



## POINTS OF VIEW

### SUMMARY:

*Child rights and human rights training has been a major focus for CAMP in Cambodia and CAP-Burma/Thailand. While their methodologies differ, both groups maintain that this training is an important foundation for all other work with young people in conflict/post-conflict situations.*

# 12. HUMAN RIGHTS TRAINING

## 1. HUMAN RIGHTS TRAINING WITH YOUNG REFUGEES, CAP-BURMA-THAILAND

### **Q. How do you structure your training?**

**A.** In human rights training, I prefer to begin from their ideas. If I work from my ideas they will base all their thinking on my notions, not their experiences. I base the training on their feelings, their communities, their experiences. It is from this foundation that we examine international issues. We need to make it concrete, we want them to understand what human rights mean on a very personal level.

It is important to organize the training so that it supports their understanding but also adds to it: “Yes you are right, but here is some more information” All of the training is structured this way: demonstrating that personal experiences have political meaning.

### **Q. Which rights do they consider the most important?**

**A.** They usually begin by saying that political rights are the most important. They say, “We are here, we are refugees because of the politics in our country, because of political rights issues.”

Then someone else will say, “No – social rights are more important. We are fighting against the SPDC (Burma Military) because we didn’t have the right to keep our culture. So we are fighting for this reason. Our economic rights were destroyed, we didn’t have a chance. So that is why we have to fight against them.”

But then another person might say: “Cultural rights are more important. They are trying to destroy our culture, that is why we are fighting this. But in our community there are no environmental rights.”

So they talk about the rights in terms of the situation in Burma.

### **Q. Does this mean that they would see the war as a human rights war?**

**A.** Not at the beginning. And this is partly also because people’s understanding of the war in our country is changing. At first it was seen only as a political issue. But more and more people are looking at it differently, as something that is about human rights abuse and cultural identity

People in the camps see the war in different ways. Sometimes they say, “Why have I come here? I want to go back home.” But the families see that they are going to die if they don’t leave because they cannot farm or grow anything. So we try to make a link so they understand why this happened to them. This is so important for young people to know.

### **Q. What other aspects of human rights do you discuss with them?**

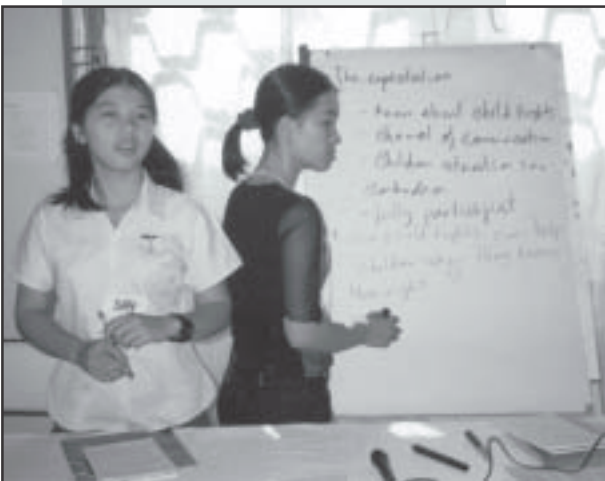
**A.** We also define rights into two parts – moral rights and legal rights. Because in our community we need to keep our moral or identity rights – this is very important. For legal rights we want them to know about the law and the principal of laws.

Moral rights are the only thing that can save our community's identity – our religion, our culture and our community's location. Because our culture has been built on its connection to a specific environment. Very important.

They also have to think about national security. How do we prevent human rights violations during a conflict situation? Which human rights should be limited in these situations? This is a very big point. Which rights should we never limit, even during a security situation? Which ones can be denied ?

They recognize that in conflict situations freedom of assembly will be limited and maybe freedom of speech. They say that these rights should not be denied but in practise they often are. The reality of Burma is that all rights are denied except the right to be alive. But that is denied at times too.

## **B. CHILD RIGHTS TRAINING: INTERVIEW WITH CAMP YOUTH**



*Cambodian youth give presentation on child rights training during CAP international meeting in Uganda*

### **Q. Can you provide a brief overview of your work?**

**A.** Yes. We work with all ages, usually from age 8 up. Younger children understand in the simple way. There can be many levels of understanding in a group. We have to respect that and express ourselves in ways so that all participants understand.

We want to stimulate the thinking of all children. The ideas of younger children are a contribution we can learn from. Young children speak very directly about a point. In our workshops we try to be very close to the children so they trust us and tell us what they think.

### **Q. Can you talk about the response to the idea of children's rights?**

**A.** This can be difficult because here in Cambodia we still have the survivor mentality. It is hard to talk about human rights inside that view. If we go to a village we have to be very careful to build trust first. We have to explain in great detail, to tell what we want to do. Human rights can be new to them, a new concept, especially children's rights. At the same time they appreciate that we are coming to their village.

One reason that it is difficult is because of the Pol Pot regime and the poverty. Many people have very little education. Also it has something to do with the way that Cambodians look at human rights. It is new and it is also very individualistic and maybe against some of our traditions. At the same time we are very open to new things if people can see the benefits

You have to be realistic. You can't ask young people about their views on human rights if they don't know what they are. They need to know the context of what it means, to understand about human rights but also

about how they can fit into Cambodian culture. And also to look at new ways that youth can be.

It is important to be clear. If we use the word selfish, we are saying that people can be selfish, not our country. Cambodia has a wonderful, deep culture. It is only the way that we have been practising our culture lately that it is not good.

**Q. How do you handle discussions on children's rights and war?**

A. Usually with pictures. We show them pictures of children in conflict situations and ask them what needs to be changed. They answer very well. This often leads them to talk about their own experiences. Sometimes we do a combination where we first talk about rights and then talk to them about their situation – the dream and reality.

**Q. Do you do any training with adults?**

A. Yes and also with government officials. Just recently we did training with the Department of Tourism in Cambodia. This is important because of the high rate of sexual exploitation of children.

**Q. Do you work with adults as well?**

A. Yes, we also do training with adults. But we believe that children are our priority. In our view they need to know their rights so they can protect them and work to have these rights recognized.

It is very difficult to get adults to change their attitudes or even to participate in training. So maybe we have to do advocacy as well – and children can help with this.

**Q. Do you see any changes after doing training with children?**

A. Yes. They have a tendency to try to resist violations against them. For example, in areas where there have been child rights training the incidence of sexual exploitation doesn't seem to be as high. We think this is because they know their rights.

**Q. I know that everyone in CAMP is young. Do you get a reaction or resistance because of this?**

A. You have to understand that youth participation is part of our vision and objective. CAMP wants to be the model to show what young people can do. It is a model to show how we can work together and identify the issues that are important to us. We want to show adults the attitude of youth and to exercise the idea of democracy. We think this is very important.