

Navigation and Challenges of Myanmar Education in Conflict Setting

 **Jan 22 (Wednesday), 2025; 2:30 PM - 4:30 PM MMT (GMT + 06:30)**

 **Online Zoom**

 **Language : English**

Event Description

YRI presents the second chapter of our seminar series: Exploring Contemporary Issues in Myanmar, this time with a particular focus on “**Navigation and Challenges of Myanmar Education in Conflict Setting**”. This seminar is based on multiple research projects conducted by YRI researchers including the speakers. With different contextual focuses in Chin state, Mizoram and Pekon township, they explored navigational strategies of students, parents, local communities and educational institutions to circumvent barriers imposed by the ongoing protracted conflict to ensure continuous access to education as well as their challenges and policy implications. You are cordially invited to join our seminar and exchange with the speakers by registering at the link below.

Supported by the Pyin-Nya-Man-Daing Programme (PNMD), a total of 80 researchers have studied key issues in Myanmar, including gender, environmental justice, governance, migration amid ongoing crises following the 2021 military coup. Based on these research outputs, YRI is organizing a monthly research seminar series to strengthen evidence-based governance and policy reform, improve research quality through stakeholder feedback and enhance collaborative efforts on Myanmar’s pressing challenges. These seminars aim to present research findings, gather feedback, and promote evidence-based dialogue among stakeholders to inform policy and advocacy.

About the Researchers & Abstracts

1. Education amidst conflict: Exploring Challenges in Education for stakeholders in conflict-affected Chin State

Ling Kee Htang & Peter Suante

Abstract

Chin State has experienced significant educational disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic and political conflicts following the 2021 military coup. Concurrently, community-based schools emerged to provide educational opportunities for children. This study investigates the experiences of local stakeholders, including teachers and parents, in navigating these challenges through semi-structured interviews in Mindat Township. Key findings reveal multifaceted obstacles, including transportation issues, security threats, resource limitations, and a shortage of qualified teachers, resulting in increased student attrition and unrecognized educational qualifications. However, the community's resilience is evident in their self-reliant initiatives, such as the establishment of self-supporting schools and adaptations of curricula to incorporate ethnic languages. Opportunities for educational innovation have emerged amidst adversity, driven by heightened parental engagement and local recruitment efforts. The study highlights the necessity for support for volunteer teachers, recognition of non-state educational systems, policy reforms favoring decentralized education, and increased international support. Ultimately, Mindat Township exemplifies how marginalized communities can sustain educational efforts during crises, emphasizing the critical importance of recognizing and bolstering these initiatives to uphold the right to education for all children in conflict-affected regions.

***Ling Kee Htang@Cain** is a Dai ethnic minority who holds a doctorate in Higher Education Policy. He has over seven years of experience in conducting educational research with publications in highly regarded academic journals and has taught at both primary and tertiary educational levels.*

***Peter** is a Zo ethnic minority and a doctoral graduate of work on non-state actors in education in Myanmar. He has more than seven years of research experience and has well recorded academic publications in refereed journals. He has expertise in mixed research methods, educational policy, and shadow education (private tutoring). His research interests include educational policy, inequality in education, and educational rights. He had over two years of experience in teaching and mentoring (supervision) in higher education. He also had more than three years of work experience in local NGOs.*



2. Conflict and Displacement in Pekon Township: Navigating Educational Access in a Conflict Setting

Felicita

Abstract

This paper explores the educational dynamics in Pekon Township, which has been engulfed in conflict since May 2021. Frequent clashes between the military and local resistance groups have led to widespread displacement and the closure of state schools. In 2023, approximately 40,000 individuals were displaced, and only three out of over 200 state schools have briefly managed to reopen. Using the navigational framework, this paper examines how parents in Pekon Township approached ensuring access to education without state schools in the region between 2021 and 2023. The findings suggest that despite challenges, parents demonstrate agency in determining their children's educational paths and have employed various strategies to ensure their children receive an education amidst political instability. They recognize education as a beacon of hope and a critical investment for their children's future. However, ongoing clashes, including artillery shelling, airstrikes, and bombings, along with economic constraints, continue to disrupt children's access to education. The study draws on twenty interviews, including perspectives from ten parents affected or displaced by armed conflicts, seven educators, and three educational providers supplemented by secondary sources.

Felicita completed her PhD in Human Rights and Peace Studies at Mahidol University in 2024, with her dissertation publication pending. Her expertise spans international human rights law, political imprisonment, human rights issues, and peace and conflict studies. Currently, she works as a researcher, focusing on human rights-related topics.

3. Access to Education of Burmese Refugee Children in Mizoram, India

Khin Mon Lin, Mary, and Ei Ei

Abstract

Since the 2021 military coup in Myanmar, over 40,000 refugees have fled from Myanmar, particularly in regions like Chin State and Sagaing Region, to Mizoram, India. Many of these refugees are children whose education is disrupted due to displacement. Although the Mizoram government has granted access to public schools for more than 6,000 Burmese refugee children as of October 2022, numerous challenges persist. The purpose of the paper is to explore multifaceted dimensions of access to formal and informal education of Burmese refugee children in Mizoram from a phenomenological perspective. The phenomenological study aims to seek a valuable framework to gain insight into the lived experiences of refugees, facilitating a deeper understanding of their educational challenges and opportunities. In the context of non-formal education, the study examines camp-specific initiatives offering Myanmar curriculum under NUG's

interim education program that contributes to the educational landscape of Burmese refugee children. However, legal status and documentation, the lack of official recognition and financial pressure, poor infrastructure and insufficient resources, uncertainty of education accessibility, and policy gap between the Central authority and Mizoram state government may be considered the significant barriers influencing Burmese refugee children's access to effective education in Mizoram state. The study highlights the need for a comprehensive approach to address these challenges and ensure equitable access to quality education for Burmese refugee children from the host country.

Keywords: Burmese Refugee, Access to education, Mizoram, India

Khin Mon Lin is a former lecturer at the Department of Law. Currently, she works as a freelance researcher and Human Rights educator. She is working as a part-time tutor under the PNMD programme. Her teaching and research interests include human rights, intellectual property rights, and terrorism. Her academic works have been published in national and international publications and e-proceedings.

Dawt Nei Iang @ Mary is a former lecturer in Myanmar university. She began her teaching career since 2012. Her academic pursuits are centered around human rights, with a specific focus on refugee, migration and minority rights. Following the coup, she has worked with Chin organizations to address human rights issues in Chin State and conduct borderland studies. Based in Aizawl, India, she also works as a freelance researcher and instructor of human rights and international humanitarian laws, using her expertise to contribute to the field of human rights.

Ei Ei is a former lecturer at the Department of Law in Myanmar University. Throughout her academic career, she has participated in training workshops enhancing her teaching skills. She has also participated in the Asia Pro Bono virtual conference and access to justice exchange, and led her department in Mock trial events and completion. After the coup, she works as an instructor via online at Myanmar online universities.

Event Agenda

2:30 PM	Greetings and Introduction	Strategy and Communication Adviser
2:35 PM	Keynote	Chairperson/ Senior Programme Manager
2:45 PM	Discussion Intros to the research papers @SCA Bios of researchers @SCA Questions and discussions @researchers taking turns	Researchers moderated by SCA
4:05 PM	Break (5 mins)	
4:10 PM	Participants' questions and discussions (20 mis)	Participants