



# ITUC REPORT

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## "Burma's Children: a Generation Sacrificed"

"Overview of the impact  
of human and trade union  
rights abuses on the  
situation of children in  
Burma"

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) represents 175 million workers, 40 percent of whom are women, in 155 countries and territories and has 311 national affiliates.

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# Contents

I. Introduction	7
II. Burma: essential data and statistics	8
III. 1962 – 2009: 47 years of dictatorship	8
IV. Standard of living in Burma	11
4.1) General remarks	11
4.2) Example salaries	11
V. Education in Burma	13
5.1 Junta policy forces one of the world's lowest school enrolment rates	13
5.2 Alternative solutions	17
5.3 Higher education	20
VI. Child labour	22
VII. Forced child labour for the authorities	26
VIII. Health	30
IX. Conclusions	32
X. Endnotes	33



# I. Introduction

Burma's population is young<sup>1</sup>: the under 14s represent approximately 25 percent of the population<sup>2</sup>, and the under 18s around 40 percent<sup>3</sup>. The country's ruling military dictatorship has made no effort to prioritise child development and well-being, however. The Burmese government allocates over 40 percent of the state budget to its army<sup>4</sup>— when no outside threat exists — leaving a mere pittance for such key sectors as education and health care. Consequently, these two public sectors are now seriously underperforming and are subsidised by citizens themselves, when they are already some of the world's poorest.

The disastrous economic situation that has resulted from the policies of Burma's successive military governments in recent decades places most parents in a position where they must rely on their children going out to work to feed their families. The worst forms of child labour are rife in Burma, whether this is in the army, domestic servitude, prostitution or elsewhere. Neither are children spared the forced labour imposed by the military every day on hundreds of thousands of Burmese.

Since the military dictatorship will accept no criticism, it is extremely dangerous to tackle matters relating to social rights, human rights, or children's rights in public. The junta's censorship prevents the Burmese media from publishing reports showing the realities of life in the country. According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma), there are over 2,100 political prisoners in Burma. Among these are thirty or so trade union activists, sentenced to between five years and life imprisonment. Many have been, or are still being tortured. This brutal repression of all independent trade union activities prevents male and female Burmese workers from demanding higher pay, better working conditions, and an end to child and forced labour.

This report aims to provide an insight into growing children's rights abuses in Burma, and their relation to widespread trade union rights abuses in the country. It follows from a survey carried out in Burma during August and September 2009 in which meetings were held with tens of stakeholders in the child development sector: teachers, parents, children, undercover trade union activists, doctors, social workers, international organisations, etc. We would like to thank them for their time, especially since they took a risk talking to us about the realities of life in their country. So as not to place these individuals in any further danger, we have changed the names of those wishing to remain anonymous and, in some cases, we have not revealed the exact location of our meetings.

## II. Burma: essential data and statistics

**Population:** 50 million

**Capital:** Nay Pyi Taw

**Largest city:** Rangoon (renamed Yangon by the military junta)

**Area:** 676,552 km<sup>2</sup>

**Government:** SPDC (State Peace and Development Council)-dominated military dictatorship

**Head of State:** General Than Shwe

**Life expectancy at birth:** female 64 years, male 59 years

**Adult literacy:** 84.7% (official figure)

**GDP per capita:** \$2,704 (Economist Intelligence Unit estimate for 2008)

**Infant mortality rate (under 1) (2007):** 74 ‰

**Under-5 mortality rate (2007):** 103 ‰

**Urban population:** 30%

**Currency:** kyat (1 US dollar = 5.51 kyats at the official rate and 1,150 kyats on the black market at August 2009)

**Religions:** Buddhism (85%), Animism (5%), Christianity (4.5%), Islam (4%), Hinduism (1%)

## III. 1962 - 2009: 47 years of dictatorship

Burma gained independence from the United Kingdom in January 1948, following lengthy negotiations led by General Aung San, who had been assassinated six months earlier. A more or less democratic parliament was established, in spite of action by a number of rebel movements. In 1962, the government was overthrown in a military coup d'état led by General Ne Win. The new regime pursued policies under the "Burmese Way to Socialism", which led to economic disaster, coupled with drastically reduced freedoms. In 1987 and 1988, large-scale protests called for Ne Win's resignation. Ne Win retired in July 1988, too late to put a halt to the popular unrest. A series of demonstrations followed, notably that of 8 August 1988 (8/8/88), when soldiers opened fire on the crowd of unarmed protestors. We will never know the exact number of casualties resulting from this crazed act of repression, but it is certainly in the thousands. The military remained in power and in September 1988 the newly-formed State Law and Order Restoration Council [SLORC] declared martial law. Abandoning the "Burmese Way to Socialism", it opened the economy to the private sector and foreign investment.



Elections were held in 1990 for the first time in 30 years. The outcome was a convincing win for the democratic party (National League for Democracy) formed by Aung San's daughter, Aung San Suu Kyi, which, in spite of a series of military manoeuvres, took 392 of the 485 seats. The military failed to respect this outcome, storming the NLD offices and arresting its main leaders. Over the 1990s, the dictatorship further consolidated its position through key victories over Karen and Mon rebel groups along the Thai border, and ceasefire agreements with other ethnic guerrilla groups. Aung San Suu Kyi has been awarded many highly-prized international honours, including the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991, but has been unable to receive them in person under house arrest. In 1997, the SLORC was restructured as the SPDC (State Peace and Development Council), but in practice nothing changed.

Aung San Suu Kyi was released from house arrest on 6 May 2002. On 30 May 2003, however, during a campaign tour in the north of the country, her convoy was attacked by the regime's militia. Many of her supporters were killed or injured in the attack. Aung San Suu Kyi managed to escape but was arrested soon after. She was again placed under house arrest in September 2003.

September 2007 saw a large popular uprising against the military regime, instigated by Buddhist monks and supported by workers, students and civil opposition activists. The protests were sparked by a 100 percent increase in fuel prices, which impacted the costs of transport and basic foodstuffs. The movement, known as the Saffron Revolution, came to an end in a crack-down by the armed forces on 26 and 27 September, resulting in hundreds of dead and injured and the arrests of thousands of people.

In May 2009, the visit of an American tourist to Aung San Suu Kyi's residence led to her reimprisonment. After a mock trial, Aung San Suu Kyi was first sentenced to three years' imprisonment and hard labour for breaching the terms of her house arrest, a sentence later reduced to 18 months' house arrest. This travesty of a trial was aimed mainly at ensuring that the key figure in the Burmese opposition could play no part in the forthcoming national "elections", due to be held in 2010.

The election the junta promises to hold in 2010 is one step in a political reform plan launched in 2003. The pretentiously titled Roadmap to Democracy has been unilaterally led by the military regime, without any real consultation with political opponents or representatives of ethnic minorities in the country. The junta held a referendum on a new Constitution in May 2008, just days after part of the country's south was devastated by Cyclone Nargis, causing over 140,000 fatalities. The expectation was that the referendum would be postponed to allow cyclone victims time to reorganise themselves, but the military stood firm and refused to receive foreign aid. According to the government, the referendum saw a 98.1 percent turnout, with 92 percent of registered voters voting to accept the Constitution. It is nevertheless impossible to determine exactly how many Burmese really supported this plan because the pro-constitution propaganda was so extreme in the weeks preceding the vote.

The new Constitution contains a number of measures that leave little doubt as to the military junta's intention to remain in power after the election. Within it, 25 percent of parliamentary seats are allocated to the military, as well as entire branches of executive and judiciary authority. It assures impunity for the perpetrators of past human rights abuses and grants the military the right to suspend all fundamental rights in "a state of emergency".

## IV. Standard of living in Burma

For the purposes of understanding the realities described in this report more clearly, it seems helpful to provide a brief overview of the standard of living for the vast majority of Burmese.

### 4.1) General remarks

According to a report published in April 2008 by the ITUC, a UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) survey found that 95 percent of Burma's population live on less than a dollar per day<sup>5</sup> and 90 percent live on less than 65 cents a day<sup>6</sup>. A report on Burma's economy published a month earlier by the National Council of the Union of Burma<sup>7</sup>, however, suggests that in early 2008 an average family of four living in Rangoon required close to three dollars a day to achieve a minimum subsistence level (basic foods and lodging, not including schooling, health care costs, etc.).

It is to redress this great discrepancy between the cost of living and average income per inhabitant that very many Burmese are forced to send their children out to work or send a family member abroad to find work there. Over 3 million Burmese have become migrant workers in this way (mainly in Thailand), but the current global financial crisis means they have less money to send back to their families.

### 4.2) Example salaries:

When asked their income level, most Burmese quote an approximate daily amount because they have no fixed income and no work contract. Consequently they may go several days with no income at all. Below are some examples of adult Burmese worker salaries (1 dollar was worth 1,150 kyats on the black market as at August 2009):

- **Female construction worker:** 1,000 kyats per day (0.86 dollars)
- **Farm day labourer:** 1,500 kyats per day
- **Female worker at small rural factory:** 500 kyats per day
- **Carpenter in Rangoon region:** 4,500 kyats per day, or 1,800 if carpenter's assistant
- **Assistant lorry driver:** 2,000 kyats per day
- **Worker at small ironworks in Rangoon region:** from 2,500 to 3,500 kyats per day
- **Fishery worker:** 2,000 kyats per day
- **Unskilled female worker at factory in an industrial zone in Rangoon region:** 35 dollars per month (for 48-hour to 74-hour working weeks)
- **Qualified manager:** from 100,000 to 150,000 kyats per month



### **The place where you look forward to your husband coming back**

“Many people are without fixed employment. On the outskirts of Rangoon, a family gets up early, prepares food for breakfast and lunch, then they clean the plates and take them, along with covers, clothes and a mosquito net, to someone who gives them money in exchange. The father then goes to Rangoon with this money to look for work. The mother and child wait for him to come back. When he comes home, if he has enough money to buy back the things pawned in the morning, they can recover them. Sometimes the man does not come back, because he is ashamed of not having found work in town. In one industrial zone, there is a place called Lin-Hmaw-Gone which means “the place where you look forward to your husband coming back”, because many people go there in the morning to the local pawnbroker.”

(From an interview with Maung Maung, General Secretary of the Federation of Trade Unions of Burma, published on the ITUC website at <http://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article3833&lang=en>)

## V. Education in Burma

### 5.1) Junta policy forces one of the world's lowest school enrolment rates

In theory, under Burmese law schooling is free and compulsory up to primary school fourth standard (only). In practice, an NGO working in the child development sector in Burma has revealed that 4 million children aged between 5 and 13 years were not attending school in 2006<sup>8</sup> and, according to UNICEF, less than 55 percent of Burma's children fail to complete the primary cycle<sup>9</sup>. An economist specialising in Burma at Sydney's Macquarie University suggests that the Burmese education system has deteriorated to such an extent that illiteracy levels in rural areas are now double those recorded under British colonial rule<sup>10</sup>.

This disastrous situation can be explained by multiple factors linked directly to the policies of the military junta. Below is a (non-exhaustive) list of some of the main factors.

#### A) Spending on state education is far too low

A report published in 2008 by the ITUC exposes inconsistencies in the way the military junta runs Burma's economy: "The Burmese government spends 0.5 percent of its GDP on health and 0.9 percent on education, far less than any other government in the region. By comparison, Cambodia and Laos, among the poorest countries in Asia, spend 3.5 percent and 3.3 percent respectively. On the other hand, Burma's defence budget, at 40 percent of the GDP, is over 28 times higher than health and education combined"<sup>11</sup>.

The Burmese military, Tatmadaw, numbers around 400,000 troops, making it South-East Asia's largest army in terms of personnel. Yet the country enjoys peaceful relations with every single one of its neighbours. The army has no role other than to crush opposition forces in Burma and facilitate the "running" of the country by the junta.

In addition to civilian schools, the SPDC<sup>12</sup> has established a primary and secondary education network exclusively for the children of high-ranking military officials. Enrolment fees for the cream of these well-equipped schools are well beyond the means of most Burmese. In these schools, pupils are taught that the army is the country's "saviour", a saviour that must always be obeyed, and never criticised.

#### B) Pitiful teacher salaries lead to a private lesson-centric system

In the absence of trade union freedoms, Burma's teachers have no option but to accept government pay. In 2007, public sector salaries rose, but were still far from meeting the rising cost of living. Salaries currently stand at around 27,000

to 30,000 kyats (23 to 26 dollars) per month for primary school teachers, and around 35,000 to 45,000 kyats (30 to 39 dollars) per month for teachers in secondary schools.

Faced with salaries which are far too low to offer them a decent standard of living, most of Burma's teachers resort to a "tuition fee" system, which translates into private lessons. Most primary and secondary schoolteachers merely touch on theory in normal school hours to encourage pupils to attend their private evening or weekend classes. Lessons are held at the teacher's home or at the home of a parent. Here, children can ask questions and do exercises.

Pupils whose parents cannot afford these lessons feel discriminated against and risk becoming demotivated. The cost of these lessons represents a sizeable chunk of parents' incomes. A pupil at a small state primary will require an investment of between 1,000 and 3,000 kyats per month. At lower secondary school, fees range from 3,000 to 5,000 kyats per month, per subject. At upper secondary school, parents must pay between 10,000 and 50,000 kyats per month, per subject. Teachers at the best-performing state schools in major towns can demand much higher prices, but these schools are only attended by children of the most well-off families.

Pupils who pay for these lessons are much more likely to pass examinations, either because they are favoured by teachers, or because they have a better understanding of lesson material, or because they receive exam questions beforehand. The vast majority of parents select a few of the most important subjects. "Teachers know that not all parents can afford these lessons, so it is possible to pass exams without taking private classes, but doing so requires more effort and there is no chance of a high grade," explains one opponent living in Burma. "Teaching in Burma is mainly by rote. Children taking private lessons are given the exact wording for the answer to this or that question. If they answer exam questions accurately in this way, they are given the highest grade. If their answer is formulated differently they are given a lower grade, even if the content of the answer is in fact correct."

This private lesson system is akin to students buying their qualifications. The practice is widespread in major towns like Rangoon. Fees vary according to the quality of the school. "Teachers count on receiving this supplementary income stream and, although they might sometimes be unaware of it, they will not treat pupils who cannot afford it in the same way," explains a social worker in Rangoon. Pressure to adhere to this "tuition fee" system appears to be lower in rural areas, firstly because of the lower cost of living, and secondly because the inhabitants of rural areas are generally poorer and therefore have less money to spend on private lessons. Furthermore, teachers in rural areas may be more committed: if they are from the same village as the children, and if they know their families well, they are more motivated towards assisting these children in their education. This is not so much the case in large towns, where teachers also run the risk of being transferred from one district to another, severing any chance of long-term contact with the community.

### C) Miscellaneous school costs are too high for parental incomes

In addition to private lessons, parents must also bear the costs of a whole range of back-to-school expenses, including textbooks, exercise books, uniforms, school cleaning/maintenance, computer equipment, exam papers, sports, etc. Altogether, schooling can cost up to 4,000 or even 5,000 kyats per month at primary level.

Parents are often sceptical about what happens to the money they pay to their children's schools – money for maintenance costs, for example – but in a country where the slightest challenge can result in a lengthy prison sentence, they tend not to ask questions. Parents prefer to pay up or, if they are unable to do so, withdraw their children from school. A Mon community human rights defence organisation cites one such example: on 15 August this year, the 1,500 pupils of No.1 Basic Education Middle School in Ye town, Mon State, were told they would have to pay 9,000 kyats over the school year in 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> standard and 16,500 kyats in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> standard. One student explained how pupils were told that the fee was for buying recycling bins and water jugs. The NGO estimates that the school has collected over 4.5 million kyats in this way. It estimates the cost of a bin at around 3,000 kyats per unit, and the cost of a jug at between 1,500 and 4,500 kyats. By the end of September, only a few bins had been purchased.<sup>13</sup>

In the poorest communities, however, some school boards are conscious that parents cannot afford all the extra expenses that parents pay elsewhere. In a Pa-O village around 7 kilometres from Inthein, Shan State, the primary school does not require parents to purchase uniforms. Parents pay just 1,500





### Gender discrimination

As in most developing countries, parents who are unable to afford to send all their children to school will send their boys and keep girls at home for training in household tasks. This discrimination is already reprehensible in itself but is also to the detriment of the whole of society since it is known that the quality of care given by a mother to her child is positively correlated to her level of education.

kyats per year to enrol their child and also contribute to subsistence costs for teachers who come to live in the village.

### D) Poor quality of teaching

Overcrowded classrooms make teaching difficult and demotivate pupils who require support (which also explains the need to resort to private lessons). Classes of fifty to seventy pupils are commonplace in Burma, and classes of eighty are by no means unusual. This situation can be attributed largely to a paucity of schools and schoolteachers. According to Education International, where parents have been unable to pay for private lessons, teachers have been forced to find other employment<sup>14</sup>, which exacerbates the teacher shortage.

The paucity of schools is yet more striking at secondary level. In the Pa-O village mentioned above, for example, just one child in fifteen is schooled beyond the primary cycle, because the closest secondary school is at Inthein, a two-hour walk from the village. In the absence of public transport, most parents from this type of village are unwilling to make their children walk these kinds of distances. On the one hand, parents are not very aware of the importance of education themselves; on the other, they prefer to have their children close by to help them work.

Teacher training also leaves much to be desired, again because the government does not make adequate investment in this area. According to Education International figures, 24 percent of primary schoolteachers are unqualified<sup>15</sup>. We visited a number of the country's schools, and every time the English teacher was called upon to assist communication. None of these teachers were able to sustain conversation beyond "What is your name?" or "Hello, how are you? Fine, thank you"; not because they are afraid to talk, but because their knowledge of English is purely theoretical. As already stated, teaching is broadly limited to reading books and repeating phrases or words from vocabularies by rote. Failure to make progress causes some pupils and parents to become discouraged.

### E) Language and education access problems for non-Burmese ethnic communities

In regions populated by non-Burmese ethnic groups, the official language used in schools – Burmese – is a major problem since many children and parents do not understand it. This method of imposing the Burmese language on the people angers ethnic communities and the inability to communicate freely simply serves to make teachers sent by the government to these villages more demotivated. In practice, some teachers agree to use the local language for the first or second years of the primary cycle, but this is far from system-wide and is unofficial.

Every non-Burmese ethnic group faces this issue, but the situation of the Rohingya, a Muslim minority group with some 725,000 members living in the Northern Arakan State on the Bangladesh border, is particularly complex in this



respect: Rohingya children may not enrol in state schools beyond the primary cycle because these are reserved for Burmese citizens only. The Rohingya were denied Burmese citizenship under the 1982 Citizenship Law. Furthermore, the Rohingya's freedom of movement from one village to another is severely restricted, which prevents very many children from access to education (not to mention health care).

#### **F) Lack of electricity**

Studying or doing homework in the evenings is difficult when there is no electricity supply. Burma's electricity supply has continued to deteriorate in recent years, especially since the decision by the junta to transfer the capital from Rangoon to Nay Pyi Taw, in the centre of the country. Burma's new capital, with a mostly state-employed population, is the junta's top priority for electricity provision, even if this means that other more populous towns and regions have to go without. In Rangoon, for example, electricity is now available on an area-dependent six-hour rotation basis only, and there are frequent power cuts during the six hours in which the supply is supposed to work. Only well-off families can afford a generator supply.

Pushed to the limit, an increasing number of Burmese citizens are speaking out against the junta's handling of energy and natural resources. They stress that Burma is selling natural gas to Thailand and China to generate electricity, but that it is incapable of meeting the electricity needs of its own people. According to the ALTSEAN network, only 5 percent of the population has access to the electricity network.<sup>16</sup>

#### **G) Few facilities for children with disabilities**

The Burmese government allocates almost zero budget to educating children with disabilities. Without an education, these children remain a burden for their families, which intensifies their discrimination. According to Education International data, the government runs just three schools for the blind, two for the deaf, and two rehabilitation centres for children with disabilities. Local NGOs run four schools for the blind.<sup>17</sup>

### **5.2) Alternative solutions**

Faced with a glaring lack of public investment in education, the Burmese have found ways to ensure a minimum level of schooling for their children. Some of the most widespread initiatives are listed below.

#### **A) Monastic schools**

Many monks in Burma participate in the social life of communities. Some have set up schools where the children of poor families can receive an education at nearly no cost, in addition to classes on Buddhism. These monastic schools are funded by local community donations, from wealthy people living in and

outside these communities. Parents are not required to purchase uniforms. The monastic school system is not widespread, however. In the vast majority of these schools teaching is limited to the primary cycle, but in some cases the monks find ways to fund the brightest pupils through their secondary education at government schools.

## **B) Community-funded and community-run schools**

In remote regions where there are no schools, some communities have been able to secure private funding to build them. In some cases the money is contributed by NGOs. In others, the most well-off residents pool resources to build schools. One example is a lakeside village near In Phaw Khone, on Inle Lake (Shan State). With no nursery school in the village, young children remained at home and were cared for by their elder brothers and sisters while their parents went out to work, which was to the detriment of the education of these brothers and sisters. Well-off village residents and a few outside donors have recently funded the construction of a nursery school. Each parent pays 1,000 kyats per month to enrol their child, which also covers the teacher's modest wage (20,000 kyats per month).

## **C) Mobile schools for displaced persons in Burma**

According to the latest report of the Thailand Burma Border Consortium<sup>18</sup>, there are currently over 470,000 internally displaced persons in the east of the country (with over one million internally displaced persons in total in Burma), of which at least 75,000 were forced to leave their homes between August 2008 and July 2009. Some of these forced displacements can be attributed to SPDC troop tactics of clearing and controlling zones populated by ethnic groups viewed as hostile to the government. Others are due to development projects.

The global estimate of 470,000 individuals includes approximately 231,000 people living in temporary housing in zones run by ethnic groups who have made ceasefire agreements with the junta. A further 128,000 have followed evacuation orders and settled in government-designated relocation sites. The most vulnerable are the 111,000 civilians in hiding in zones most affected by clashes between the Burmese military and opposition guerrilla groups. These people try to evade relocation site life by taking refuge in the jungle, where they must remain on the move to avoid being captured by government soldiers.

Living conditions in the jungle are extremely harsh, but some village-dwellers have successfully started up mini-schools which follow them as they move. They choose the best-educated villagers to teach children basic knowledge and the alphabet. Non-governmental organisations send brave militants into the jungle with packs containing medicines and basic school materials that they deliver to displaced persons.<sup>19</sup> These "jungle schools" demonstrate the desire of the Burmese people to give their children a minimum level of education, even in the most extreme circumstances.

### A trade union gives clandestine support to five schools

The FTUB (Federation of Trade Unions – Burma), which is affiliated to the ITUC but which is banned in Burma, is providing clandestine support to five schools in various parts of the country. The donations it makes to schools mean it can be close to teachers and parents, and can raise awareness among these groups of issues linked to work. “Parents and teachers inform us about their daily lives, and we can sometimes help them”, explains a clandestine militant from FTUB. “For example, if small-scale farmers have some of their land, harvest or cattle seized by some authority (e.g. army or police et al.), we will write a letter to SPDC representatives to inform them of this and to try to get compensation or to have the confiscated goods or land returned. We are not acting as FTUB, as the junta considers our union to be a “terrorist” organisation, but we can write as individuals, as advisers, advocates or friends of the victim. We have already received positive reactions from the SPDC in this type of case.”

NB: For more information about FTUB's activities within and outside Burma, please see Union Vision no. 15, which is available at [http://www.ituc-si.org/IMG/pdf/VS\\_Burma\\_EN.pdf](http://www.ituc-si.org/IMG/pdf/VS_Burma_EN.pdf), or see [www.ftub.org](http://www.ftub.org).



### 5.3) Higher education

University students played an important role in the 1988 protests which called for the return of democracy. Since then, they have been a source of fear for the SPDC generals, who have done everything in their power to prevent civil universities from functioning normally.

In the past universities were closed for a long period, but they are currently open. However, there is a large shortage of teaching staff in the sciences and foreign languages, because these staff prefer to work in the private sector or abroad, where they can earn more.

The dictatorship feared that these new sources of dissent would grow, and so it established faculties far away from each other, and some were a long way from urban centres. As these faculties do not have accommodation facilities that students can afford, students spend large amounts of time on public transport. In Rangoon, for example, faculties are at least 15 km from the centre, and it takes 90 minutes to reach them by bus. This means that students waste at least three hours each day on crowded public transport.

Given the difficulties that the government has imposed on civil universities, and the restrictions on enrolment in military institutes, some students have enrolled in university courses via distance learning, but these offer practically no opportunity for active learning. "From time to time, these students go to the faculty for intensive classes over a limited period, two weeks for example, but for the rest of the time, their classes and exercises are done via distance learning," explained an opposition supporter living in Rangoon. "However, virtually no distance learning students do the exercises alone; everyone pays someone to teach them. Just as in the rest of the Burmese educational system, if students pay for intensive lessons, they pass the exam...".

Several Burmese universities organise this type of distance learning course, which remains cheaper than a full year of university study. "Enrolling on these courses costs 20 dollars," explains a student who lives 20 km away from Rangoon. "The next three months are only costing me 5 or 6 dollars per month (the price of transport to go and fetch lessons and exercises) and last month I paid 50 dollars for intensive lessons."

In many cases, this system is less expensive than traditional university courses, in which the charging of tuition fees is widespread, and these fees can be around 80,000 kyats per subject per year. Students seem, however, to be less obliged to submit to this system than in primary and secondary education, but for the wrong reasons. "The government has instructed the universities not to fail many students, whatever their results, in case there is a revolt or protest," continued the opposition supporter from Rangoon. "The percentage required in order to pass the exam depends on the average result. At least three quarters of students pass, even if this means the pass mark has to be set at 35%! Teachers find themselves alone against the system, and they have no trade union protection when the authorities put pressure on them. Last year a

teacher passed only five out of his 12 doctoral students, based on what he felt were their true exam results. The day after these results were published, the teacher noticed that all the students had, in the end, passed: there had been involvement from further up in the hierarchy, or at Ministerial level, we don't really know where it came from."

Under such conditions, companies do not have confidence in the young people graduating from Burmese universities. Many are therefore obliged to work for the administration, which only offers very poor salaries, or to do menial jobs which are unconnected with their higher education courses. "I have a degree in history, but there are no jobs available in my field, so I am a waiter in a small restaurant, and I earn 15,000 kyats per month," says a young man from Bago, with regret. This situation means that Burmese people have no incentive to invest time and money in studying.

### **Internet technology offers a learning opportunity – but it is censored**

The recent emergence of the Internet in Burma provides a learning opportunity for young people in cities, where many internet cafes have been set up. Access does remain restricted to those who know how to use a computer; which remains a small minority of the Burmese population. Young internet users must also be very careful not to visit sites other than those that the SPDC judges to be "politically correct". Thin<sup>20</sup>, a former internet café manager from Rangoon, explains the regime's policy of cyber-repression: "They employ around a hundred internet specialists in Yadanabon Cyber City, a 'silicon valley' that was developed by the junta in Pyin U Lwin, near Mandalay. These specialists work in shifts, day and night, to monitor where Burmese people go on the Web. Internet users can never know which sites are safe to visit: sometimes, these government employees let users visit sensitive or banned sites, before cutting off their connection suddenly... they can then find the internet user using his or her IP address, and a great deal of trouble can ensue."

Most internet cafes have posters warning users not to go to political sites or sites that are to do with "domestic affairs of State". Many foreign sites are censored (including the ITUC site). Some Burmese people have found ways round the censorship, but there are significant risks, both to internet users and to internet café managers. "Because internet cafes do not ask their customers to identify themselves, managers run the risk of being arrested if banned sites are visited," Thin explains. "Managers have already been locked up for this reason. The government has also asked internet cafés to install a program that takes an automatic screenshot every 30 minutes."

## VI. Child labour

As a result of the poor economic climate engendered by the military dictatorship's policies, adult incomes are not enough to guarantee survival for most households. Burmese society has always entrusted some tasks to children (e.g., helping parents with the harvest, fetching water from a well, looking after younger siblings) but in the current situation many children do not have the opportunity to go to school and work from a very young age.

The Burmese government is not taking any credible action against child labour, even in its worst manifestations, which are widespread in this country. In addition, Burma has not ratified ILO Convention 138 concerning minimum employment age, or Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labour (however, it did ratify the International Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991).

In law, 13 is the minimum employment age, but this is not enforced, and the savage repression of any trade union organisation promotes this lack of respect for the law. Very often, workers are not aware that there are laws that can protect them, and laws banning the youngest children from working.

The main sectors in which children work in Burma are the following (this list is not exhaustive and sectors are not listed in the order of number of children working in them):

### A) Agriculture

70% of the Burmese population lives in rural areas, in which the population are almost all involved in growing crops or raising livestock. It is rare that children do not help their parents in the fields or with the livestock. The same is true for fishing families. The level of involvement varies from family to family, and depends on income levels, proximity of schools, parents' motivation to see their children educated, among other factors. Levels of child involvement increase greatly when men are conscripted by SPDC troops for forced labour.

### B) Work in tea shops and catering

Tea shops (small establishments that sell tea, outdoors or inside) and small restaurants employ a large number of children. In towns, they often employ young people from rural areas or deprived suburbs. The small chairs on their terraces are Burmese people's favourite place to sit with a cup of tea. Day and night, they go there to chat, and are served by children. Several anecdotal accounts tell of servitude as payment for a debt: children appear to be employed by these tea shops because their parents were not able to pay back a debt to a loan shark.

Some employers impose inhumane working schedules on these children. "I work 7 days a week, 12 hours a day, for 10,000 kyats per month," says Min, a child of 11 who works in a tea shop near Bogyoke Market in Rangoon. "Other

children only earn 7000 kyats per month. My boss gives me two meals a day and I can sleep in a small building, but there are a lot of us who sleep in the overheated room. I am always tired during the day because I don't sleep enough. I have to serve customers, clean cups, clean the floor, without stopping..."

We would have liked to talk to Min for longer, but her face suddenly became stricken with fear and she went back behind the counter: a truck full of men in uniform was passing in the street, and this is never a good sign in Burma. The truck, luckily, continued on its way. In Burma's cities, one often sees police or army vehicles, full of heavily-armed men in uniform, travelling at full speed. They are not, in general, mobilised for a particular purpose. They are there to remind the population of the strength of the regime, and of the repression that they will experience if they dare to resist. Burmese people are taught from the start that in their country Big Brother can be watching them at any time.

### **C) Street work (e.g., selling, rubbish collection, begging)**

Thousands of children sleep in the streets of the cities every night. Some are there with their parents; others are orphans or have had to leave the family home for various reasons (e.g., divorce, death of a parent). All have to get by from day to day, sometimes alone, and sometimes with other unfortunate companions. There are plenty of jobs to do in the street: for example collection of plastic bottles, sorting rubbish, begging. "A child who spends his days collecting, sorting rubbish (for example plastic bottles, scrap metals) and begging can earn between 1000 and 3-4000 kyats per day, which is quite a lot in comparison with most Burmese workers," explains Zaw<sup>21</sup>, a social worker in Rangoon.

These street children are easy prey for criminal gangs involved in drugs, prostitution (see below) and other illegal activities. "In Rangoon, several adults (particularly women) have got together and organised beggar children into small groups," Zaw continues. "They must give them some of the money they earn each day, and in exchange they can sleep at these people's houses. They also receive a bit of food and some glue (glue-sniffing is a common activity among these street children). They are like host families, but these women are far from being model mothers. Most are very poor, and some are beggars themselves. Their houses are makeshift shelters, in which many of those excluded from society are crammed: prostitutes, disabled people, beggars and so on. These small networks threaten the children, saying that if they accept help from social workers or NGOs, they will be killed. The government is cruel to these street children. The government will do anything to hide these children from the general public, including enrolling them in the army (see page 27) or handing out long custodial sentences for minor crimes, for example two years for stealing a bicycle."

### **D) Prostitution**

"Many underage children are prostituted at night, in the streets or in the

markets,” explains Zaw. “Some fall into the hands of rival criminal gangs, and it is very hard for them.” Foreign men who walk around some large hotels in the centre of Rangoon are regularly approached by pimps offering girls of all ages, including underage. According to the American State Department report on human rights in Burma<sup>22</sup>, foreign diplomats have noticed a large number of prostitutes in late adolescence, and some brothels seem to have offered young “virgin” girls in exchange for large sums of money.

Although the situation of exiled Burmese children is not the subject of this report, we cannot ignore the sordid exploitation that some experience, in particular in terms of prostitution. “Of 110 underage children in an institution in Mandalay<sup>23</sup>, 27 were girls aged between 15 and 18 who had been trafficked to southern China, either for marriage or forced prostitution,” confirms a Mandalay social worker.

However, migration, even illegal migration, should not be confused with human trafficking. Of the more than 3 million Burmese migrants who have fled misery and repression to find opportunities abroad (mostly in Thailand), only a minority have left the country by falling into the hands of human traffickers. However, this does not mean that the others were able to emigrate and work under decent conditions<sup>24</sup>.

#### **E) “Small businesses”**

The streets of Burmese towns are full of small businesses, some of which are even on the pavements. Here one can buy clothes, foods, electrical equipment, etc. Many children help their parents in such businesses, or operate them themselves for their families. Very young children can also be seen selling souvenirs, postcards and food in towns and tourist destinations when they are supposed to be at school.

#### **F) Domestic work**

In Burmese towns, many domestic posts are held by children from villages. Some are recruited via agents who travel around rural areas asking parents to entrust their children to them. They promise a bright future for these children, and then sell them into sectors such as domestic work.

#### **G) Small-scale industry and crafts**

There are few businesses in Burma, but those that do exist, if they do not produce directly for export, do not care much about the age of their workers. The banning of trades unions, the ineffectiveness of employment legislation and the near-total lack of workplace inspections mean that employers have a lot of freedom. In the lakeside village of Nampan, for example, in the Shan region, a small cigarette factory employs eight female workers, the youngest of whom is only 13. Their salary is 560 kyats. They work between 8am and 6pm, with a one-hour break at midday.





#### H) Mine construction

The banning of trades unions and the near-total lack of monitoring by the authorities means that employers have free rein to use children in mine construction. Because children are weak, however, they are less useful for this kind of work. According to anecdotal evidence, employers in these sectors use children to help their parents, if they work in this sector.

## VII. Forced child labour for the authorities

Burma is one of the last countries in the world in which forced labour is enshrined in State institutions. Every day, tens of thousands of Burmese people must obey conscription orders from the army or local authorities and must complete a series of jobs: they have to construct roads and barracks, carry military material on their backs, monitor and repair railways and pipelines, break stones, maintain plantations for the benefit of the authorities, among other tasks. Most often, the order calls up one person per household. This person must bring his or her own tools and food, and must work for one or more days without pay. The authorities generally allow households an exemption from forced labour if they pay financial compensation equivalent to one or several days' wages (1000-2000 kyats or more, depending on the situation), and it is therefore rare that a family will be able to escape from forced labour.

If no adults in the household are available, for example if the parents are ill, dead or too busy with their own work, a child must be sent. In other cases, the time allowed to complete the forced tasks means that the whole family must help, including the children. A 15-year-old boy from Kachin State, not far from the Chinese border, speaks from Thailand where he is a refugee: "I followed my education as normal until June 2009. I was in ninth grade. I only missed school when I had to do forced labour: the authorities demand that each family in my village send one person to carry out different tasks, without pay, once a week. The sum of 2000 kyats (1.8 dollars) has to be paid to be exempted. It was me who was sent as of the age of 12, because with my brother being in Thailand, my mother being ill and my father busy with his goods transport work, no one else could go. We could not pay the 2000 kyats in compensation as we are very poor, especially since the Burmese army confiscated my grandfather's lands 10 years ago. We can still work there but we have to donate half of the produce to the army, even though it does not contribute to the operating costs"<sup>25</sup>.

Forced labour has meant a great deal of international criticism has been levelled against the military regime, including several damning assessments by the ILO. In 2007, the military junta agreed to draw up a memorandum of understanding with the ILO in order to offer the victims of forced labour a mechanism whereby they could demand compensation. Victims could send their complaints to ILO-Rangoon, which would then try to investigate on the ground and obtain redress, apologies and any compensation that might be forthcoming<sup>26</sup>. Lack of co-operation at all levels of power has meant that this mechanism has not yet been very effective, but one advantage is that it does put some pressure on the generals. "It seems as though there is a serious 'lag' between central government's wish to end forced labour and the behaviour of local authorities, both civilian and military, which do not accept the agreements that have been reached, which have kept their traditional forced labour practices and which harass those who try to assert their rights under the legislation," says the ILO

office in Rangoon in its report to the ILO Council of Administration in November 2009<sup>27</sup>.

The huge use by local authorities of forced labour, land confiscation and extortion make Burma one of the last feudal countries in the world. “The problem is that the regime’s mindset has not changed,” says Maung Maung, secretary general of the Federation of Trade Unions – Burma (FTUB). “It wants everyone to think that it is doing everything it can to fight forced labour, but it is not, in fact, mentally prepared to stop using it, as it is not only to its advantage on the ground, but also on a psychological level: if someone can be persecuted by a person in a green uniform, it means that the latter is ‘superior’. Forced labour is also, therefore, a way of telling soldiers that by wearing the uniform they become members of the ruling class. It was seen once again during the recent military offensives against ethnic groups in Karen, Kachin and Shan States, and last August against the Kokangs: all the military equipment had to be carried by villagers.”<sup>28</sup>

Recent reports confirm that minors are still among those civilians who are forced to carry military equipment for the Burmese army and allied armed groups<sup>29</sup>. In zones in which the Burmese army is fighting armed rebel groups, civilians are often forced to march in front of the troops, ostensibly in order to guide them; in reality, everyone knows they are used to “clear the path” if there are antipersonnel mines.

Use of forced labour has decreased in some regions, but it is often replaced and/or complemented by extortion or land seizures. These reduce parents’ already meagre incomes, and this means they can no longer fund education or healthcare for their children. In Mon State, for example, a human rights organisation reports that on 3 July 2009, in Ye canton, light infantry battalion number 343 forced the inhabitants to undergo military training for one day or pay a fine of 6000 kyats<sup>30</sup>.

There is another example from the Inle Lake region, in Shan State: “The use of forced labour has fallen sharply over the last two or three years in my region, but the extortion continues, in more subtle ways,” explains one of the inhabitants of a lakeside village. “In April, for example, the local authorities demanded that each family pay several thousand kyats, supposedly to plant *ricinus communis* (castor oil plant) by virtue of a national programme drawn up by the government, which hopes to make natural fuel for it. In the villages inhabited by educated people, passive resistance was more or less organised and people didn’t pay much, and have suffered no retaliatory measures thus far. Paradoxically, it was in the poorer villages, where the people are less educated, that the authorities were able to collect up to 10,000 kyats (9 dollars) per family, because people were very fearful of the threats.”<sup>31</sup>

### **Individual case of forced labour of children in the army**

Burmese legislation outlaws enrolment of children under 18 in the armed forces, but underage children continue to be recruited. Thousands of children

are currently soldiers in the Burmese regular army<sup>32</sup>. Some volunteer because of poverty, but most are picked up in the street and taken to army recruitment centres. “When I came back from my grandmother’s shop in Rangoon, I went to Sule pagoda” explains Maung, a deserter aged 18, in an interview conducted by the human rights group KHRG (Karen Human Rights Group)<sup>33</sup>. “A soldier who was there from the Taw Boke army camp grabbed me. He told me that he would give me pocket money. That soldier sold me for 20,000 kyats to a military officer who was sitting in a tea shop. My army training started on 3 June 2008.”

Recruitments from the street like this one are conducted by the police and army themselves, particularly among street children. A frequent scenario is that a police officer or soldier asks a child for his or her identity card. If the child does not have one or does not have it with them, the man in uniform gives them a choice: be put in prison or “agree” to be recruited by the army. Aside from recruitment by police officers or soldiers, children are drawn into the army by agents who, in exchange, receive a few dollars or payment in kind (e.g., a bag of rice, protection against various types of harassment by the authorities, a certain reputation among the military). Contact with parents is generally cut off, as the officers do not give the children time to warn them.

The high command of the Burmese army has made a public commitment not to use child soldiers, which has had little effect on the ground. “Army recruiters often accept children as they are faced with a dilemma: on the one hand, there is the ban on recruiting soldiers aged under 18 but, on the other, there is the need to keep up troop levels, and there are a lot of desertions,” explains Steve Marshall, liaison officer at ILO Rangoon<sup>34</sup>. Deserters are severely punished if they are found (sometimes beaten to death, killed with a bullet to the head, humiliated or imprisoned), but the numbers of desertions are nonetheless increasing rapidly, because of the unpleasant conditions in the barracks, particularly for the youngest recruits (for example the very intensive training, terrible food, separation from their families) and the very low wages paid to soldiers. According to Maung, the deserter interviewed by KHRG, “a soldier receives 21,000 per month, but we do not receive all of this money. They deduct 5000 kyats for “savings” and make other deductions when they distribute bathroom items. We only receive between 3000 and 4000 kyats per month.”

The ILO complaints mechanism concerning forced labour has been extended to the families of children who are victims of army recruitment. In his most recent report to the ILO Council of Administration, the Liaison Officer for ILO Rangoon notes that there has been an increase in the number of complaints: in total 152 complaints were received to 15 May 2009, but this number rose to 223 at 28 October 2009, with 71 new cases, compared with 31 for the same period in 2008. Of the latest cases, 52 concerned accusations of recruitment below the legal age<sup>35</sup>. “The youngest boy involved in a complaint regarding recruitment in the army was 11 years old, but in the majority of cases they are between 15 and 17,” explains Piyamal Pichaiwongse, deputy liaison officer at ILO-Rangoon<sup>36</sup>.

According to the report by ILO-Rangoon, it appears that the increase in the number of complaints can be attributed to the fact that the Burmese people are now better informed about their rights (even though they are in general poorly informed about their rights, particularly in rural areas), that there has been a strengthening of the network of those who can help people complain to the ILO, and that the population is now more inclined to complain.

As for the Burmese authorities, there has been a refusal to make examples by punishing those who have recruited children into the army. Some army recruitment agents and some soldiers have been accused of recruiting child soldiers, but in most cases they have only been reprimanded. The “worst” punishment that has so far been given for recruiting child soldiers has been docking one month’s salary from an officer. The authorities put more effort into punishing deserting child soldiers. “We were involved in the case of a former child soldier who deserted eight years ago. Despite so much time having passed, he was still being pursued. The authorities went to his home to arrest him and he was imprisoned for desertion... even though his recruitment was illegal! We were able to secure his release from prison, but there are many other cases like this one,” says Steve Marshall<sup>37</sup>.

Outside the regular army, several armed groups, allied to or against the junta, also resort to recruiting child soldiers.

## VIII. Health

According to UNICEF statistics for 2007, for every 1000 children born in Burma, 74 will die before their first birthday and 103 will die before they reach 5 years old. The vast majority of these deaths are caused by lack of access to healthcare and medical knowledge. The poor state of education and of the public healthcare system are directly responsible for this situation, which could be remedied if the Burmese government provided the necessary money instead of wasting State funds on military expenditure. According to global health statistics published by the WHO, just 1.5% of Burmese government expenditure is spent on health<sup>38</sup>. In 2007, the government spent 0.7 dollars per person on health<sup>39</sup>. The WHO puts the Burmese healthcare system at number 190 (of 191) in the world<sup>40</sup>.

Malnutrition obviously makes it more likely that children will die. According to UNICEF, around one in three children under 5 suffers from serious or moderate growth retardation or failure to gain weight. Appallingly low wages, poor agricultural management, land seizures, forced labour, and the weakness of healthcare are some of the factors responsible for malnutrition among children.

The report on the Burmese economy, published in 2008 by ITUC<sup>41</sup>, also criticised the way in which the government distributed health budgets, as this reinforced the dreadful existing social inequalities: “military run... hospitals are the best in the country, while civilian hospitals are poorly funded and unable to respond to rampant HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. If the generals fear that local treatment is below the standard they and their families need, they fly to Singapore to be treated in some of Asia’s most expensive private hospitals”.

According to WHO data, the public healthcare system has 6 hospital beds, 4 doctors, 10 nurses or midwives and less than 1 dentist per 10,000 inhabitants (in comparison with 9, 5, 12 and 1 respectively for South East Asia as a whole). Geographic distribution of medical infrastructure is very uneven. Border areas, where a large number of ethnic minorities live, are very deprived in comparison with the Rangoon-Mandalay axis. A great many villages have no medical facilities within a two-hour drive.

The existence of a public hospital is not a guarantee that patients will be treated: given the extreme impoverishment of most of these hospitals, patients must buy medications and medical equipment when they go there (using their own transport, given the lack of ambulances and even of roads in some areas). Even if appointments are supposed to be free, doctors have to be paid if patients want to be treated in hospitals: just like other Burmese workers, doctors do not have any trade union rights, and they therefore cannot negotiate salaries that would enable them to survive. Doctors generally have a private clinic in the same town, and only go to the public hospital when a patient can pay. Some doctors do have a sliding payment scale depending on their patients’ level

of poverty. According to most reports collected in August 2009, a doctor's appointment costs around 1500-2500 kyats. To this has to be added the cost of treatments prescribed by the doctor, or injections given (between 500 and 2000 kyats per injection).

For every 100,000 deliveries, there are 380 maternal deaths<sup>42</sup>. Many women prefer to avoid giving birth in hospital, because of the cost and the poor quality of care. They have to allow 80,000 kyats for the delivery, and between 200,000 and 500,000 kyats if an operation is required. Faced with costs that are so ridiculously high in comparison with incomes, most women give birth at home, where they are assisted by people with varying levels of qualifications, such as midwives or "traditional birth attendants". This system is not in itself bad, if the assistants really are qualified, and if it is possible to get to hospital quickly if complications arise, but the policies of the military junta mean that this is not the case. Thousands of Burmese children will have to live their whole lives with the consequences of delivery in such poor conditions.

## IX. Conclusions

47 years of military dictatorship have plunged Burma into social chaos. Violations of all human rights, including the right to join a trade union, prevent workers from demanding decent wages and standards of living. Burma suffers from no external military threat, but the defence budget is 28 times greater than the combined budgets for health and education. Children are the direct victims of these policies: fewer than 55% of Burmese children finish primary education, and hundreds of thousands work long hours every day, sometimes under the forced labour regime that the authorities impose. Forced recruitment of child soldiers remains a reality in Burma.

The junta has promised to organise “elections” in 2010, but the new Constitution it adopted in 2008 leaves no doubt as to the wish of the military to remain in power after the vote. These elections cannot be considered as progress towards a true democratic state. The ITUC is asking the international community to keep up economic and political pressure on the junta. The ITUC also supports the ILO’s action to combat forced labour and recruitment of children into the armed forces. The ITUC is also calling for further international support for its new affiliate member, FTUB (Federation of Trade Unions – Burma) which, despite the savage repression it has suffered, is fighting courageously to support the rights of all workers and Burmese children.



## IX. Endnotes

- 1 When referring to “the Burmese population”, “Burma’s population” or “the Burmese” in this report we refer to the whole population of Burma, including ethnic minorities, which are present mostly in the border regions.
- 2 Source: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>
- 3 Source: [http://www.ei-ie.org/barometer/en/profiles\\_detail.php?country=myanmar](http://www.ei-ie.org/barometer/en/profiles_detail.php?country=myanmar)
- 4 “Rich pickings: how trade and investment keep the Burmese junta alive and kicking”, ITUC, 2008, report available at <http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/BirmanieEN.pdf>
- 5 Amounts expressed in dollars are US dollars.
- 6 “Rich pickings: how trade and investment keep the Burmese junta alive and kicking”, ITUC, 2008, report available at <http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/BirmanieEN.pdf>
- 7 “Economic Report. Burma”, NCUB, March 2008. To find out more about the NCUB, go to [www.ncub.org](http://www.ncub.org)
- 8 Source: <http://www.emdh.org/drupal/myanmar>
- 9 Source: <http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/myanmar.html>
- 10 Turnell, Sean. “Burma’s Economy 2008: Current Situation and Prospects for Reform,” Burma Economic Watch, Macquarie University, Australia, May 2008.
- 11 “Rich pickings: how trade and investment keep the Burmese junta alive and kicking”, ITUC, 2008, report available at <http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/BirmanieEN.pdf>
- 12 military dictatorship dominated by the SPDC (State Peace and Development Council)
- 13 See <http://rehmonnya.org/archives/1080#>
- 14 Source: Education International Barometer, available at [http://www.ei-ie.org/barometer/en/profiles\\_detail.php?country=myanmar](http://www.ei-ie.org/barometer/en/profiles_detail.php?country=myanmar)
- 15 Source: Education International Barometer, available at [http://www.ei-ie.org/barometer/en/profiles\\_detail.php?country=myanmar](http://www.ei-ie.org/barometer/en/profiles_detail.php?country=myanmar)
- 16 See <http://www.altsean.org/Key%20Issues/KeyIssuesEconomy.htm>
- 17 Source: Education International Barometer, available at [http://www.ei-ie.org/barometer/en/profiles\\_detail.php?country=myanmar](http://www.ei-ie.org/barometer/en/profiles_detail.php?country=myanmar)
- 18 Report available at <http://www.tbtc.org/resources/resources.htm#idps>
- 19 See <http://www.freeburmarangers.org/>
- 20 His name has been changed
- 21 His name has been changed
- 22 “2008 Human Rights Report: Burma”, US Department of State, available at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/eap/119035.htm>
- 23 The ‘Institutions’ house a mix of orphans, street children and children who’ve broken the law, without making a distinction between age categories
- 24 See report concerning Burmese migrants to Thailand in Union View no. 15, available at [http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/VS\\_Burma\\_EN.pdf](http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/VS_Burma_EN.pdf).
- 25 Account taken from Union View #15, available at [http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/VS\\_Burma\\_EN.pdf](http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/VS_Burma_EN.pdf)

26 See report concerning forced labour in Union View no. 15, available at [http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/VS\\_Burma\\_EN.pdf](http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/VS_Burma_EN.pdf).

27 Source: "Developments concerning Burmese government application of convention 29 on forced labour, 1930" [Faits nouveaux concernant l'exécution par le gouvernement du Myanmar de la convention (no 29) sur le travail forcé, 1930], document submitted to ILO Council of Administration, available at [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms\\_116954.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_116954.pdf)

28 Quotation taken from an interview with Maung Maung, published on the ITUC website at <http://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article4355&lang=en>

29 See, in particular, <http://www.khrg.org/khrg2009/khrg09b4.html>

30 Source: <http://rehmonnya.org/archives/999>

31 Account taken from Union View #15, available at [http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/VS\\_Burma\\_EN.pdf](http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/VS_Burma_EN.pdf)

32 The ALTSEAN network (Alternative ASEAN Network on Burma) reports estimates of around 70,000 children in the Burmese army, which would make it the largest recruiter of child soldiers in the world. ALTSEAN is a network of organisations and individuals based in ASEAN member states, which works for and supports the human rights and democracy movement in Burma. See [www.altsean.org](http://www.altsean.org).

33 See <http://www.khrg.org/khrg2009/khrg09b4.html>

34 Quoted in Union View #15, available at [http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/VS\\_Burma\\_EN.pdf](http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/VS_Burma_EN.pdf)

35 "Developments concerning Burmese government application of convention 29 on forced labour, 1930" [Faits nouveaux concernant l'exécution par le gouvernement du Myanmar de la convention (no 29) sur le travail forcé, 1930], document submitted to ILO Council of Administration, available at [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms\\_116954.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_116954.pdf)

36 Quoted in Union View #15, available at [http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/VS\\_Burma\\_EN.pdf](http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/VS_Burma_EN.pdf)

37 Quoted in Union View #15, available at [http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/VS\\_Burma\\_EN.pdf](http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/VS_Burma_EN.pdf)

38 Source: [http://www.who.int/whosis/whostat/EN\\_WHS09\\_Full.pdf](http://www.who.int/whosis/whostat/EN_WHS09_Full.pdf)

39 Source: "A preventable fate: The failure of ART scale-up in Myanmar", MSF, November 2008, available at <http://www.msf.org/source/countries/asia/myanmar/2008/PreventableFate/PreventableFate-report.pdf>

40 Source: <http://www.actioncontrelafaim.org/nos-missions/nos-missions-dans-le-monde/birmanie/>

41 "Rich pickings: how trade and investment keep the Burmese junta alive and kicking", ITUC, 2008, available at <http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/BirmanieEN.pdf>

42 Source: [http://www.who.int/whosis/whostat/EN\\_WHS09\\_Full.pdf](http://www.who.int/whosis/whostat/EN_WHS09_Full.pdf)



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