% of children join school</li> <li>• Very few students continue secondary education</li> <li>• Shortage of teachers</li> <li>• Children help parents for family income</li> <li>• All children under 15 should be in school to protect child labour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some schools use regime's curriculum</li> <li>• Some schools use Indian curriculum</li> <li>• To produce textbooks for Burmese language</li> <li>• Teachers do not want to teach regime's history syllabus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In Chin state, Hakha language (LAI), Titain language (ZO) and Palum language (LAIZO) were allowed to teach in schools since 1925. It was limited in 1990 by the regime.</li> <li>• Zo language is taught once a week until 3<sup>rd</sup> standard in Titain</li> <li>• Naga language was not allowed to teach at school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools in Chin state are still using teacher centered method</li> <li>• Due to lack of teachers, three teachers teach five classes of different level for all subjects</li> <li>• Pupils should participate in teaching and learning by interactive way</li> <li>• Teaching aid materials should be used widely</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Due to lack of training, teachers have lack of knowledge and skills</li> <li>• Due to poor transport and food supply, qualified teachers do not want to work in Naga schools.</li> <li>• Qualified teachers should teach primary level for the development of children at the beginning of their social life</li> <li>• To support teacher subsidiary</li> </ul>