

Caring Narratives in the Face of Perilous Situations: Voices of Karen Women in Communities in Thai-Burmese Border Zones

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<https://doi.org/10.12982.CMUJASR.2017.0010>

ABSTRACT

The current situation in the Thai-Burmese borderlands can be labeled 'frontier capitalism', that is, capitalist expansion into the borderlands that is characterized by political conflict, state recognition that ethnicity issue playings a key role in preventing women and men from obtaining Thai citizenship, and competition for control of natural resources through development programmes. Among the numerous stakeholders involved are local Karen people, including women, who are asserting their rights over natural resources and protecting their livelihoods. This article argues that the women's motives are based on the ethics of care. Considering the precarious situations and the risks to sustainability of natural resources, Karen women at border villages have raised their voices to protect the future of their families and the community. However, their association with community men for joint action is riddled with many challenges. Therefore, they have to seek survival strategies and create opportunities to negotiate with frontier capitalism to secure better livelihoods.

KEYWORDS: Caring gender, Resource struggles, Karen women, Thai-Burmes border zones.