

Press release by the Karenni Civil Society Network

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New report critiques “peace support” amidst militarization in Karenni State

A new report by the Karenni Civil Society Network (KCSN) raises concerns about international “peace support” programming amidst increasing Burma Army militarization in Karenni State after the 2012 ceasefire with the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP).

The report “*Where is Genuine Peace?*” Exposes how a pilot resettlement project of the Norway-led Myanmar Peace Support Initiative (MPSI) in Shadaw Township is encouraging IDPs to return to an area controlled by the Burma Army where their safety cannot be guaranteed.

The MPSI claims that between June 2013 and September 2014 it supported 1,431 IDPs to return to 10 Shadaw villages forcibly relocated in 1996. However, KCSN found only about a third of these IDPs in the villages, most of whom were working-age adults returning to carry out farming, but not daring to return permanently due to fears of renewed conflict. As in other parts of Karenni State, the Burma Army has been reinforcing troops and fortifying its positions in Shadaw, where there is a tactical command centre and over 20 military outposts.

“Instead of encouraging IDPs to return home before it is safe, international donors should be trying to ensure that the rights of conflict-affected villagers are protected,” said one of KCSN. “There must be pressure on the government to pull back its troops from the ethnic areas and start political dialogue towards federal reform.”

KCSN also criticizes the MPSI for fuelling conflict by ignoring Karenni-managed social service organizations that have been providing primary health care and other support to IDPs in Shadaw for decades. MPSI’s health support was through the government system, which remains highly centralized and dysfunctional in Karenni State.

“Donors should not just give one-sided support to expand government services into ethnic conflict areas. This won’t be effective, and will only increase resentment and fuel conflict,” said KSWDC.

The report also raises concerns about rampant resource extraction after the ceasefire, land confiscation, military expansions and lack of transparency around dam plans on the Salween and its tributaries in Karenni State. KCSN is calling for a moratorium on large-scale infrastructure and resource extraction projects in Karenni State until there is genuine peace.

The full report can be viewed on www.ecdfburma.org

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