Establishing appropriate Kachin education for Kachin children in northern Shan State, Myanmar

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Since 2012, Kachin communities in northern Shan State, Myanmar, have been establishing their own independent, sustainable school system under the umbrella of their own Kachin education organization. This Kachin community-based initiative is improving the quality of education while promoting Kachin language, Kachin culture, and contemporary Kachin community values.

They have established community-managed primary schools that use their own culturally appropriate curriculum; their own internally trained teachers; and the widely accepted Kachin lingua franca Jinghpaw language as the main language of instruction. Burmese and English are taught as second languages, initially in lower primary, and then also used as minor languages of instruction in upper primary.

There are now 16 schools established with 1,000 children attending these schools in northern Shan State. Since 2014 the same curriculum and a teacher-training program have also been used in establishing independent Kachin schools in Kachin State. So far 13 schools have been established there for 292 children.

In northern Shan State, the development of an independent secondary education is also underway, as well as planning for future tertiary institutions and sustainable models for future teacher education.

Presented by key Kachin education managers from northern Shan State, this paper provides a case study account of the challenges of developing an independent education system in village communities previously marginalised by the national education system. The presenters will provide an account of the education model that has been specifically designed to address the needs of contemporary Kachin youth and their communities and report on the documented positive impact that this initiative is having on students, parents, and school communities.