Community-based teacher education in conflict-affected areas of southeast Myanmar and teachers’ role in supporting inclusive education and peace-building efforts

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Karen Teacher Working Group

Supporting Karen Education Throughout South Eastern Burma / Myanmar since 1997
The Karen people are the 2nd largest ethnic group in Burma / Myanmar

The Karen reside throughout Eastern Burma / Myanmar as well as other parts of the country.

The political formation of the Karen people predates independence (circa. 1881)

The Karen National Union (KNU) formed in 1947 (one year prior to independence) and gained control of several areas in Eastern Burma during 60 years of conflict.

These areas remain under Karen administration.
Background: Karen Education Department

- **KED Central**
- 7 Karen districts
- 28 Karen Townships
- Head teachers & villages leaders

**Program Areas**

- Curriculum
- Personnel & Management
- Materials & Infrastructure
- Data Collection
Key Features of the Karen Education System

- Governance Structure (Central through to Village Level)
- Full Education Cycle (Nursery through to Higher Education)
- Teacher Education (Preservice, inservice and observation and feedback)
- Unique Curriculum (culturally and linguistically relevant - preserves and perpetuates Karen history and culture)
- Mother Tongue-Based
Schools in Karen Areas

- Karen schools are largely organized and supported at the community level.
- Fall of the KNU headquarters resulted in destabilization of the KED and of Karen education.
- KTWG has supported schools since 1997, implementing projects and programs, helping to rebuild Karen education during the conflict.
- Supported schools are in Karen-controlled areas which government cannot reach and in mixed-control areas where government services remains weak.

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<td>Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
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<td>Students</td>
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Schools in Karen Areas

**Religious:** Schools in KNU, mixed- & gov’t-controlled areas

**Curriculum:** Gov’t curriculum, separate MTB curriculum &/or curriculum from other countries

**Instruction:** Burmese &/or Karen

**Administration:** funded & administrated by Churches

**Community:** Often supported by the KED & located in KNU/Karen-controlled or influenced areas

**Curriculum:** KED curriculum, textbooks Sgaw Karen language

**Instruction:** Karen Lol. Teachers are usually community members from local area

**Administration:** KED and School Committee

**Support:** KTWG & community

**Mixed - Schools:** Partially run &/or supported by the KED & gov’t. Often in mixed-controlled areas

**Curriculum:** Typically gov’t curriculum, s’times supplemented with KED materials

**Instruction:** Burmese & Karen. 30%-70% gov’t teachers from outside local areas

**Administration:** Gov’t, KED, School Committee & community

**Support:** Gov’t, KTWG & community

**Government:** Schools in gov’t- & mixed-controlled areas

**Curriculum:** Gov’t

**Instruction:** Burmese Lol, gov’t textbooks in Burmese language. All teachers gov’t usually from outside the local area

**Administration:** Gov’t

**Support:** Gov’t
School Administration

- 70%
- 30%
Curriculum in supported schools

- Curr-KED
- Curr-MoE
- Curr-Mixed
- Curr-Other

1% 19% 37% 44%
KTWG’s main strategies to support education in Karen areas

- Preservice teacher training (at KTTCs)
- Inservice teacher training (from MTTs)
- Education material assistance
- Strengthening school management (through SMC training)
- Data Management
- Community mobilization (parent and community education)
High quality context focused preservice development
Karen Teacher Training Colleges

**Year 1**
- 2-week orientation visit to community schools
- Engagement with school management and community

**Year 1 & 2**
- Participation in summer vacation training
- Peer-to-peer teacher training

**Year 2**
- 1 month in a local township practice teaching with head teacher observation
- 1 week teacher observation
- Community project
Inservice teacher training: MTTs as response to remote context

Cycle of village and school visits

**Village**
- Community leader & family awareness raising & training
- Teacher stipend ceremony

**Schools**
- SMCs/PT AS
- School data collection
- QLE

**Teachers**
- Teacher observation & modelling
- Support & feedback
- QLE

Up to 15 villages
- 3 or 4 days walking

**Return to regional office**
- Data entry
- Data Analysis

**Planning**
- Summer intensive training
- School improvement support
MTT breakdown of time spent over 6 months

- School visits incl. parent education, teacher training, observation and coaching, SMC meetings
- Retraining and professional development
- Delivering training during summer vacation
- Data collection and reporting - incl. project administration planning - stipend distribution,
- Parent education, community engagement
Teacher Motivation and Community Relations

**Teachers**
- Teachers with low pay but high intrinsic motivation
- Strong understanding of context
- Community support, affiliation and embeddedness leads to greater accountability

**Communities**
- Parent education programs
- Involvement in school management
- Value of education and teaching profession as community service
Education Assistance (KSEAG)

• KSEAG is a working group with members from KED and KTWG that aims to ensure that education assistance is distributed systematically and equally across all Karen schools.

• Provision of teacher subsidies to **approximately 4,618 community teachers**.
  • Communities already provide significant support for teachers and payment of teachers through existing community structures including the school management committee reinforces this.
  • KSEAG provides a stipend of approximately USD 215 per year for community teachers.
  • Teacher subsidies are currently provided through donor contributions. It is hoped that long-term support for community teachers could be achieved through continued dialogue with government about the future of the Karen education system.
Education Assistance (KSEAG)

- Provision of school materials to over 160,000 students.
  - Provide around $3 of learning materials per student
- Engage local education leaders and school committee members in data collection, monitoring, distribution and evaluation processes to support Education Assistance.
- Coordinate with other groups providing assistance in Karen state to ensure equitable distribution of resources.
Data Collection and Analysis

• KTWG has been actively strengthening data collection to support analysis and program improvements. Data now captures:
  • Enrollment rates
  • Promotion rates
  • Repetition rates
  • Dropout rates
  • Teacher retention
  • Teacher quality: through teacher competency assessments and classroom observation
  • Education quality: using Save the Children’s Quality Learning Environment (QLE) assessment tool
Expanding the KTWG model and fostering stronger collaboration

- Eastern Burma Community Schooling (EBCS) was started by KTWG to share the KTWG model with other ethnic groups.

- This eventually led the creation of MINE in 2014. MINE aims is to promote coordination and cooperation amongst ethnic groups in the delivery of education services in ethnic areas. It is hoped that stronger coordination will support negotiations with the government about future alignment of education systems throughout the country.
Education and the Peace Process

• The KNU signed a preliminary ceasefire in 2012 – ending over 60 years of conflict.

• The KNU signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) in late 2015 and is actively involved in the peace process.

• The future of the Karen education system depends on governance arrangements for Karen areas as a whole.

• The Myanmar government has embarked on an ambitions reform agenda, including within the education sector.
Education Reform

• In order to deliver on Education for All and the Sustainable Development Goals for Education, particularly SDG 4 ‘ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning’, the Myanmar government should recognize the great contribution of ethnic and civil society education providers throughout the country.

• The Karen system delivers much of what the Myanmar government plans within the National Education Sector Plan (NESP): local curriculum, MTB-MLE approach, decentralization, school-based management.

• It is a missed opportunity not to capitalize on the existing strengths of the coordinated system of Karen schooling as part of development of government education services in Karen areas. This would also significantly contribute to peacebuilding.
KTWG’s focus moving forward

• Actively engaging the government to strengthen communication and coordination of education services in Karen areas:

  • KED and KTWG have met with the Kayin State Government to foster greater understanding of the Karen education system since this has become possible (since October 2014).

  • KTWG facilitated dialogues with government during the Education Awareness Raising Events held this summer with positive outcomes.

  • KED and KTWG have been engaged at the central level on key reform issues, advocating for MTB-MLE and recognition of ethnic education systems, including recognition of children’s learning and community teachers.
Thank you for your attention

Karen Teacher Working Group