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Forty years after it began, the ethnic conflict continues, producing refugees and displaced people along the length of the Thai-Burma border. Burmese ethnic minorities, such as the Shan, Karenni, and Karen, as well as ethnic majority, Burman, have been displaced from their villages inside Burma and are living on the Thai side of the border as refugees or undocumented migrants. The distinction between these two groups is important, as undocumented migrants do not receive services, including education. In 2005, Thailand passed a law allowing undocumented children to attend Thai schools up to grade 10. Given the difficulties, both logistically and socially, of integrating over 60,000 undocumented children, the Thai MOE has also begun to work with Burmese-run migrant learning centers (MLCs). The rationale for ensuring education for students along the border is founded in EFA. A human rights-based approach to education is promoted by the INGOs that work directly with the Thai government specifically to provide education for non-Thai students.

The internship I did this past summer was with an NGO called Curriculum Project (CP). CP writes and provides curricula, including student texts, teacher texts, and teacher training, for post-10 MLCs. The original intent of the internship was to go to the border and do teacher training. However, as is the norm along the border, the situation changed-several times. When I first arrived in Chiang Mai, a friend of a friend who worked at CP casually mentioned that they were in need of someone to edit a public health curriculum-quickly. I mentioned my qualifications (I have a MPH and have worked along the border for several years) and was promptly re-assigned to the public health curriculum. While it was not what I had been hoping

to do, it was something the organization needed and I was able to provide. The curriculum was to be used inside Burma in three remote villages who were working with CP's parent organization to foster self-empowerment via education opportunities, technical skills (such as public health) and administrative skills (such as grant writing). This project has not received clearance from the Burmese government as it is considered 'a threat to national security'. I had expected to work on the curriculum the full 10 weeks and present a finished draft before I left.

But, as I mentioned, things along the border change. Two staff members from CP were scheduled to do some teacher trainings inside Burma, but when they arrived in Yangon, they were notified of their 'black list' status and sent back to Thailand on the next flight out of Yangon. As CP had made arrangements to do the trainings already, and as I was able and willing to do teacher trainings and had a 'clean' passport, I was asked to go to Yangon for 26 days and do some teacher trainings at schools that operate just under the governmental radar. These schools focused on teaching young adults concepts such as democracy, human rights, and environmental consciousness in the context of Burma. My job was to train these students how to teach, so they could return to their communities and effectively teach others the concepts and skills they learned in Yangon. The resources I used, "Activities for teachers" and "Teacher Preparation: A Guidebook to Teaching Critical Thinking" were considered 'contraband', so I hid them in my luggage when I traveled to and from Yangon. Around town, I wrapped them in brown paper and stuffed them into a less-than-appealing bag as I carried them from place to place.

When my visa expired, I left Burma and returned to Mae Sot. While I had continued to work on the public health curriculum while in Yangon, I did not make the progress I was hoping.

Although, interestingly, while in Burma, I had a chance to consult with the very people for whom it was being written. In the end, it was decided that another person would need to take over and finish the curriculum, as I needed to leave the area and return to UW-Madison. To date, the curriculum is almost finished and it will be ready for the November program start date.

This short narrative hardly does justice to the experiences I had this summer. Hopefully it does, however, give a modicum of understanding to how the fellowship was used to further social justice in Burma. The situation there is far from perfect and the public health curriculum and teacher training may or may not be a step toward community empowerment. But as my good friend Al Khoune, a Karenni refugee living in one of the border camps, is so fond of saying, “We have to try...”