



STARTTS

**Karen Community
Consultation report**

**28th March 2009
Granville Town Hall**

Acknowledgements

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Karen Information

Some of the history

Historically, the Karen people descend from the same ancestors as the Mongolians (KNU 2005). The earliest Karens are said to have settled in Htee-mset Met Ywa in the Gobi desert, and later migrated south and entered Burma around 739BC (KNU 2005). The land where they settled was named kaw-lah, meaning Green Land, but was later changed to Kawthoolei meaning, the land burned black (by slash and burn farming or warfare), the pure land the land of the *thoo lei* plant (i.e. flower land), or a land free of all evils (HRW 2005).

Although Burma has been inhabited since 2500 BC, the first Myanmar Empire was established in 1044AD, by the Burman ruler King Anawrahtar. After the invasion by the Mongols in 13th century a second kingdom was established in the 1500s, and a third from 1752 - 1826 (add ref 1). The Burmese brought feudalism with them and won the feudal war. They subjugated many other ethnic nationalities, including the Karen, subjecting them to persecution, torture, killings, suppression, oppression and exploitation (KNU 2005). Many fled to high mountainous and jungle areas or were made slaves.

Things began to change for the Karen people around 1824 when over a period of 62 years (1824-1886) Britain conquered Burma and incorporated it into its Indian empire (CIA 2009). During this time, many Karen aided the British against the Burman leadership and served as guides during the Anglo-Burmese wars (Rogers 2004). Consequently as Britain gained power, conditions for the Karen people improved. They could go to school and be educated, and the British treated them as equal to the Burman Burmese (Rogers 2004). However, the Karen still suffered at the hands of the Burman many of whom resented the Karen's assistance to the British, leading to further tensions between the two ethnic groups (Rogers 2004). For example, some Burman sought revenge on the Karen and after the capture of Shwe Dagon Pagoda, all Karen villages within 50 miles of Rangoon were burnt, rice supplies seized and destroyed, and hundreds of people killed (Rogers 2004).

The Karen's loyalty and support for the British was also evident during World War I and II when many Karen applied to join the British military forces. It is estimated that over 50,000 Karen served with the Allied Forces in World War II, and were one of the key ethnic groups that came to Britain's aid when Japan invaded Burma in 1941 (Rogers 2004). However, Karen loyalty has not been without consequence. In 1942 when the British were in retreat to India the Japanese who had the support of the Burmese Independence Army (BIA)¹, headed by Aung San, took revenge on British supporters, including the Karen ((DIMIA 2006)). During this time Karen villages were attacked and many Karen were arrested, tortured and killed on suspicion of providing hiding places, acting as spies, or participating in communications and reconnaissance, or information gathering.

In 1944, as Japan's strength in the war began to falter and it became clear that Japanese promises of independence were a sham, Aung San switched sides to join the

¹ Later reorganised as the Burma Defence Army (BDA), then renamed in 1943 as the Burma National Army (BNA)

British (Wikipedia 2009a). After negotiations with communist leaders, Thakin Than Tun and Thakin Soe, and Socialist leaders Ba Swe and Kyaw Nyein, formed the Anti-Fascist Organisation (AFO) in August 1944 (Wikipedia 2009b).. The AFO was later renamed the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL). After raising up against the Japanese on March 27, 1945 Aung San and others officially joined the Allies as the Patriotic Burmese Force (PBF) (Wikipedia 2009b).. At this time a new labour government, headed by Prime Minister Clement Atlee, was elected and quickly set about dismantling the British Empire (Wikipedia 2009a).

The new alliance between Britain and Aung San, was to have a significant impact on the Karen peoples desire for an independent Karen State, separate from the Burman under whose leadership they had suffered. The AFO represented itself to the British as the provisional government of Burma with Thakin Soe as Chairman and Aung San as member of its ruling committee (Wikipedia 2009b). Consequently, the British government began negotiations for independence with Aung San and proposals by the Karen for a United Frontier Karen State were brushed aside.

In 1947 Aung San was invited to London to discuss a transfer of power; however no ethnic minority members were invited to participate in the negotiations (Rogers 2004). Consequently the Atlee-Aung San Agreement which granted Burma independence as soon as possible+disregarded pleas for minority autonomy or independence (Keenan 2005). A conference was held at Pagalong to hear the views of people in the Frontier Areas, however Karen representatives were present only as observers and consequently the agreement that was signed establishing the principle of Union of Burma and enshrining right of autonomy, did not take into account Karen objectives (Rogers 2004). In April 1947 Aung San was elected prime minister of Burma but was assassinated two months later (DIMIA 2006)). This meant even bleaker prospects for the Karen, as the new prime minister U Nu, openly stated that he was 100% against creation of Autonomous States for the Karens+(Fong 2008, p.100).

Consequently the Karen National Union (KNU) and the associated armed wing the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) were formed with the aim of independence or greater autonomy for the Karen (AI 2008a). The new government was challenged by the KNU and other ethnic groups and periods of intense civil war resulted. Although the constitution had declared some level of independence for the minority states they were never given this autonomy (DIMIA 2006).

In an attempt to quell the uprisings the military, under General Ne Win, removed U Nu from office in 1958 (DIMIA 2006). The KNDO was declared unlawful and their headquarters were attacked. Karen leaders were arrested, personnel disarmed and put in jail, and villages attacked (KNU 2005). In 1960 general elections were held, which returned U Nu's Union Party to power (Wikipedia 2009b). This was short lived as in 1962 Ne Win staged a coup d'état, arrested U Nu, and established a military government based on socialist economic priorities (Burma Socialist Program Party . BSPP) (DIMIA 2006). Ne Win's policies were heavily influenced by superstition and black magic (Yoldi 2007). For example, when he was told his lucky number was 9 he demonetized bank notes that weren't divisible by 9 (Rogers 2004). Policies such as these had a devastating effect on Burma's economy.

The Karen continued to suffer under the dictatorship and then self-appointed presidency of Ne Win. Many Karen schools were shut down and social and cultural activities taken

over by the military regime (KWO 2007). In 1970 the four cuts policy was introduced. This policy is designed to break down armed opposition groups' links to food, financial support, recruits and information by systematically terrorising the civilian population in ethnic minority areas (AI 2008a). The military has classified certain areas according to level of military control. White areas are completely controlled by the military. Brown areas experience military and resistance group activities, in these areas forced relocation and labour is common. Black areas are controlled by resistance groups. These areas are free-fire zones, where the army operates on a shoot-on-sight policy (KWO 2007). The policy aims to transform black rebel held areas into brown contested/free fire areas, and then into white government-held areas (HRW 2005).

Under this policy practices such as detention, torture, execution, forced labour, forced relocation to sites controlled by Burmese military troops, rape and other forms of violence against women are reported to be a commonplace (KWO 2007). The policy is used to defend such actions which the Tatmadaw (Burmese Army) claim are necessary in the prosecution of a protracted war against rural based guerrillas (HRW 2005).

Ne Win maintained power until 1988 when he stepped down in response to widespread protests and demonstrations that broke out in response to the worsening economic situation and brutal police repression of protestors (DIMIA 2006). The armed forces under General Saw Maung staged a coup two months after Ne Win stepped down. In an attempt to establish control, the military swept aside the Constitution of 1974 in favour of martial law and the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) was established (Wikipedia 2009b). The SLORC ordered the army to suppress the demonstrations and many civilians were killed or fled to the hills (DIMIA 2006).

In 1990, the SLORC held multi-party elections (DIMIA 2006). The main opposition party, the National League for Democracy (NLD) led by Aung San Suu Kyi², won a landslide victory with 82% of seats (CIA 2009). However, the military would not let the assembly convene and the winners were persecuted and imprisoned (Wikipedia 2009b). In April 1992 General Saw Maung was replaced by General Than Shwe (CIA 2009).

Around this time the KNLA experienced further trouble. In December 1994 disaffected Buddhist Pwo-speaking KNLA soldiers who felt excluded by the dominant Christian S'gaw-speaking KNU elite broke from the mainstream Karen insurgent group and established the Democratic Karen Buddhist Organisation (DKBO) and related army (DKBA) (HRW 2005). The KNU were also unwilling to negotiate a cease-fire agreement with General Khin Nyut, and eventually their main base at Mannerplaw was captured in early 1995 (Wikipedia 2009b). In late 1996 the SLORC was abolished and replaced by the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) however these changes were merely cosmetic and human rights abuses continued (Wikipedia 2009b)..

In 2003 General Khin Nyut, Chief of Military Intelligence, was elected prime minister (DIMIA 2006). In 2005 he announced the reconvening of the National Convention (NC) to draft a new constitution, one of seven steps in the government's newly proposed road map to democracy (HRW 2005). However, the process was dominated by the military and major pro-democracy groups such as the NLD were barred from participating. By October 2004 Khin Nyunt had been arrested for corruption and replaced as prime minister by Lieutenant-General Soe Win (Wikipedia 2009b).

² Daughter of Aung San

In Jan 2004, an informal cease-fire between the Tatmadaw and the KNLA was agreed upon (KWO 2007). However both groups have repeatedly violated the agreement (HRW 2005). Low-level skirmishes and abuse of Karen civilians has continued (AI 2008a). It has been claimed that the cease-fire was merely used as an opportunity for SPDC to increase militarisation as a large offensive was launched on Karen villages and KNU targets in September 2005 (KWO 2007). This ultimately led to the formal cancellation of the cease-fire in October 2006, when the SPDC stated they were not prepared to discuss a political settlement (AI 2008a).

The KNLA as a force appears to be deteriorating. With a military backing of approx 20,000 in 1980s this had reduced to less than 4,000 by 2006 (Wikipedia 2009a). There has also been further division in the group with commander of KNLA 7th Brigade, Brigadier-General Htain Maung, announced the formation of a separate group, the Karen nation Union/Karen National Army Peace Council (KNU/KNLAPC), in January 2007 (AI 2008a). This happened following his reported negotiations with the SPDC that did not have the sanction of the KNU leadership, which subsequently dismissed him. By February 2007 the SPDC announced a peace agreement with KNU/KNLAPC (AI 2008a). And in April 2007 the KNU/KNLAPC, DKBA and Tatmadaw took part in joint operations and attacked KNLA forces near the Thai-Burma border (AI 2008b).

Persecution Past and Present

The Karen have experienced persecution from the Burma Armp for over 60 years (KWO 2007). The extent of the persecution has been so severe that many consider it to be genocide (Rogers 2004). In fact, in 1992 in a public statement, Major-General Ket Sein, South-East Regional Commander in the SPDC proclaimed the regime's intention that %a 10 years all Karen will be dead. If you want to see a Karen, you will have to go to a museum in Rangoon+(Rogers 2004, p. 40)

Furthermore the protection afforded to the Karen people by the KNU has diminished. Due to military set-backs in the 1970s and diminished support from the Thai government and army, the KNU is a weakened force (HRW 2005). The KNLA still has some 4,000-7,000 soldiers but is no longer considered a significant threat to SPDC (HRW 2005). However, the KNU still has an interest in controlling or maintaining populations in Karen lands as a source of legitimacy and of food, intelligence, volunteer soldiers and porters.

Documented cases of human rights violations during late 2005 and 2006 indicate that SPDC attacks on Karen people during this period have increased and have deliberately targeted the civilian population (KWO 2007). Civilians have been targeted because of their Karen ethnicity, location in Karen majority areas or as retribution for activities by the KNLA (AI 2008a)

Political prisons in Burma



Bhamo prison	Myaungmya prison
Bassein prison	Myingyan prison
Buthitaung prison	Myitkyina prison
Henzada prison	Nyaung U prison
Insein prison	Pa-an prison
Kale prison	Pakokku prison
Katha prison	Paungde prison
Kengtung prison	Pegu prison
Hkamti prison	Prome prison
Kyaukphe prison	Shwebo prison
Lashio prison	Sittwe prison
Loilek prison	Tachilek prison
Magwe prison	Taunggyi prison
Mandalay prison	Taungtha prison
Maubin prison	Tavoy prison
Maikhtila prison	Tharawaddy prison
Mergui prison	Thayet prison
Mogoke prison	Kawthaung prison
Monywa prison	Pu-ta-o prison
Moulmein prison	

<http://www.aappb.org/prisonmap.html>

Arbitrary levies and fines

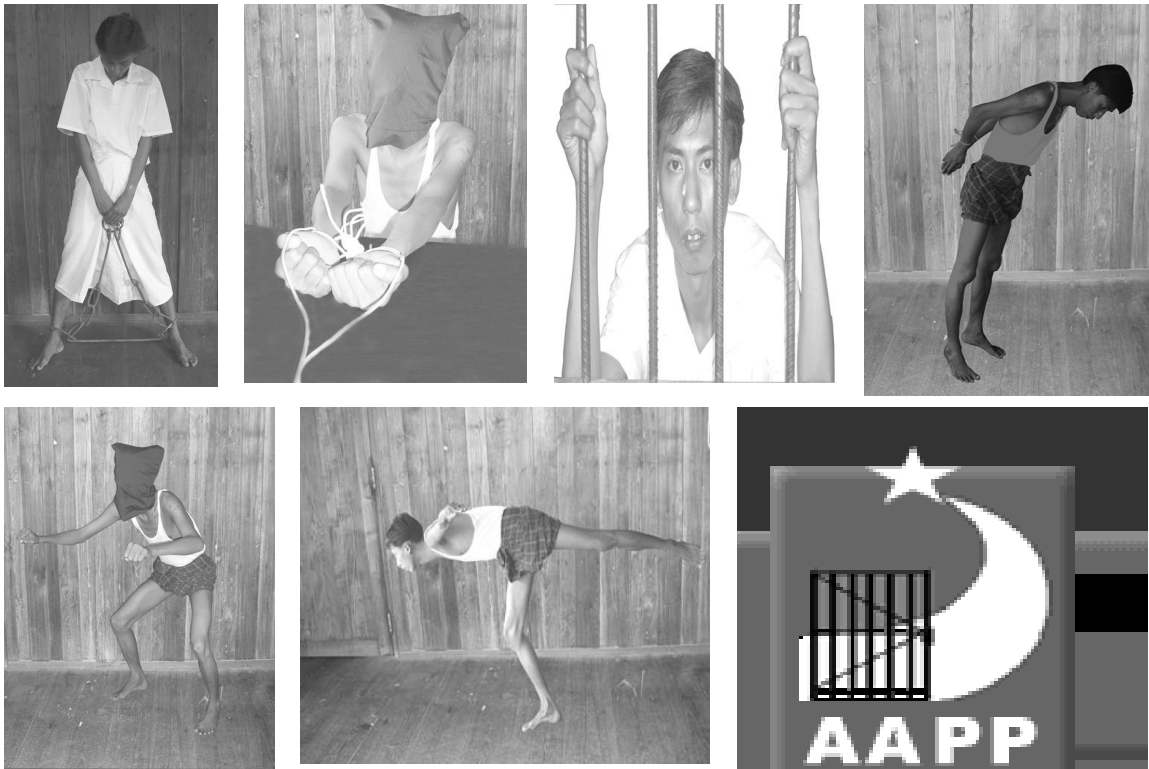
The Tatmadaw and DKBA regularly subject Karen villagers to arbitrary levies and fines (HRW 2005). Some villagers have reported having to pay a monthly levy of 10,000 kyat for families and 5,000 kyat for widows (AI 2008a). Fines between 200,000 and 300,000 kyat have been imposed on villagers expressly because of fighting between the KNLA and DKBA (AI 2008a). In some cases villagers have had to pay to be able to leave their villages to go to their fields to farm (AI 2008b). Villagers often have to borrow money to be able to pay these levies and fines. Failure to pay can result in portering or forced labour, for up to an entire month. This has significant impacts on a family's ability to tend their fields and grow enough food to live off; it essentially prevents Karen people from being able to survive in their villages. KNU sources estimate that 10M Kyat was extorted from villagers in Nyaunglebin District alone in the first half of 2004 (HRW 2005).

Looting and theft

In addition to arbitrary levies and fines, villagers are subject to frequent demands for food, alcohol, and labour to support the regime and its soldiers. These demands are often collected through the village chief who risks abuse and torture if he fails to comply (KWO 2007). Consequently, it has sometimes been the case that women have had to take on the role of village chiefs as men have refused to continue in this role (KHRG 2006)). Often, crops, livestock, water supplies and personal possessions are destroyed, with the Tatmadaw claiming that this action is taken to stop the KNU and KNLA from reaching food supplies. Theft and looting has also been conducted by the KNLA (AI 2008a).

Torture, assault, abduction and arbitrary detention

Torture and assault are carried out on the whim of the Tatmadaw and DKBA at military camps, in fields, by rivers, and in public places in villages (KWO 2007). It is used as a mechanism to elicit information about the identity and movements of members of the KNLA; to punish and control the local population for perceived support of, or for not disclosing information about the KNLA; to intimidate and deter further support; as punishment and a means of enforcing orders pertaining to curfews, food requisitioning and forced labour (AI 2008a). Many reports detail brutal assaults and indicate that many people tortured are often subsequently killed (HRW 2005, KWO 2007, AI 2008a, KHRG 2009).



Forms of torture used in Burma

<http://www.aappb.org/>

Soldiers frequently do not follow arrest and detention procedures. No warrants are issued, grounds are not provided for the arrest, individuals are held incommunicado, and there is no disclosure as to the whereabouts of detention to family members or lawyers (AI 2008a). As a consequence, enforced disappearances after arbitrary arrests are frequent.

Murder and Extrajudicial execution

Men, women and children have been killed by the Tatmadaw and related forces (KWO 2007). Villagers have been shot and killed during periods of village closure, or when the KNLA is operating in the area. In certain areas, an on-site, shoot-to-kill policy has been endorsed and often villagers have no warning of this (AI 2008a). Extrajudicial execution

has also been used as a form of collective punishment to penalise villagers (KWO 2007). Villagers have been told to report on KNU activities or suffer eye-for-eye retribution (AI 2008a). Villagers who are forced to be porters and guides also suffer at the hands of this policy if the army is ambushed by KNLA forces during their period of service (HRW 2005).

Forced Labour and Portering

Taking villagers against their will and forcing them to carry out a variety of activities without remuneration is a policy frequently employed by military and civilian officials as well as ethnic insurgent groups (KWO 2007). In Toungoo District alone, during the period from January 2004 to March 2005, 390 incidences of women forcibly recruited as labourers were reported (KWO 2007).



The work of porters and labourers is varied and may include: carrying supplies, rations or ammunitions; marching with troops through rough terrain, carrying loads of up to 40 kilos; being used as human shields and being forced to show the way through landmine infested jungle paths, consequently clearing landmines with their lives; cooking for soldiers; being subject to sexual servitude; constructing roads and bridges; and guarding military installations and equipment (HRW 2005).

Neither age nor ability prevent a person from being taken, and children, pregnant women and breast-feeding mothers are forced to be porters and labourers (KWO 2007). This often results in miscarriages for pregnant women.

Forced labour and portering is often concurrent with other human rights abuses such as rape, beating, mutilation, torture, murder, and denial of food, water and shelter (KWO 2007). Those taken are often responsible for the care of vulnerable family members in the village. Their absence can result in a reduction in family productivity and a concomitant inability to pay taxes and other fees, which exposes them to further risk of forced labour (HRW 2005). Repeated forced recruitment has further negative effects in that it prevents completion of schooling, maintenance of livelihoods, and ability to care for their families. A survey conducted in October 2004 by the Thai Burma Border Consortium (TBBC) showed that of 57% of IDP (Internally displaced people) households surveyed (39% in Karen State) have been forced to work without compensation and have been extorted cash or property within the last year (TBBC 2004).

Rape or Sexual Assault

Many women who are forced to serve as porters and labourers are subject to rape or sexual assault. Rape is used as a tactic of war and is particularly targeted at ethnic minorities as a form of ethnic cleansing (Rogers 2004, Mason 1999). The documented experiences of rape victims highlight the brutality of many rapes, after which the woman is often killed (KWO 2007). Both individual and gang rape are widespread, with many acts of rape being perpetrated by senior military officers or done with their complicity (KWO 2007)



Women prison Burma

Forced conscription of children

Even though forced conscription of children is officially prohibited, the Tatmadaw, DKBA and KNU related groups still continue this practice (HRW 2005, KWO 2007, AI 2008a). Since 2008, the DKBA has engaged in an aggressive forced recruitment drive (KHRG 2009). Villagers have been told to provide a specific number of recruits from amongst their residents and also pay 20,000 Thai Baht (approx US \$572) per recruit to support them during their time as soldiers (KHRG 2009). Children are often among these recruits or are taken as army porters or unpaid labourers.



Forced conscription of children is also a problem in the KNLA (Karen National Liberation Army), in particularly in its militia wing the KNDO (Karen National Defence Organisation) (Oo, 1997). Although the KNU (the political wing controlling KNLA) stated in 2006 that no children under 18 were to be recruited, this has been undermined by conscription policy that allows one son from each family to be conscripted provided there are several sons (KHRG 2008). Also it is difficult to monitor recruitment processes to the KNDO. Hence although recruitment of children is declining it remains a problem.

Landmine victims



Landmines are regularly deployed by SPDC, DKBA and KNLA military units (HRW 2005). The SPDC and DKBA deploy both factory and handmade landmines around army camps and bases, alongside vehicle roads and bridges, in villages after residents have fled or been forcibly relocated, and in some cases specifically to block civilian travel (Quintana 2008). While the KNLA also deploy landmines, they use them as a means of ambushing SPDC and DKBA patrols, or as a defensive barrier around KNLA army camps and IDP hiding sites (KHRG 2009). The KNLA also typically inform local villagers about the locations of mines and in some areas have sought permission to plant them (AI 2008a). When landmines are activated the results are often

fatal, or cause severe injury and dismemberment. Injury may still result in death from blood loss or infection.

Forced relocation and destruction of livelihood and villages

Attacks by military forces and non-State armed groups on villages in Karen state has leading to extensive forced displacement and serious violations of other human rights (Quintana 2008). Villages are burnt and destroyed as a punitive measure against civilians for alleged cooperation with the KNLA (KHRG 2009). This is generally done in response to KNLA landmine deployment or KNLA attacks on DKBA or Tatmadaw forces. Destruction of villages also allows the Tatmadaw to forcibly relocate the residents (AI 2008a). Relocation reduces the possibility of contact between villagers and KNU/KNLA personnel, as well as providing increased resources for local DKBA forces, such as new recruits, labour, money, food and supplies.



Villagers may be given anywhere from 0-7 days warning to leave (HRW 2005). Most of the time they are instructed to go to designated relocation sites. The TBBC has recorded 100 such government-controlled relocation sites in Karen areas (TBBC 2004). Conditions at the sites are poor and people living there continue to be subject to human rights violations. Forced labour and arbitrary taxes are prevalent; there is generally no access to schools, health care, or regular paid work; access to

agricultural land is restricted and there is a lack of food and clean water (HRW 2005). Consequently, many villagers are forced to flee to Thailand for survival or become internally displaced (Quintana 2008).

Demographics

The last ethnic based census was done in 1947. This census recorded a total population of 24M, with the Karen numbered at 7M (KWO 2007). Since then the military government have conducted a few censuses which have shown the number of Karen to be drastically decreasing, while the Burman population grows. The 1974 census listed a decrease from 5M to 3.2M while the total population grew from 24M to 33M (KWO 2007). The 1990 census calculated a total Karen population of 2.9M (KWO 2007). As there is no reliable census data, various sources estimate the total Karen population from anywhere between 2 to 7 million (HRW 2005, KNU 2005, KWO 2007, AI 2008a).

In Burma the majority of Karen people live in Irrawaddy, Pegu, Rangoon and Tenasserim Divisions. There are also large numbers of Karen people in Mon, Karenni and Karen states (KWO 2007).

Many Karen people are also internally displaced. In February 2004, the Committee for Internally Displaced Karen People (CIDKIP) recorded 300,000 IDPs in Burma, of which at least 150,000 are living in the relocation areas (CIDKIP 2004). At this time the CIDKIP also recorded 120,000 refugees living in camps in Thailand (CIDKIP 2004). As well as over 600,000 Karen who work as migrant workers in Thailand (KWO 2007).

As numbers in refugee camp increase, Thai authorities have moved to prevent further border crossings (KWO 2007). Therefore temporary camps are being established just across the boarder in Karen State. As these camps have no security they are particularly vulnerable to attack (AI 2008a).



Karen New Year celebration

Karen Cultural information

The Karen are a mix of at least 20 Karenic sub-groups that traditionally did not recognise each other as belonging to the same group (Keenan 2005). In fact the term Karen itself was derogatory until the late 18th Century (Rogers 2004). Consequently, the Karen form the second largest of 135 ethnic groups in Burma and amongst them there is a variety of languages, dialects, beliefs and customs (AI 2008a). The Karen have a government structure (mostly in exile in Thailand), a language and dialects, their own history, an army and a flag. In Burmese the Karen are known as *Kayinqand* and in Thai as *Yangq* (Rogers 2004).

The language spoken by the Karen is part of the Sino-Tibetan language group (Keenan 2005). While there are 12 different dialects the most widely spoken are either *Sgahaw* or *Pwo* (Queensland Health 2008). Around 80-85% of Karen are either *Sgahaw*, mostly Christian and animist living in the hills, or *Pwo*, mostly lowland Buddhists (HRW 2005). The Christian Karen population has suffered particularly intense persecution, including imprisonment and in some cases crucifixion for practicing their faith (Keenan 2005).

The Karen also have their own state which consists of 7 townships; *Pagan*, *Kawkareik*, *Kya-In* *Seik-Gyi*, *Myawaddy*, *Papun*, *Thandaung*, and *Hlaingbwe* (HRW 2005). However the Karen are spread throughout Burma with many living in the hilly eastern border region and Irrawaddy delta in Karen state, some in Kayah state (Karenni state), southern Shan State (MoBye region), Ayeyarwady Divisions (Irrawaddy Division), Southern Kawthoolei (Tenasserim Coastal Region) and western Thailand (Wikipedia 2009a).



The Karen are predominately rice farmers, however they also cultivate paddy, betel nut, vegetables and other crops (Keenan 2005). Consequently, around 70% of Karen live in rural rather than urban areas, 40% of which are plain dwellers and 60% of which live in the hills (Burma Ethnic Research Group 1998). This pastoral background has also influenced the types of food eaten by the Karen. The base of a meal is white rice, accompanied with a variety of meats and vegetables (Keenan 2005). Meals are highly spiced and eating is normally done communally. One particularly famous Karen dish is *aya uq* fermented fish pounded into a fish paste served with rice and vegetables (Keenan 2005).

Traditionally housing consisted of 20-30 families living in a communal bamboo house, raised on stilts (Keenan 2005). This was usually rebuilt each year, or when the village moved location to start a new harvest. Before choosing the building site chicken bones were consulted (Keenan 2005). Before leaving, offerings of four balls of rice, one white, one red, one yellow, and one blackened by charcoal, are carried to the centre of the house and spat on before leaving by every villager (Keenan 2005).



Costume and dress are also important in Karen culture, and can indicate a certain meaning. For example a type of white dress known as *Say Moe Wah* indicates that a girl is unmarried (Waddington 2002). A particular sub-group of the Karen, the Padaung is well known for the brass rings worn on their necks (Waddington 2002).

Drums are another important symbol of Karen culture. Of particular importance is the bronze drum known as *lo oh tra oh* which indicates wealth and importance of the owner (Keenan 2005). The drums are said to have originated from a tribe of head hunters called *Kwa* or *Swa*, or alternatively from the *Yu* people who inhabited Yunnan (Keenan 2005). The drum is cylindrical with the head of the drum slightly larger, and fashioned with concentric circles which surround a central star, around the edge situated at intervals are four or six frogs, often with one or two sitting on each others backs (Keenan 2005). The drum is carried by two small handles on the side of the drum. They vary in size from 18in to 30in.



Queensland Health 2008).

The Karen have been described as mostly an exceptionally gracious, gentle, hospitable, generous, courageous and faithful people who uphold qualities of honesty, purity, co-operative living and who are devout in their religious beliefs (Rogers 2004, Keenan 2005,

Some of the impacts of the struggle

The ongoing nature of the struggle for the Karen people has resulted in increasing numbers of internally displaced people (IDPs). At the end of 2007, the TBBC had recorded 503,000 IDPs in Burma (TBBC 2008). The majority have been forced from their homes as a result of Tatmadaws 'four cuts' counter insurgency strategy and the impact that this has had on local economies and livelihoods (HRW 2005). Continual forced relocations and displacement, interspersed with occasional periods of relative stability has become a fact of life for generations of poor villagers. As one



villager described:

'I have suffered from war since I knew myself, since I was a child. Always escaping because of war; from World War II, when the Japanese entered into Burma, during the British period and after 1948 when Burma got independence from the British. My life was always escaping from war and until today being old, 70 years.' (KWO 2007, p.8)



Karen IDP's

Karen Perceptions on Mental Health

We were unable to source any literature on the perception of mental health issues amongst Karen and the following is obtained from observations made by the STARTTS Karen Counsellors.

Karen understanding of mental health is diverse and varied depending upon educational, spiritual or geographical backgrounds. Karen have adopted most forms of western medicine since colonial times whilst still widely using traditional medicines, especially in rural and mountainous areas.

In general mental health/illness is seen as a case of %Dar Bluh+which roughly translates to Crazy people, people become Dar Bluh as a result of changes in the environment or spirit world.

Karen describe Crazy people as %talking to oneself+, %walking alone+ and, %eating grass or soil+or other similar abnormal behaviour and the person displaying this behaviour is viewed as someone %who is no longer able to cope %or %no longer knowing who they are+%or %they have lost themselves+.

The vast majority of Karen have lived a long period of time in the path of danger or a life full of risk. This has impacted upon the whole community and made the impacts of trauma hard for Karen people to identify themselves as so many people share similar symptoms or trauma reactions. This has also resulted in many people normalising the impacts of trauma within their lives where the abnormal has become %normal+.

When a person is having difficulties beyond what is %normal+they will seek the support of a respected higher status person such as an elder, pastor, teacher or monk, and on rare occasions from peer group members.

When asked about trauma history, Karen people will explain the story in a flat disciplined manner, sometimes with a smile on their face reciting the extra ordinary events like they are everyday occurrences and without the standard emotional signs associated with trauma that western counsellors are used to observing.

Emotional strength is a asset that Karen have adopted and it may make it difficult for mental health practitioners to identify reactions amongst Karen people.

Karen people themselves often say my suffering is less than someone else's, I was only raped twice but wasn't killed. This blunt non emotional description of traumatic events can make it hard for people to measure the level of distress or the degree to which the event is currently impacting on peoples lives.

Karen families have supported loved ones through difficult periods and use humour to debrief from the situations and rely heavily on spiritual beliefs and practices for support and strength. Counsellors and other helping professionals should ask if the Karen person is connected with the local support networks and assist in this process complementary to interventions offered.

The Karen community leaders would welcome research in this area.

Karen In NSW

Karen have been arriving in NSW since the late 1980 early 90s in small numbers with a noticeable increase from 2005 onwards. Many of the initial community members have become intensively involved in raising awareness, building support base and setting up infrastructure for people who arrived later.

The vast majority of Karen live in Southwest and Western Sydney with concentrations in the local government areas of Parramatta, Auburn, Bankstown, Fairfield and Holroyd.

Many Karen have settled in suburbs adjacent to railway lines, mainly due to cheaper housing as well as proximity to established community members.

According to DIACs settlement database there have been more than three thousand Karen speakers settled in Australia over the last ten year, it is estimated by community leaders to be approximately 800 people of Karen heritage living in NSW

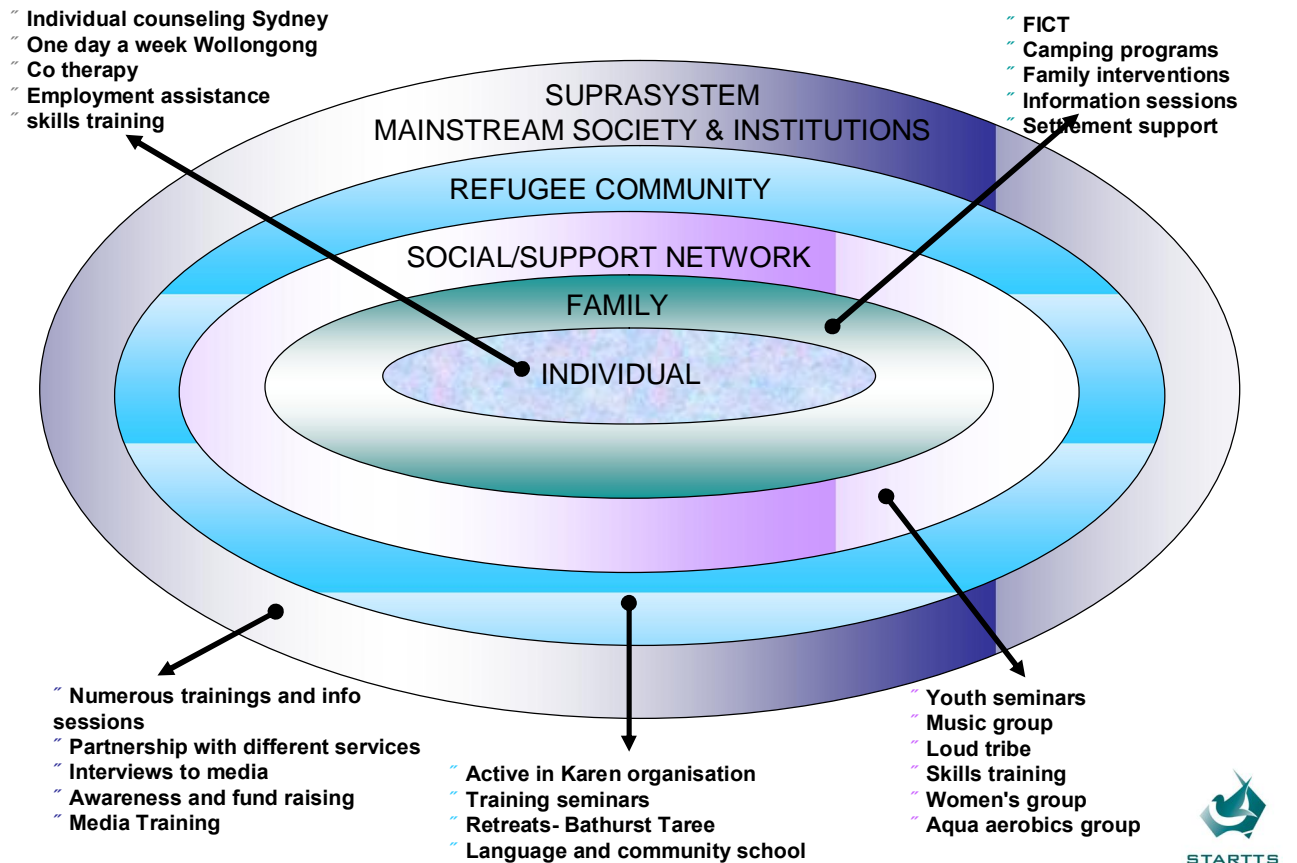
There are a number of Karen organisations all of which all have youth and women's groups attached to them, the organisations are mostly connected to places of worship although they are separate entities.

There is a Saturday School held at Fairfield Public school for Karen children on a weekly basis and there are a number of church based youth and women programs which are highly attended and organise series of outings and group programs.

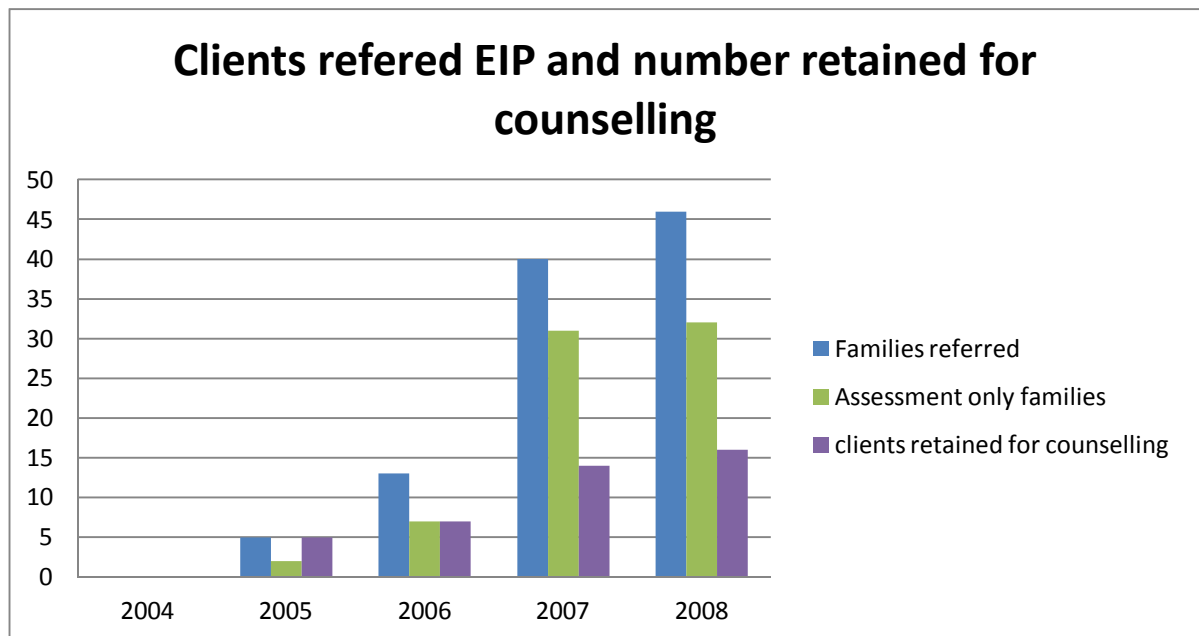
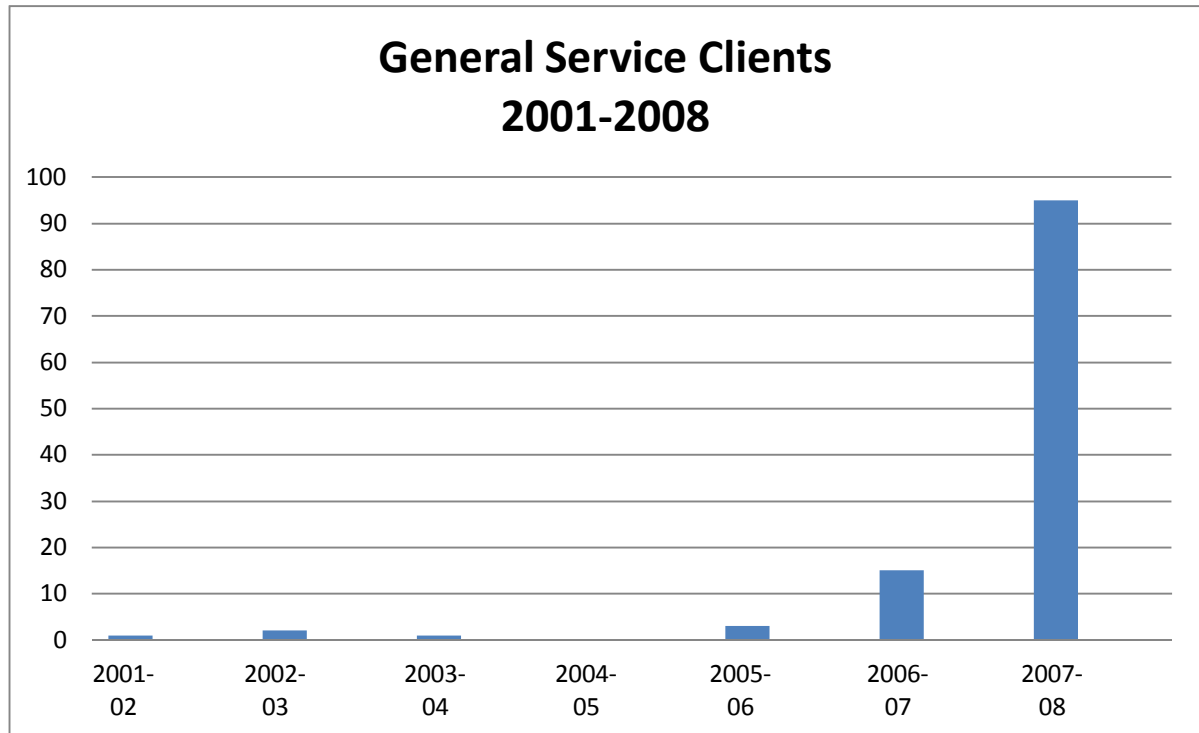
The Australian Karen Organisation has particularly engaged with service providers across Sydney and Australia.

STARTTS work with Karen

STARTTS systemic Approach with the Karen



Counselling programs



Community Development work

Women initiatives

Craft groups x 2

Health information
sessions x 3

Aqua therapy group x 1

Outings to

- Zoo,
- Blue mountains
- Circus.



Youth

Fundraising evening

National Youth seminar

Youth health information
sessions x 4

Saturday School



Mixed

Camping trips to Bathurst
x 3

Farming food security
group

Enterprise facilitation for
Karen buy out of Factory

Media training



**Families in cultural
transitions x 6**



**For further information on these activities or intervention visit STARTTS website
or contact STARTTS on 02 97941900**

The Community Consultation

STARTTS principles for consultation

- STARTTS is committed to community consultation on issues affecting the provision of our services.
- STARTTS is committed to the strengths-based approach to community consultations.
- STARTTS recognises that the communities we support are legitimate partners in the provision of services and that opportunities for community participation and involvement should be identified throughout the consultation process
- STARTTS will endeavour to involve all interested people in community consultations,
- STARTTS acknowledges that the impact of organised violence and state terrorism on individuals and their community's ability to self-advocate is taken into account and that this requires STARTTS time to develop trust, ensuring people feel safe to participate and people understand what the process is all about
- STARTTS needs to clearly communicate the actions it can take and then must demonstrate reliability and take those actions
- All consultation need to have a reporting back process that is relevant and appropriate for the community being consulted.
- STARTTS will be fair and consistent with all members of the community

STARTTS believes

- That as a service provider it needs to listen to the views of the communities it services
- That consultation should be timely in regards to the community's needs and stage of development
- That due to the diversity of our client group a range of consultation processes are made available and the consultation process should be developed with the needs of the community in mind.³
- That the consultation processes should be visible and readily accessible to the community

³ Elements adapted from the *NSW Health Department (1999) Community Consultation and Participation Resource Kit*

- That communication during the consultation process should be clear and simple and in a language that people can understand including but not limited to translation
- That communication should be honest and respond to and acknowledge the views of the community in a fair and respectful manner

STARTTS Aims of consulting with communities STARTTS has not had previous consultation with:

1. Ensuring STARTTS services are accessible and equitably provided to new communities through
2. Development of relationship and work on building trust with community
3. Increasing awareness of STARTTS and other relevant services
4. Developing a knowledge base of the new community i.e. needs, priorities, issues, strengths, resources, culture, structure, understanding of counselling and mental health
5. Identifying potential STARTTS training needs
6. Identifying potential STARTTS recruitment needs
7. Identifying barriers of access to STARTTS services
8. Identifying future directions for engagement with this community . further consultations, projects, strategies . development of an action plan



Summary of consultation process

STARTTS has been providing support and services to the Karen community since the early 1990s. These services have increased over time in relation to the ever increasing Karen Population in NSW culminating in 2007 with STARTTS employing two Burmese Trainee counsellors (Daniel Zu and Wah Wah Naw) as a method to improve STARTTS service delivery to Karen and other refugees from Burma and ensure high demand for services resulting from the composition of the humanitarian intake is addressed. Following their employment, it was decided to organise Karen community consultations

A letter of invitation was sent to all Karen community agencies and selected leaders in November 2008 to inform community leaders of STARTTS intent to hold a formal consultation with the Karen community and to request community leaders involvement in the working party. The general informal reply received was that community members were happy that STARTTS was organising a consultation and that STARTTS should just send the invitation for the consultation when the date was set and the community would help to promote.

A working group was set up and it was decided to hold the consultation after the Karen New year (dates) and before Easter in 2009. A date was set and then changed to accommodate a health information session being held by the NSW Refugee Health Service.

Granville Town Hall was chosen as a venue for the consultation as the community was already aware of the location and stated they would feel comfortable meeting there.

An external catering service was chosen rather than relying on community providers as the working group felt it would show that STARTTS wanted to consult with women as well as men and traditionally women leaders in the community would do the catering and men would do the talking.

It was also decided by the working group to have the food first and the consultation second as sharing a meal together would be a good way to break down barriers and would allow community members to mingle with STARTTS management informally prior to the formal discussions.

A Thai restaurant in Granville was chosen as it could deliver and set up, thus removing any traditional roles and treating all participants equally.

It was difficult to get an interpreter through the TIS and CRC as the interpreters were also community leaders and elders and were invited to attend. This resulted in Daniel Zu and Wah Wah Naw doubling as interpreters for the consultation which was unfortunate as the roles of Bi cultural counsellors is not one of interpreting but of providing counselling.

Consultations Agenda



STARTTS

Karen Community Consultation

Saturday 28th March 2009

Granville town Hall

Time: 6.00 – 9.30pm

Agenda

6.00pm Registration and Light Meal

6.30pm Welcome and Overview

Welcome to Country

Overview of STARTTS

STARTTS Early Intervention Program

STARTTS General Services

**Community development and other
interventions with Karen**

Questions

7.40pm Small Groups

8.50pm Large Group feedback

9.00pm Evaluation

9.10pm Word of thanks

9.15pm Close

Goals of the consultation

The goals of the consultation were:

- to provide information on STARTTS services and how they have worked with Karen individuals, families and communities
- to formally document feedback about STARTTS and feed that into future planning
- to explore Karen community perceptions about trauma, its consequences and appropriate treatment and rehabilitation strategies
- to explore and document any other issues significant to Karen community

Consultation questions

1. STARTTS Services

- What does Karen community think about STARTTS?
- When do people get referred to STARTTS and why?
- What happens after people are referred?
- What aspects of STARTTS work is your community satisfied and why?
- Where can we improve and how?
- What additional services should we provide to cater for the Karen community needs?

2. Counseling

- In your community, who helps people when they experience sadness or when they do not feel well emotionally?
- How would you describe counseling?
- How can we explain counseling?
- How can we change what we do so that it is more appropriate for the community?
- What is health?
- What is mental health?

2. Community issues relevant to STARTTS

- What do you perceive are the greatest strengths within Karen community?
- What are some of the difficulties torture and trauma survivors in Karen community is experiencing at the moment?
- How did the community try to address those difficulties in the past?
- How did other agencies try to address those?
- What worked and what did not?
- How did your specific community's strengths help with those difficulties?
- What can STARTTS do to help with the community's initiatives?
- If everything was well with your community how would you know? What would you see? How would people interact? What resources would there be within the community?

Summary

The participants were divided into 4 different groups, Men's group, Women's group, English/Leaders group and Youth group.

Each group was given the consultation questions . Each group had two facilitators and a scribe. The discussion was documented and each group was encouraged to present a summary of their discussion.

Feedback from small groups

In summary, all groups were happy with the services they received from STARTTS, especially with the group activities being undertaken by Daniel and Wah Wah and through FICT. Most people had come in contact with STARTTS previously through a group (including FICT) or through the EIP program. The participants were keen to learn more about STARTTS services and expressed gratitude to STARTTS for being willing to work alongside Karen community to meet its needs.

The English speaking community leaders group had many questions for the STARTTS management and an attempt was made to answer some of those questions. The men's and women's groups followed the questions provided and the youth group used the story-boarding technique.

The raw data for each group is included as an appendix and below is a summary of the findings from the small group discussions. I suggest you use a consultations photo here as you have already used this one above.



Main issues raised

1. What does Karen community think about STARTTS?

The Karen community expressed satisfaction with the services they received from STARTTS, in particular the service they received by **working in partnership** with the two Karen Counsellors.

%STARTTS has always treated us with respect and STARTTS management and staff attend when we invite them to community gatherings.+

All groups agreed that Karen people want **assistance to develop skills so they can provide assistance to each other** in particular they would like to receive an Accidental Counsellor training.

%Counselling is walking, working and being together with clients+

The groups raised that they would like **%more assistance with family issues**", in particular more FICT groups and programs that help families to settle and make adjustments in the new country

The FICT program was viewed as very useful for Karen people and many people enjoyed the program and saw it as a suitable intervention especially during the transition time.

The community leaders also appreciated capacity building and logistical support provided by STARTTS (eg. access to the STARTTS hall, bus driver training and access to STARTTS bus)

This is a whole new theme and it might need its own heading i.e.. Karen community perceptions of trauma and appropriate interventions or something like that.

The participants stated that trauma is very common amongst the Karen community. All members of the community have lived through the ongoing civil war and associated human rights abuses. This makes it difficult for Karen people to highlight a single event or single period of time when trauma was not occurring.

Thus, it appears that trauma has been **%normalised and naturalised+** over the 60 years of struggle and the way the community has dealt with it has been to **%not talk about it and to leave the past in the past+**. Elders within the community have come some way to discussing trauma but the youth group stated that they **%want to forget+**.

The community would like STARTTS to develop a program or training to explore **the "normal" or other (post trauma) side of life. It is likely that is one of the reasons FICT Program is so well received in the community.**

2. Counseling

%STARTTS counselling is as a place where you can go and express your problems and get help with your problems+

%The Karen are not used to western counselling models. We normally seek support from individual elders and leaders+

The main point raised by all groups was that counselling without practical assistance carries little meaning for most Karen people. While they felt happy to have someone who they can share their emotions with, they also felt that was not enough to assist recovery.

The **importance of case work combined with counselling** was expressed as an important method of engaging the Karen in counselling,

Group interventions and group sessions were perceived as more useful than individual sessions to begin with and it was suggested that individual sessions might be useful for people who want further individual support.

The community would like **More information on what is counselling and how it can help** in a variety of formats include written and verbal presentations. In these sessions it would be useful to have clear explanations of what is counselling and how it can help.

Most participants suggested that psychoeducation interventions such as focus groups or discussion groups on coping with symptoms may be more useful than individual counselling

As %Mental health is viewed as a sickness or as a disease+, the participants suggested that information sessions or discussion on counselling and other mental health concepts would be welcomed

3. General community issues relevant to STARTTS and other service providers

Self determination and self sufficiency was identified as one of the strongest themes in this section. The Karen people like to provide assistance to other Karen members. They find it difficult to seek support from outside of the community due in part to a sense of pride - %we have received so much help from Australia, we don't want to bring our problems to others+

Community would like other services to **work alongside the Karen** the way STARTTS has, i.e. not to just offer a service but to come and %share the journey+ with the community. People expressed this as a two-way learning exchange, which would enhance the sense of pride in Karen community. Gary . you may need to give practical examples of what this may mean!

The community would like STARTTS to assist them with **networking with other service providers and agencies**.

It was also raised that it would be helpful for all **service providers to recruit Karen bi-cultural staff** to assist in creating the bridges between community and services.

The Karen have had a positive experience with English language providers and their English skills have increased but their confidence has not. The community would like opportunities for **increased English language tuition and opportunities for practical conversation**

Many Karen arrivals have come from a rural agricultural background and would like to seek employment in **working on the land especially farming. The community would like STARTTS support with this.**

There are many **single parent families** amongst the Karen and many young people growing up without fathers. Parenting issues were also raised particularly in relation to parenting toddlers and pre-schoolers as some parents were very concerned about their children's behaviour.

The increasing cost of housing and **housing stress** is impacting across the community. The increasing cost of rent and the transition from IHSS to private rental market is causing financial difficulties for community members. The participants expressed an interest in learning more about NSW Housing products and services.

Lack of employment opportunities and pathways for Karen were highlighted by the participants: *'We have skills but we don't know the right way to seek employment'*. The participants uniformly expressed a willingness to work and an interest in obtaining employment in their area of skills.

A recent issue identified post-consultation was the community's **lack of awareness of legal rights and responsibilities**. This information would be welcomed during the IHSS period or through the AMEP time.

Finally, the young people would like to organise a specific youth consultation where their needs can be highlighted across the community and for them to get to know other STARTTS as well as other relevant services.

Karen Community Consultation implementation plan

Item raised	Strategy	By whom	When
What does Karen community think about STARTTS?			
Assistance to develop skills so the Karen people can provide assistance to each other	Promote STARTTS training calendar to community leaders for distribution	Training coordinator	Annually
	Promote Western Sydney Community Forum to Karen Community.	CDPO	Completed
	Run two Karen specific trainings per year . particularly the Accidental Counsellor training	Karen BCC and relevant staff	Underway and Ongoing
	Offer student placements to Karen community members	Student placement worker	Dependant on offers and availability
	Model skills to Karen community members and participate in planning meetings.	All workers working with Karen	Underway and Ongoing
	Include Karen organisations in the CiCT Program	CiCT Project Officer	Following the recruitment to the relevant position.

Item raised	Strategy	By whom	When
The Karen community is expressed satisfaction with the services they received from STARTTS in particular the service they received by working in partnership with the two Karen Counsellors.	Continue to work in partnership with Karen organisations when doing activities or groups for Karen Continuation of Karen positions at STARTTS	CDPO, Karen BCC STARTTS CEO	Underway and Ongoing July 2010
Self determination and self sufficiency.	Provide capacity building to Karen on request Attend and participate in working groups with Karen communities Promote capacity building training to community Organise Accidental Counsellor training for Karen community.	CDPO, CiCT Project Officer Karen BCC CDPO CDPO Karen BCC CS coordinator, Karen BCC	Underway and Ongoing Underway and Ongoing Underway and Ongoing May/June 2010
STARTTS has always treated us with respect and STARTTS management and staff attend when we invite them to community gatherings.+	Continue to attend Karen functions and events	Karen BCC, CDPO, STARTTS Management attend Karen New year	Underway and Ongoing

Item raised	Strategy	By whom	When
More assistance with family issues, in particular more FICT groups and programs that help families to settle and make adjustments in the new country	Continue to run FICT groups at least twice a year for Karen	FICT Project Officer	Underway and Ongoing
	Run 1-2 Karen TIPS groups per year	FICT Project Officer	Post-FICT
	Pilot other family programs with Karen	Clinical Services Coordinator	2010
	Investigate the running of Family conflict programs with Karen	Karen BCC	August 2010
High levels of chronic multiple traumas in Karen community as well as acceptance of trauma as a normal life event thus preventing help-seeking.	Continue to promote the General services component of STARTTS.	Karen BCC	Underway and Ongoing
	Develop a pamphlet on trauma and ongoing effects in Karen	Karen BCC	Completed
	Psychoeducation groups for Karen people	Clinical Services Coordinator, EIP and BCCs	2009
	Instigate research into trauma with Karen	Clinical Services coordinator	Underway and Ongoing
	Highlight trauma reactions when they occur	Clinical supervisors and Karen BCC	Underway and Ongoing
	Promote STARTTS relaxation CD and investigate translating into Karen and Burmese	Clinical Services Coordinator Karen BCC	2010

Item raised	Strategy	By whom	When
STARTTS to implement a program focussing on non-trauma+ aspects of life.	Continue to encourage Karen young people to participate in STARTTS youth program	Karen STARTTS BCC, Youth staff.	Underway and Ongoing
	Organise outings and social activities on women group	Karen BCC	Underway and Ongoing
	Assist Karen youth with running their own activities	BCCs and Youth staff	Ongoing
	Continue with FICT	FICT Project Officer	Ongoing
Investigate opportunities for Karen people to receive sufficient information about STARTTS prior to referral	Discuss this with ACL and develop strategies	EIP Coordinator	
2. Counseling			
The importance of case work combined with counselling was identified as an important method of engaging the Karen in counselling,	Conduct a clinical presentation and report findings to counsellors	Karen BCC and CDPO	2010

Item raised	Strategy	By whom	When
Importance of group interventions	Run 2 x women's groups	Karen BCC	Some groups completed in 2009 and Recommence 2010
	Run youth seminars	Karen BCC	Ongoing
	Hold 2 FICT groups per annum + TIPS groups	FICT Project Officer	Ongoing
	Psychoeducation groups	Clinical staff . both EIP and GS supported by the Clinical Team	2009 . 2010
	Men's group	Karen BCC + CDPO?	2010
More information on what is counselling and how it can help in a variety of formats.	Psychoeducation groups	Clinical staff in EIP and GS supported by the Clinical Team	2010
	A pamphlet on counselling in Karen	Public Affairs Coordinator and Karen BCC	January 2010
	Include short talks on counselling at Karen events	All STARTTS workers who talk at Karen functions	Underway and Ongoing

Item raised	Strategy	By whom	When
<p>Focus groups or discussion groups on coping with symptoms</p>	<p>Identify what the most troubling symptoms are as far as the Karen clients are concerned.</p> <p>Include discussions of those symptoms in the above mentioned psychoeducation groups.</p> <p>Investigate running an anger management group for Karen clients.</p>	<p>EIP Counsellor and Karen BCC with Clinical Team support and other clinical staff.</p>	<p>July 2010</p>

Item raised	Strategy	By whom	When
<p>Mental health viewed as a sickness or as a disease+ Information sessions or discussion on counselling and other mental health concepts would be welcomed</p>	<p>Translate and distribute mental health pamphlet into Karen Various strategies as described above.</p>	<p>Karen BCC</p>	<p>Underway</p>

Item raised	Strategy	By whom	When
3. Community issues relevant to STARTTS			
Community would like other services to work alongside the Karen	Prepare a Karen Case study for CD training of STARTTS	CDPO and Karen BCC	March 2010
	Write articles on Activities	CDPO supported by the CD Evaluation officer	Underway and Ongoing
	Promote consultation report	All	December 2009
	Assist Karen community to develop a training package for service providers + protocols on how exactly service providers should work with them.	CDPO	September 2010
	Ongoing support with systems advocacy through training and helping community develop networks with other potential allies re: overseas issues.	CDPO	Ongoing

Item raised	Strategy	By whom	When
Networking with other service	Promote AKO and other Karen groups to service providers	All STARTTS with contact with Karen	Underway and Ongoing
	Support Fairfield MRC and HHPMRC workers	CDPO	Underway and Ongoing
	Make connections with mainstream services providers	All STARTTS with contact with Karen	Ongoing
	Facilitate Karen attendance at relevant service provider networks	CDPO	Ongoing
Service providers to recruit Karen bi cultural staff to assist in creating the bridges between community and services.	Promote success of Karen bicultural Counsellor model for STARTTS	All STARTTS with contact with Karen Especially senior management	Ongoing
	Assist Karen community with systems advocacy to achieve this	CDPO	Ongoing
	Support Karen youth and others to pursue careers in the community services sector	CDPO	Ongoing
The community would like opportunities for increased English language tuition and practical conversation groups	Engage with opportunities that allow for this.	Karen BCC CDPO	Underway and Ongoing
	Give feedback to AMEP providers . encourage Karen to meet with them.	CDPO	February 2010

Item raised	Strategy	By whom	When
Many Karen arrivals have come from a rural agricultural background and would like to seek employment in working on the land especially farming. The community would like STARTTS support with this.	Work with relevant stake holders Work with opportunities such as Pathways to primary industries and Food Security project to make this occur	CDPO Karen BCC CDPO Karen BCC	Underway and Ongoing Underway and Ongoing
There is a lot of single parent families amongst the Karen and many young people growing up without fathers. Parenting issues Connect Karen parents with relevant support services	Run women's group targeting single parents Referral of young people to appropriate programs. TIPS groups Information session on parenting services Tour of Karitane	Karen BCC (EIP) FICT Project Officer Could do this in collaboration with HHP MRC on a Friday when Saw Vic is here	2010 Underway and Ongoing 2010 2010

Item raised	Strategy	By whom	When
The increasing cost of housing and housing stress is impacting across the community. The increasing cost of rent and the transition from IHSS to normal rental market is causing financial difficulties on community members.	Raise issue with housing forum and with IHSS consortium.	CS coordinator EIP coordinator	2010
	Organise for Karen workers and leaders to meet with NSW Housing. Help them prepare for the meeting including thinking about solutions.	CS coordinator	2010
	Housing options information session for Karen	Karen BCC	2010
Karen need more Employment opportunities and pathways	Promote employment pathways days that occur	Karen BCC	Completed and ongoing
	Work with FECAP Employment pathways expo	CDPO Karen BCC	Underway and Ongoing
	Link Karen with Enterprise Facilitator.	Karen BCC	Underway and Ongoing
Lack of awareness of legal rights and responsibilities , this information would be welcomed during the IHSS period or through AMEP time.	Promote Department of Fair trading courses	CDPO Karen BCC	Underway and Ongoing
	Information sessions on specific legal issues as identified by community members	PIAC worker Karen BCC	2011

Item raised	Strategy	By whom	When
The young people would like STARTTS to organise a specific youth consultation where their needs can be highlighted across the community and for them to get to know other services as well as STARTTS.	Organise youth consultation for Karen Young People	Youth Staff	2010/11
Access of Karen young people to all STARTTS youth activities and projects.	Referrals of young men to STARTTS boysq camps and young women to the girlsq camps.	Karen BCCs and other relevant staff.	Ongoing
	Further promote Capoeira Angola amongst Karen	Karen BCC Capoeira Angola staff	Ongoing
	Participate in sporting events organised by local youth services	Youth staff to inform Karen BCCs for promotion and involvement	Underway and ongoing.
Information about education pathways for young people	Organise an info session for Karen youth with Career advisors.	Karen BCC CDPO	Ongoing

Item raised	Strategy	By whom	When
Youth and others want to meet and get to know other communities.	Facilitate Karen involvement in various multicultural activities run by local services.	Karen BCC, Youth Staff	
	Facilitate exchange of cultural dances and between Karen and other communities.	Karen BCC	
	Encourage Karen to participate in sporting activities organised by other communities.	Karen BCC	
Difficulties with Homework and assessment tasks.	Facilitate Karen youth access to existing homework assistance and free tutoring services.	Karen BCC and School liaison officer	Under way and ongoing

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