

## **CHAPTER III**

### **Historical and Political Context: Causes of Displacement and Education**

#### **Management in the KIO Region**

This chapter explores the significant causes of Kachin internal displacement following a 1961 Kachin revolution and discusses subsequent KIO management of education for IDPs camps in the Kachin region. The chapter explains the origins of the Kachin education system and describes the KIO's current education management efforts to improve IDPs camp schools. The following sections present a discussion of Je Yang IDPs community participation in and contributions for education in emergencies. The discussion is influenced by a brief history of the formation of the KIO and its revolutionary agenda which broadened to address issues relevant to the importance of education for people residing in the Kachin region, including processes and capabilities of the Kachin education system. For this discussion, it is important to grasp historical and political antecedent conditions leading to internal displacement, especially in KIO-controlled regions. Furthermore, a fundamental understanding of these topics requires exploration of the evolution of education in KIO-controlled areas, including better understanding of contemporary education processes in existing IDPs camps.

This section first offers a discussion of the Kachin revolution and living conditions within the IDPs camps as preparation for later analysis of KIO management of education in displacement from a Kachin perspective. Second, this section presents a description of the Kachin education system depicting historical development from its beginnings until the present. Third, the question of how education system integration occurred during a ceasefire (1994-2011) between the KIO and the Myanmar military government will be addressed; and finally, a further discussion will detail the establishment of various institutions in KIO-controlled areas which accommodated Kachin student need for improved education-related wellbeing. Capacity to reliably

establish required institutions in the region is a significant deciding factor which is crucial for development of the quality of education that can lead to hope for both students and the community.

### **3.1 Kachin Revolution and Displacement**

Myanmar's political and ethnic disputes date back before independence from British colony. Myanmar's political leader Aung San (Aung San Suu Kyi, known as the father independence in Burma) sought to include ethnic nationalities in the political process; these were ethnic groups which were then under British administration such as Kachin, Chin, Shan and other ethnic groups. Representatives of the Shan, Kachin and Chin participated in the signing of the Panglong Agreement of February 12, 1947 which guaranteed establishment of a federal union with 'full autonomy of internal administration for the Frontier Areas', and 'rights and privileges which are regarded as fundamental in democratic countries'. Soon after independence in January 1948, repeated armed conflict outbreaks occurred between ethnic armed groups and the newly independent central government

The goals of ethnic armies varied, ranging from outright secession to achieving autonomy and rights within a federal democratic coalition under the Union of Burma (Myanmar). But in 1961, the Kachin Independence Organization was formed and took up arms in response to growing subjugation by the Myanmar military political establishment in the Kachin region. "Since then, the Kachin State has been a fierce battleground living with armed conflict for the past 50 years; civilians suffered the brunt of these conflicts, enduring casualties, abuses and displacement" (a KIO education minister). Since the early 1960s, when the Kachin began their revolt and fight against the military government for restoration of political rights and self-determination, a large number of Kachin revolutionists entered the KIO. Displacement of the Kachin people began immediately following the KIO uprising against the Union of Burma's military government. Inevitably, during the following four decades of KIO revolution from the early 1960s to late 1990s, armed conflict remained a significant cause of ongoing widespread displacement throughout the Kachin region. Unknown numbers of civilians

within both the Kachin State and Northern Shan State were displaced, and an exact record of the impact affecting civilian inhabitants is inaccessible. The February 1994 ceasefire agreement between the KIO and the then-military government, signed at Myitkyina, Kachin State's capital city, granted the KIO political autonomy for governance of a Special Region in the Kachin State. The agreement called for creation of formal political, economic, and legal ties between the military government and Kachin authorities (Human Right Watch, 2012). Furthermore, the KIO and the central government agreed that some territory would be either under exclusive Burmese government or KIO control, and other areas would be administered as shared territory. "The KIO-controlled regions included a headquarters area along the China-Burma border, another area to the west of Bhamo, a larger zone to the north of the Kachin State capital of Myitkyina, and the largest area – a triangle of territory between the Mali Hka and Nmai Hka rivers, extending north to the China border, adjacent to the ceasefire zones controlled by the ex-Communist Party of Burma groups; the KIO also maintained influence over a number of villages in the Northern Shan State". (South, 2003, p-167) (see map in figure 1.1).

Ongoing conflict continued even following the ceasefire agreement, and South (2008) estimated that by 1994 a total number close to 70,000 IDPs and 20,000 refugees were impacted directly as a result of civil conflict in the Kachin region, and approximately 4,000 had fled into India. Often those affected would switch between areas on the Myanmar and China sides of the border. During this period, displacement was widespread and the exact number of displaced persons was difficult to accurately estimate due to poor access to affected areas; and international agencies such as the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Committee of the Red Cross were at the time not allowed to operate on any of Kachin State's borders (Human Rights Watch, 1992). Overall, the displaced received very little support from the KIO, especially for wives of KIO civil servants. Outside assistance was limited to the little which arrived from a Canadian Church which maintained connections to missionaries who lived and worked in the Kachin state prior to the civil war (Jolliffe and South, 2014).

During the first wave of displacement which occurred from 1961 through 1994, a significant resettlement effort was undertaken by the KIO and many revolutionists entered the KIO-KIA. The KIO capital was moved to Laiza and KIO-controlled regions, some adjacent to country borders, became important due to the proximity of China's border making this territory inaccessible for the Myanmar central government. Such relative inaccessibility for the central government facilitated the formation of the KIO-KIA revolutionary movement. Intensive fighting resulted in migration of many Kachin people to border areas, many of whom were villagers devastated by civil wars and violence. Prior to 1994, Kachin villages had been razed by the Burmese army during the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s. Human Rights Watch reported painful histories of abusive forced labor, torture, killings, rape, property destruction, land confiscation, and other abuses committed by the Burmese army both before and after the 1994 ceasefire (Human Rights Watch, 2012). In addition, the expansion of the KIO's administrative reach and ongoing KIO recruitment combined with Myanmar's abysmal economic management in the 1980s and 1990s, including demonetization of Burma's currency, to drive people throughout the country to seek an improved existence in new places where business opportunities were more available (Roi Aung, 2009).

Roi Aung stated that many Kachin migrated in search of better lives to Kachin-China border areas where they found opportunities for cross-border travel, trade, and resettlement back to their respective villages to engage in farm work, or migrated to cities such as Myitkyina and Bhamaw in the Kachin State. Due to this tragic situation of displacement, school education in the Kachin region was poorly accommodated or inaccessible in the Kachin villages which were remote and far from cities controlled by the KIO during the early 1980s. Children had access only to primary school education and one 45-year-old lady at the Je Yang IDP camp reported that the school was frequently shutdown for security reasons and that the community lived in fear of the military coup. This respondent reported that her family was displaced to Mai Sak Pa village near Laiza, and that the resumption of civil conflict in 2011 was the second time in her life she had moved to a displacement camp. From her story, it can be understood that the government counter-insurgency policy of 'four-cuts' implemented since the 1960s had devastating consequences for those inhabiting ethnic minority areas (Lenkova, 2015). The four-cut policy was an attempt to block access of ethnic armed

groups to food, funding, recruits and intelligence. This blocking action of the Burmese army was carried out through ‘destruction of villages, food supplies and human rights violations’, stated one KIO education officer, which led to waves of forced migration away from conflict areas. The four-cut policy was meant to destroy the resistance of ethnic insurgencies, however the consequence directly impacted on the ordinary civilian population living in conflict areas by impeding transportation and access to education and any health care system.

Table 3.1 The Wave of Displacement

Wave	Time	Reasons
First displacement	1961 – 1994	The establishment of homeland in the Kachin region by nationalists. To escape from warfare and the Burmese military’s non-corporative strategies.
Second displacement	2011 to till date	The refusal of military government imposed on border guard force (BGF). Political economy interest of Myanmar government and Chinese state owned investment.

The second wave of displacement occurred as the KIO adamantly opposed conversion of its KIA armed wing into a Border Guard Force (BGF) during a dispute over the major Myitstone dam project on the Irrawaddy River in 2011. The ceasefire agreement of 1994 broke down in June 2011, and to date more than 120,000 IDPs in the Kachin regions, including the Kachin State and the northern Shan State, have been displaced. The majority of IDPs reside in areas under KIO control with fewer IDPs living in government controlled areas. The Kachin community-based organizations (CBO) including faith-based organizations and individual donors provide most assistance to IDPs in the KIO-controlled areas. CBOs have varied types of relationships with the KIO which govern the implementation process for assistance to the IDPs, and NGOs enjoy

complete operational independence. In some instances, UN agencies have been able to provide limited assistance to front lines in the Kachin regions.

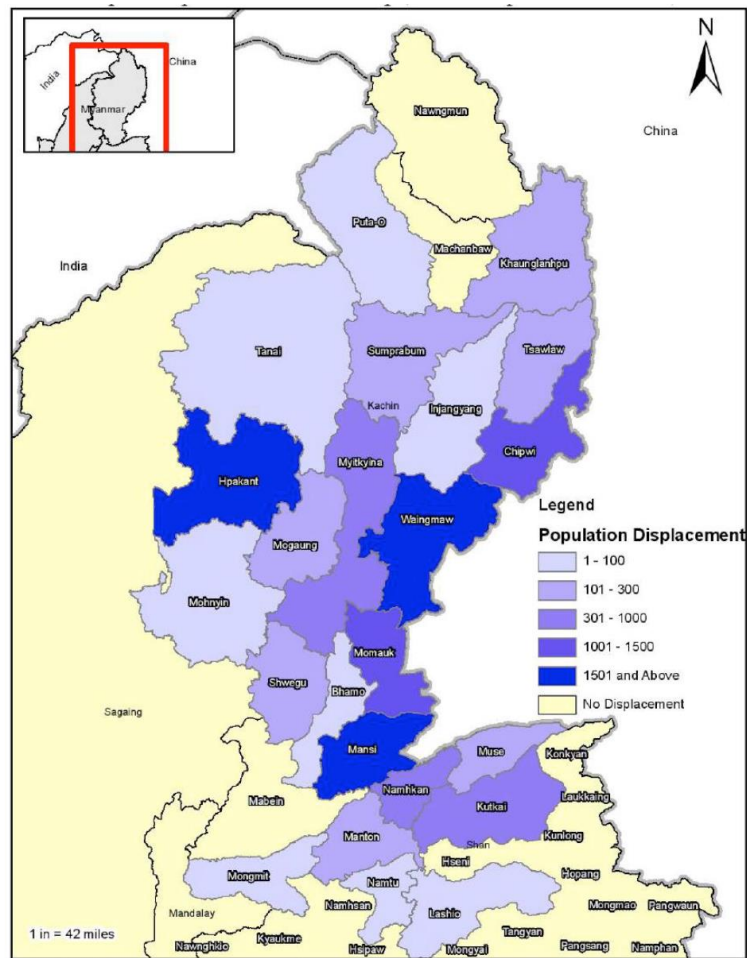


Figure 3.1: Displaced Population Per-Township in Kachin and Shan State  
(Source: Cross-camp and trend analysis report 2015 by UNHCR)

According to a joint report concerning local CBOs and national and international partner organizations released in January 2016, by the end of 2015 the number of IDPs camps increased to 132 compared to 126 in 2013, and 85 per cent of camps were located in the Kachin State with the remaining 15 per cent located in the northern Shan State. Civil conflict between the KIO and the Myanmar military government largely impacted on villages in both KIO as well as the Myanmar government controlled areas that were beyond KIO jurisdiction. The majority of these villages were displaced to KIO-controlled areas including villages near main cities such as Myitkyina, Waimaw

and Bamaw. Kachin IDPs were those forced or obliged to leave places of habitual residence to avoid the impact of warfare between the KIO and the Myanmar military.

Displacement has continued since 2011 and a large proportion of people living in camps face difficulties that include food security, economic security, human trafficking and elevated school dropout rates. These difficulties are a direct consequence of displacement and can be categorized as:

1) *Food Security*; beginning in 2012, numerous organizations provided IDPs with food and non-food support which lessened IDPs' concern over meeting their food consumption needs. But late 2014, supporting mechanisms of UN agencies and INGOs reduced food distribution and financial aid, and IDPs received only basic foods on a monthly basis, such as rice, oil, salt and beans. Food was distributed according to household and family size. Food relief represents a serious concern for IDPs which affects daily consumption due to both lack of regular jobs in the camp and land nearby the camp for farming or household vegetable gardens.

2) *Economic Security*; employment opportunities for IDPs are very rare. A few IDPs are able to find work at local farms and banana fields, but these jobs are seasonal. Camps are located along the China-Myanmar border and IDPs often cross to China in order to secure work as day-laborers earning 40-50 Yuan (8-9 US dollar) per day. Cross-border travel for work on the China side of the river is illegal and temporary.

On male respondent, age 40, living in the Je Yang IDPs camp described his experience as a cross-border day-laborer,

“I used to go early in the morning and return back late night to camp, I do not have temporary border pass, than Chinese border guards will not see me. But we need to have a strong social network in China and so far I have not arrested once. If I do not risk myself to work, my family will not have any income and the food items support are not sufficient to feed my family. My wife look after children at home (in camp)’.

The livelihoods of IDPs rely on seasonal labor available along the China border but work availability is limited. IDPs are exposed to labor exploitation by Chinese businesspersons due to insufficient communication skills and a lack of official travel documents and passports (Zaw Lut, 2013). UN aid programs merely attempt to provide assistance through local organizations, religious groups, and donations from overseas Kachin, including Kachin living in China, and is the only aid flowing into the camps. But any forthcoming aid helps only for survival because food packages include just rice and other basic foods, while medical treatment is mainly provided to the IDPs through Kachin managed clinics and hospitals. Other non-food items, firewood as well as supplementary food, which IDPs require must be obtained by themselves. Any vocational training or other programs designed to improve livelihoods programs are almost nonexistent in the camps. In addition, Myanmar government has no policy in place to support and safeguard IDPs, and IDPs consequently suffer from the lack a lack of economic access necessary to benefit the family and education opportunities for children. Prolonged camp existence for IDPs increases isolation and reduces livelihood opportunities thereby exacerbating their plight. Insecure socioeconomic conditions during the initial phase of living in the Je Yang IDP camp is the most important factor leading to human trafficking and increased school dropout rates.

A single mother of three children from Je Yang IDPs camp stated,

‘I work every possible job that provides any income. But I can only work 3 to 5 days per month as there are no regular jobs available around here (camp). All my three children are attending school. Since support was reduced, we (family) sometimes just make our meals with boiled vegetables to make soup and sometimes I do not even have soap to do washing. I feel so embarrassed but I need to ask my neighbor’

This quote demonstrates that availability of jobs in areas surrounding the IDPs camps are not permanent and IDPs can earn only very limited income insufficient to cover family expenses. While living in the camps, IDPs continually worry aid will be reduced or stopped because humanitarian aid is crucially important for meeting daily family consumption needs.



3) *Human trafficking*; Lack of aid reaching the Kachin state, especially the Myanmar-China border areas, has resulted in increased risk for human trafficking into China. Young people seeking work attempt to cross into China where they become targets for human traffickers, informed one Laiza district education officer. In June 2013, the Kachin Women's Association Thailand (KWAT) published a report "Pushed to the Brink - conflict and human trafficking on the Kachin-China border" which detailed 24 cases of actual or suspected trafficking in the Kachin border areas following the resumption of fighting in June 2011, mostly involving young women and girls displaced by the war. These cases concerned those who were tricked, drugged, raped, and sold to Chinese men or families as brides or bonded laborers. In the Je Yang IDP camp during 2014, according to the Laiza district education officer, there were three cases of attempted trafficking. All involved teenage girls between the ages 14 and 16 years who were fortunately rescued. This officer added that children lost interest in their studies, especially during teenage years, and this circumstance represented another huge impact of the wider civil conflict with grievous consequences for the next generation. The main causes fueling widespread human trafficking inside Kachin regions are attributable to extensive displacement, lack of IDPs protection, shortage of humanitarian aid and easy access to the China boundary.

4) *School Dropout*; Dropping out of school is also a serious consequence which families face due to camp related financial difficulty which diverts children from their education to assisting their parents with domestic work. According to the Je Yang School Head,

'Every year at least 10 to 15 students drop out, mostly at grade seven. Although students are in grade seven, their age is between 14 to 16 years'.

In some case, parents hope their children will complete at least high school, 'but because of a mix of different family backgrounds in the camp, and anxiety and influence of peers, students leave school and work as wage laborers or cross the border, and that's when these young girls are exposed to trafficking', said a Laiza district education officer.

Therefore, over-age student schooling is another related issue that must be addressed which increases school dropout rates and is caused by suspension of children's schooling during their first two years of IDP camp induction, and also students are often late to enroll at the start of their elementary school years. According to the IRRC report (2014-2015) "Over-age students in the Kachin School", there is a 70 per cent lower high school enrollment rate for over-age students compared to the enrollment rate for students at the primary school level. Causal factors include availability of school teachers (10%), need to help parents (1.25%), over-age enrollment in primary school (5.63%), health problems (2.50%), orphaned or single-parent (2.59%), frequent exam failures (10%), students who exhibit at least two or more of the aforementioned problems (49.30%), attendance at Chinese school (18.72%).

Periodically, the political interests of both ethnic Kachin and the Burmese military created massive devastation and wreckage for Kachin people's lives which led to instabilities that hindered education, socioeconomic wellbeing and security. The long-term consequence of suffering induced by displacement and its resulting uncertainty has devastating consequences for the lives of internally displaced Kachin people. Armed conflict leaves those affected with no choice or option other than fleeing their homes and community which deprives them of the mechanisms for protection (Phukan, 2013) provided by a community network, access to services and opportunities for livelihoods. The Kachin people were displaced to extremely remote and isolated areas with no access to basic services, especially during their first wave of displacement. Internal displacement is both cause and consequence of conflict which restricted and limited Kachin people's rights to education, freedom of movement, and subjected them to violation of their human rights. The result of the first wave of displacement, in the context of education for Kachin IDPs, has been to create strong incentives for the community to collaborate with the KIO to establish initiatives for education even during very challenging conditions.

### **3.2 Initial Stage of Kachin Education Development**

The construct of provision of education has been variously defined. Richard Peters (cited in Aldrich, 2008) defined the general concept of unfolding education as an initiation into and development of ‘worthwhile’ activities. From Peter’s perspective, worthwhile activities center on the ‘promotion of knowledge over ignorance, of truth over falsehood, of concern for others over selfishness, of mental and physical well-being over debility and despair’ (Aldrich, 2008). This interpretation creates interest for the state to invest in education with several aims, such as prevention and protection of children and young people from exposure to labor exploitation, and provision of training to produce skilled workers who will contribute to a growing nation guaranteeing equitable development. Although strategies for the formation of educational institutions in conflict situations may be varied, yet education providers often share similar interests. These shared goals include investing in education for the creation of a more advanced state which provides institutions and growth leading to a better quality of life.

After the Burmese military seized political power in 1962, the purpose of government run schools was more political than educational and used by the government to exercise ideological control over Kachin people. By contrast, the Kachin nationalist concept of education was dominated by views based on politics and security to provide protection from Burmese military coup expansion and violence such as the burning of villages and killing of innocents. Due to the violence and human rights violations experienced by Kachin people, the Burmese language was prohibited in the Kachin schools and textbooks were translated into the Jinghpaw language. Later, education focused on the broader concept of Kachin nation building and the conviction that ‘Kachin children must be taught in Kachin, learn English and study Christianity’ to guard against the silent invasion through “Burmanisation” of schools by the majority ethnic-Burman government in its attempt to exercise ideological control over the minority Kachin (The Economist, 2015).

‘Educational ignorance and unawareness of the past has obstructed today’s educational process in the ethnic regions’, reported one KIO education officer. Historically, the initial stages for Kachin writing and literature was created by the missionary Rev. Dr. Ola Hanson, and the first book translated into Kachin in 1927 was the Bible. This makes it clear that the beginnings of Kachin written education were provided in the context of early missionary work. During the colonial period and also after independence, education services in Myanmar was mainly available in cities, including Myitkyina and Bhamaw in the Kachin State which are the state’s two main cities. No education was provided through schooling in remote hill areas. Western schools were introduced in ethnic areas such as Kachin, Karens, and Chins by Christian missionaries who converted members of these ethnic groups to Christianity. These schools provided education for both male and female students (Chai, 2014). However, even today education and schooling accessibility remains inadequate in regions populated by ethnic groups due to marginalization of the local people. When Kachin leaders formed the KIO/KIA in 1961, they fought a grueling and inconclusive war against the military junta. At the time the KIO was established, Kachin leaders assumed that Kachin regions would achieve self-determination within a few years. Thus, issues concerning schools and education were ignored and not included as part of the initial revolution agenda, according to one education officer. As years of intensive fighting continued in the region, Kachin leaders began to realize that autonomy and independence from the military government would not easily be obtained, a factor leading to renewed concern for education issues and the consideration of a 1969 inclusion of education priorities within the resistance agenda. This initiated introduction of an education system for providing knowledge and training to people living in the Kachin state.

The KIO opened its first schools in 1964 and 1969 as the Education Committee (EC) was formed under KIO administration to manage and oversee school establishment and recruitment of teachers (KIO education officer). During this period, the main goal of the EC was to open at least one primary school in each village under KIO administration. However, success in achieving this EC aim was limited due to the number of available students. As an example, any village seeking to open a school required at least 25 potential students as well as commitment from the majority of villagers. The promotion

of education over ignorance was an initiative taken by the community and guided by education planning and endorsement of the KIO.

The officer added that, although the KIO EC was in charge of establishing schools in the KIO-controlled areas, there existed no available financial funding and each step of the education process required collaboration with communities and community contributions. In order to open a school, the community should have recourse to provide basic needs for teachers such as living accommodations, and thus all community members should agree and commit to opening their school. This meant that a community wishing to establish a school for their children must first be prepared to contribute tremendous effort toward the success of the endeavor. Not every village was able to open a school and in this case it was possible for two or three nearby villages to pool resources to open a school facility which would meet the educational needs of the children living in these villages. Students walked to school and some were required to walk two or more miles to attend classes in a nearby village. Due to long walking distances and difficult access to education, over-age students who were stronger than younger or unhealthy children more commonly were able to attend classes, explained an IDP and refugee relief committee (IRRC) officer.

Beginning in 1972, schools were allowed to again teach using textbooks written in Burmese. The KIO realized that prohibiting learning in Burmese would hinder learning of important skills for communication and development through interacting with the future Burman generation. Thus, the political interests of leaders were put aside due to concern for the younger generation. Also, the KIO hoped to reveal the truth through discussion of past deceptions. And allowing the teaching of Burmese literature was one way for Kachins to strengthen and elevate their position in the political arena, according to one KIO education officer. Over time schools under KIO management increased in number to 210, and offered education from primary school to the high school level. Even with resumption of civil war in the region in 2011, currently there are 125 primary schools, 27 upper primary schools, 17 middle schools and 7 high schools, totalling 175 functioning schools with enrollment of about 20,000 students in the KIO-controlled areas. These schools include IDPs schools and normal schools located in villages.

However, due to intensive fighting between the Myanmar military and KIO soldiers, 31 schools were shut down in the Kachin region.

In order to promote accurate teaching of history and other courses, the KIO education system has incorporated a Myanmar government education curriculum for primary to high school level classes. In my opinion, the purpose of adopting the mainstream curriculum has two main goals; first, the KIO was not yet ready to independently develop a curriculum of their own at a time when political interests and strategy demanded more KIO focus on safeguarding their homeland. Second, although ongoing fighting continued for decades, the mainstream curriculum acted as a platform for preparation of the younger generation to integrate into the greater society when a lasting ceasefire between the KIO and military government had finally been achieved, and a ceasefire was signed in 1994. In addition, although a mainstream curriculum was adopted at this time, not all mainstream lessons were taught in the classroom, according to the Je Yang IDP School Head. She added, ‘lessons which concern the ideology of Buddhism and Burmanization, especially some History subjects, are not taught. The History courses provided by the mainstream curriculum are not accurate, and are neither geographically or socially relevant nor useful in the context of providing practical applications for Kachin daily lives and for students’ intellectual development’.

The KIO education system consists of (5 + 4 + 2 = 11), five years primary school, four years middle school, and two years of education at the high school level. Classes at all levels are taught mainly in Jinghpaw, with Burmese and English being used for instruction of some subjects. Kachin education includes Kachin literature which is taught in every grade and English is divided into two parts, regular English textbook (identical to that used in the Myanmar mainstream education system) and grammar instruction for grades six to eleven. At the high school level, there are four compulsory subjects, and students may choose one of two tracks upon entering, either arts or science. Table (3.2) shows that students in the Kachin education system are exposed to studies in their mother tongue allowing them to explore and better understand the subject matter as well as interact with teachers. It is also true that, although the Burmese mainstream curriculum was adopted, students remain weak in Burmese language and

literature proficiency. Because students in Kachin school learn Burmese curriculum, but taught in Jinghpaw language. However, it is noteworthy that ‘Kachin schools enjoy a good reputation compared to the underfunded state schools located in remote parts of the Kachin state, particularly for teaching subjects such as English’ (Htet Khaung Linn, 2016).

Table 3.2 Subjects Taught in KIO Schools

Level	Language Instruction	Subjects
Primary (Grade 1 – 5)	<b>Kachin</b> and Burmese	1. <b>Kachin literature</b> 2. Myanmar literature 3. Mathematics 4. English 5. Natural Science
Middle (Grade 6 – 9)	<b>Kachin,</b> Burmese and <b>English</b>	1. <b>Kachin literature</b> 2. Myanmar 3. Mathematics 4. English (1) text book 5. <b>English (2) grammar</b> 6. Geography 7. History and <b>Politics (Kachin)</b> 8. Natural Science
High School (10 – 11)	<b>Kachin,</b> Burmese and <b>English</b>	Compulsory 1. <b>Kachin literature ( Kachin history and politics)</b> 2. Myanmar literature 3. English 1 & <b>English 2 (Grammar)</b> 4. Mathematics  Choice: (Arts and Science route) Arts-History, Geography, Economics Science- Physic, Chemistry, Biology

The division of English studies into two separate courses, English Literature and English Grammar has had a beneficial impact on learning. Compare to Myanmar mainstream education, in each grade, Kachin students have to take extra subjects,

example in mainstream education system in primary four compulsory subjects, six subjects in middle and six subjects in high school levels. The Kachin education system adds course subjects which are not included in the Myanmar mainstream curriculum. At the primary level, Kachin schools offer Kachin Literature, and in middle school Kachin Literature is also offered alongside English 2 or Grammar and Kachin History and Politics. And at the high school level Kachin History and Politics and English 2 or Grammar are offered. Table 3.2, Subjects taught in KIO Schools, depicts language instruction and overview of Kachin education system, following KIO system's adoption of a Myanmar mainstream education system in 1970s.

Initially, the Jinghpaw language medium of instruction offered benefits for both students and the community, but further consideration is required to measure resulting challenges for other Kachin sub-groups. The Kachin region is comprised of six sub-groups including Jinghpaw, Zaiwa, Lashi, Maru, Rawng, Lusi. These sub-groups each speak different languages though share the same mythology, ancestry, culture and traditions. Jinghpaw became the official language of the KIO insurgency as Jinghpaw elites tended to dominate Kachin society and politics, and due to the Kachin nationalist movement before and after British colonial independence. Over time, this has led to a situation in which the language and elements of Jinghpaw heritage have come to represent the wider Kachin culture (South, 2008). Speaking and learning in Jinghpaw became compulsory for every student enrolled in the Kachin education system without regard to students' ethnic sub-groups identities.

The KIO Central Committee (KIOCC) is the main body which oversees all aspects of the decision-making process in the KIO-controlled areas. Under the KIOCC, the civilian body Kachin Independence Council (KIC) acts separately from the KIO, which is a political organization. Members of the KIC are appointed by senior leadership of the KIO party. The KIC is a central council that oversees the KIA (the armed wing) and eleven other main departments including departments administering Education, Health, General Administration, Foreign Relations, Commerce, Revenue, Agriculture and Forestry, Treasury, Auditing, Development, News and Information.



During the years 1978 through 1979, the Central Education Department (CED) was officially established at the Laiza KIO headquarters by upgrading the Education Committee (EC). The KIC administers the CED and oversees five divisional education offices which are the north division, west division, central division, south division and east division. The CED is responsible for decision making processes concerning appointment, promotion, transfer, confirmation, suspension, leave, and dismissal of Divisional Education officers. Distribution of divisional offices corresponds to the geographical location of operational areas of the KIO schools and are located throughout the entire Kachin State and much of the northern Shan State<sup>1</sup>. District education offices closely monitor at the township level and are accountable to the divisional office. The township level works closely with village tracks such as school, education committee and teacher parent committee.

The Kachin education system evolved along with the political revolution and according to education principles in line with the values and norms common to the national education system. The policy handbook of the central Education Department mentions twelve main principles of basic education, and the first four principles mainly concern loyalty and respect for the Kachin nation and its nationalist leaders. A typical example, every Kachin citizen must be trustworthy and honorable to the nation [Kachin]; must love, show loyalty to and protect the government [KIO]; and must show respect and loyalty to the leaders and the state (translation) (Kachin Central Education Department-Policy Handbook, 2006). Inculcation of nationalism through the national education process is not new in many countries of the world because the concept of 'national education' is generally a product of nationalism. Therefore, as the momentum of the national struggle grew, people became more conscious of defects and weaknesses in the education system. Before the 1994 ceasefire agreement between the KIO and the military government, the Kachin education system had prepared to integrate Kachin education into the mainstream education system to provide benefits for students, and because the Kachin education system was not yet capable of establishing an independent higher education system.

---

<sup>1</sup> The area of northern Shan State roughly corresponds to Namkham, Manton, Kutkai, Hseni, Muse townships and parts of namtu, Mongmit, and Lashio townships.

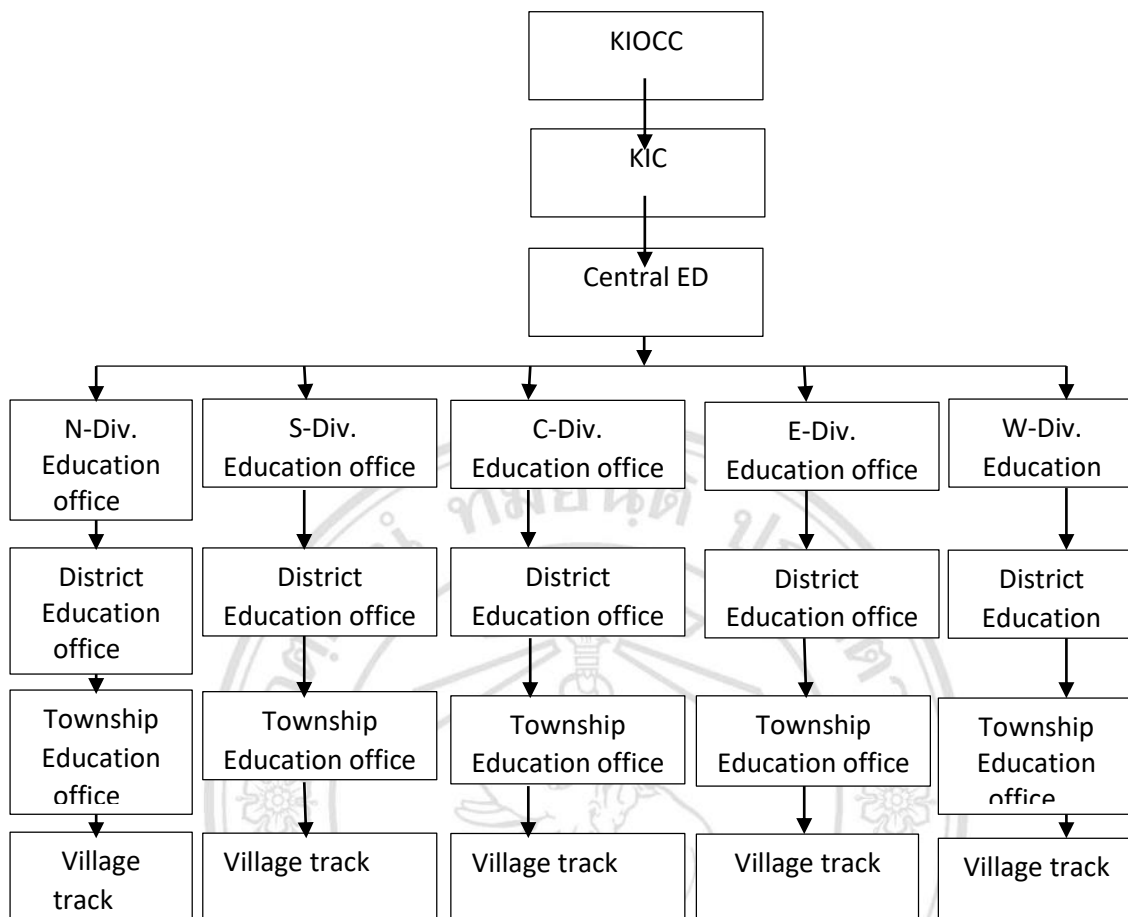


Figure 3.2 KIO Education Administrative Structure

Source: Kachin Central Education Department - Policy Handbook, August 2006

During the years 2005 to 2007, I volunteered as a teacher in the KIO managed Nong Ing middle school in the northern Shan State under the jurisdiction of the Brigade 4<sup>th</sup> station. Students originated from different regions, and mostly from KIO-controlled territory, to attend middle school after having completed primary school in their home village. The average age of the students was seven, and eight grade students were ages fourteen to sixteen, meaning that these standard students started basic schooling at age seven to nine. It was challenging for the school administration to maintain discipline because half of the teachers were from the city having arrived as volunteers and had completed high school when they were sixteen or seventeen years old. Therefore, the role of the community became significant for discipline and smooth functioning of the Nong Ing village school. Community participation began with renovation and building the school facility and teacher housing, and cleaning the school compound at three-

month intervals. Participation also included ensuring teachers' wellbeing, fund raising for the school, organizing school activities such as for Christmas and New Year, and more. The school lacked financial support for daily school expenses, and in response the community cooperated to harvest corn each year for fund raising. Every community support process was collective in nature, and the presence of one person from each household was required during collective work days.

As aforementioned, from the outset it became clear that establishment of a village school required complete commitment from the community. In general, the Education Committee bears overall responsibility for definition and ongoing review of educational philosophy, policy and standards for schools concerning issues relating to teaching, learning and assessments. But in the case of Kachin education effort, the Education Committee did not have a significant role due to limitations of financial resources and politically unstable conditions. Building strong relationships with local communities was paramount for success and gaining trust from the local people. In later years, the KIO Education Committee has had a greater role in management of education policy, teacher recruitment, teaching and learning assessment in addition to basic low-level school management. The Kachin education system (table 3.2.) is largely based on the Myanmar government education system's curriculum and content, and bilingual instruction is used, both Kachin and Burmese.

### **3.3 Education Integration during Ceasefire (1994-2011)**

In 1994, the military government and the KIO/KIA reached a ceasefire agreement which resulted in an end to large-scale fighting and lasted until June 2011. The 1994 ceasefire agreement did not include education integration as an important agenda and instead focused on socioeconomic development through cross-border trade (Roi Aung, 2009). However, the signing of the ceasefire agreement was an initial step toward development of a meaningful relationship between both the KIO and the military government which offered benefits and social services such as for education and health, economic and political, especially for the Kachin. The following section will elaborate the characteristics of the relationship and the resulting integration of Kachin education

into the mainstream education system, and the formation of various institutions within the Kachin region.

As described above in (3.1), the Kachin educational administration was prepared to risk enrolling Kachin students in a mainstream-based education system through adoption of the mainstream curriculum and education process. Creating educational hope for the next generation of students was a great challenge for the KIO education administration due to lack of human and financial resources. Although in KIO-controlled areas and after matriculation, students were presented with various choices for further study. The choices included attending a nursing school which functions under the KIO health department but lacks widely recognized accreditation in the field of nursing, or students could attend the army academy, or agricultural school, a teacher training college (TTC), or an Intensive Education Program (IEP) to become teachers at KIO schools. As the KIO education system was not recognized outside the KIO controlled territory, the profession subjects they learnt from KIO institutions were not recognized in the Myanmar government system. It can also assume that student who pursued the certificate or degree from KIO could practice within KIO control region and with that certification from KIO will not applicable to continue further education or practice in Myanmar system. Lack of accreditation form Myanmar system automatically apply that certify students from Kachin institutions could not access to Myanmar institutions as well as abroad education.

The process leading to the ceasefire agreement of 1994 became an important step forward for Kachin leadership, according to one KIO education officer. During 1993 ceasefire talks between the military government and the KIO, the KIO Education Department enrolled students in classes using the central government's mainstream curriculum in order to demonstrate KIO willingness to sign a ceasefire agreement and build a better relationship between the KIO and the Myanmar government. As a result of this KIO overture, students attended Kachin schools and students preparing for exams enrolled in the program two or three months prior to their examination period. The education officer added that there was then no official memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed between the Kachin Education Department and the

Myanmar government education system. The program resulted through mutual understanding and as a way to strengthen the ceasefire agreement. The majority of participating Kachin students were enrolled at the No. 1 Basic Education High School (BEHS) as the director of the school was Kachin making negotiations easier than would have been the case at other possible schools. The school and the KIO had already developed a close working relationship which allowed enrollment of students without any restrictions.

Although the Myanmar mainstream education curriculum had been adopted, the Kachin Education Department chose not to teach History using the textbook provided by the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), and instead taught History from a Kachin perspective; this approach emphasized the history of the Kachin revolution including biographies of Kachin revolutionary leaders. It also explained the reasons for the Kachin's 1961 revolt against the government as well as depicting revolutionary history relevant to other ethnic groups. Underscored in this history was the U Nu government's abrogation of the Panglong Agreement by not giving equal status to the Kachin State and the declaration making Buddhism the state religion. The Kachin students enrolled in the mainstream education curriculum faced challenges due to language barriers linked to daily communication and course content understanding. The Kachin Education Department's response for meeting these challenges was further integration with the mainstream education curriculum, especially for the matriculation examination, and Kachin schools were directed to begin using the State Peace and Development Council's (SPDC) History textbook, a decision which had positive implications for the ceasefire agreement. In order to pass the History section of the matriculation exam, students must know the SPDC textbook content; and for the sake of their children's future, the KIO decided to use SPDC textbooks in Kachin schools even though many people did not agree with the textbook's version of Myanmar history (Metro, 2006).

Within 17 years of the ceasefire agreement (1994-2011), hundreds of Kachin students matriculated from Kachin high schools and attended Myanmar universities. Many returned to their homeland and served in different sectors of the KIO and others went

abroad for further education. Among them, Mr. Tu Ring was one of the students who received a bachelor degree in History from Myitkyina University. Now he works as a teacher at Kachin's Laiza High School, near the headquarters of the KIO. I met Mr. Tu Ring in 2007 at Sama Boarding Homestay in Myitkyina, Kachin State. He had been enrolled in the Kachin school system and completed middle school before studying at No. 1 BEHS in Myitkyina, grades ten and eleven. After completing his bachelor's degree, he returned to his hometown and joined the KIO in 2012 in the Department of Finance. Following two years in the finance department, he shifted to the Education Department and, according to his point of view, work in the Finance Department did not present him with a productive environment, and he stated that everything he had learned could be lost if he did not remain close to books and education. He said, 'not everyone is granted an opportunity like I had in the past, and I want to contribute and help the younger generation through teaching'. He was determined to see that 'they [government] should not disrupt educational access for Kachin children of either political party', and stated his belief that political interests should not affect the educational development of children'.

Access to mainstream education during the seventeen years following the ceasefire agreement, and blockage of mainstream education access after 2011 had generated both benefits and challenges for Kachin education. The benefits were; seventeen years of a ceasefire which provided a stepping stone to achieve for Kachin students education outside the Kachin State and abroad in other countries, and it represented a means for educational preparation for unpredictable Myanmar political conditions existing between the KIO and the military government, and established educational institutions within the Kachin region, a process which was greatly facilitated by improved road and communication infrastructure in the Kachin regions. There also existed numerous challenges resulting from barriers to education access; during the years following 2011, Kachin student enrollment in government-run schools shutdown. Still, families having sufficient financial capital or whose relatives lived in cities could choose to make the effort needed to enroll their children in government schools. These students enrolled in nearby IDPs schools enabling them to study and with that they can attend respective grades in other schools. It could appear that government schools accept IDPs students, but they could enroll in certain schools only. These education options were available

only to fortunate families with financial resources and the knowledge necessary to navigate a path leading to better educational opportunities for their children, and the majority of families were less fortunate. For the majority of children, living with parents in IDPs camps and attending IDPs schools is their only means to obtain education. Those who completed high school in the Kachin education system were not presented with any practical avenue to pursue higher education in the mainstream education system. Students might obtain work or possibly continue further studies available and accessible within the Kachin region, but the scope of its offerings and content are limited for outside-the-box intellectual exploration. However, under such circumstances the KIO, over time, gradually attempted to create learning opportunities through the establishment of various supplementary institutions in the region.

### **3.4 Institutions in the Kachin Region**

Years after first commencing armed resistance against the central government, the KIO developed and now maintains an independent education system and curriculum which they perceive as being key to both growth and preservation of Kachin cultural identity. From its beginnings, Kachin educators believed that providing an equitable quality education system would encourage Kachin people to seek autonomy for the Kachin State, and that through basic education the Kachin cultural identity would be preserved for successive generations. However, the difficulties normally involved with creation of a successfully functioning education system in a peaceful stable political environment were severely compounded for the Kachin region undergoing constant armed conflict and by continuing armed intrusions of hostile military forces. “Basic education included shaping of attitudes, and providing knowledge and skills that define Kachin culture and traditions. Initially, defining and articulating quality education was challenging for the KIO education system because many Kachin people believed any person who was literate was also qualified to be an effective teacher. For example, if someone had completed grade four, people then thought that he or she was qualified to teach grade one”, said one Kachin educator.

In order to educate the community concerning appropriate teacher training and qualifications, the KIO Education Department organized the first of its Teacher Training Schools in 1997, and teachers were recruited from both Kachin schools and the mainstream education system. These training schools were designed to equip potential teachers with the knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and skills needed to effectively perform in the classroom and school setting as well as interact for the benefit of the wider community. During the years following establishment of the first teacher-training schools, other institutions were put in place to accommodate the needs of students who graduated from Kachin high schools as well as students enrolled in the mainstream education system. In the following section, I describe the various institutions for Kachin students which exist in the Kachin region, especially the institutions designed to meet the needs of the Kachin students who were unable to gain access to schooling in the mainstream education system.

*Intensive English Program (IEP)* - The IEP began in 2001 and was the first program to offer English language instruction in any KIO-controlled area, and was established in Maija Yang by Dr. La Raw and his wife. Courses at IEP were designed for post grade 10 and pre-college level students, but the program was also made available to university graduates and professionals wishing to improve English language skills. The IEP offers the certificate program (first year), a diploma in English proficiency and Social Studies (second year), and an advanced internship (third year). Each year applicants travelled from different parts of the country to attend courses offered by the IEP, but eligibility was granted only to Kachin youth. The IEP program is designed to meet the needs of students seeking to prepare for further education abroad, and its stated mission is the transforming of young students to become lifelong learners and community leaders who are always ready to serve the community with optimism and excellence.

*Maija Yang Institute of Education* – Despite initial challenges, the Maija Yang Institute of Education (in Jinghpaw-Maija Yang Amyusha Hpaji Dakkasu) was established in September 2004 with the support of the KIO Education Department. The Maija Yang Institute of Education began as a Teacher Training School in 1997. The school was later named Maija Yang Teacher Training College in 2008, and later renamed the Maija



Yang Institute of Education in 2014 with a focus on training school teachers. At present, Maija Yang Institute of Education offers courses of study including a pre-college program, a Diploma in Education, a Diploma in English and a postgraduate Diploma in Education (Kachin Land News, 2015). Currently, over 200 students from both the Kachin State and the Shan State have enrolled in the various programs offered at the Maija Yang Institute of Education.

Graduates of the Maija Yang Institute of Education educate to become in-service teachers for Kachin schools. Most graduates are assigned to teach in KIO primary, middle and high schools, and those who complete the post-graduate diploma program in Education may even be assigned as a school head in the primary and upper-primary levels. The research target school head of the Jeyang IDPs School graduated with a post-graduate diploma. She then received her bachelor's degree in Economics at Myitkyina University. In 2012, she first arrived as a teaching volunteer at Alen Bum Boarding high school, and after two years of teaching experience she entered the post-graduate diploma program which opened in 2014. Following her graduation in 2015, she automatically became an in-service teacher and anticipated further advancement to a higher academic position. For her, working as a school Principal was a challenging as the student-teaching staff ratio was high and educational resources were insufficient. Training teachers and managing students presented daily difficulties yet she completed the first six months of her position as a school head.

*Maija Yang College* - In September 2015, Maija Yang College was founded to meet the needs of students in KIO-controlled areas. After the ceasefire broke down in 2011 and war renewed between the Myanmar government and the KIO, students who passed the matriculation exam in KIO-controlled areas were banned from receiving further education in the Myanmar government controlled cities and schools. Within the recent five years (2011 – 2015), 633 students passed the matriculation exam held by the KIO examination board and some became teachers. Others continued their studies at the Maija Yang Institute of Education, or attended religious studies at Nawang Nang Kachin Theological College/Seminary (KTC/S), while others worked in local NGOs. Some students crossed the border (China) to become paid workers in sugarcane factories,

restaurants and shops. In order to accommodate students' desire for further education, the KIO and Kachin scholars around the world are collaborating to plan and open institutions of higher education.

'Maija Yang College represents a first step for providing our younger generation with a school of higher learning and exists as a result of KIO efforts to address the problem of lack of access to higher education opportunities', said a KIO education officer. During its startup phase, Maija Yang College was fully funded by the KIO to provide office maintenance, renovation, materials, and salaries for lecturers and office staff. However, administration of the college remains totally independent. He added that 'higher education should be free and independent in every aspect including college administration and curriculum, and the government should not exert control even though it still must support the college in many necessary ways.' The college's original intent was to offer four-year courses in six main subjects: Political Science, Community Development, Computer Studies, English Literature, Kachin Literature and Basic Administration. Both Kachin and English are used in classroom instruction. Kachin students who intend to pursue their studies at universities abroad are encouraged to attend Maija Yang College as preparation for further study at international academic institutions. Therefore, the KIO is seeking accreditation from neighboring countries and universities such as Kunming University in China.

Parents who are IDPs have high expectations for Maija Yang College. They see Maija Yang College as an institution where their children can receive the benefits of a higher education. Before 2015, some parents worried their children would not gain access to university level study opportunities. Parents realized that, because Kachin students were denied access to Myanmar's mainstream education system, only the Maija Yang Institute of Education and the English Intensive Program seemed available for their children to advance their education beyond high school. In addition, these available two schools were mainly designed to train students to become KIO school teachers. However, in my view, there still remains the dilemma for parents whether or not Maija Yang College can meet parents' expectations concerning the college's ability to provide the quality and breadth of learning which the college hopes to offer.

*Federal Law Academy (FLA)* – This academy was founded by the Legal Aid Network (LAN)<sup>2</sup> June 2014. The FLA provides a two-year course leading to a diploma in Law and is restricted to enrollment for Myanmar’s ethnic nationalities (Students who are of Burman ethnicity are excluded). The FLA’s minimum entrance requirement for students is that they have a high school education qualification. The FLA adopts its own mandatory curriculum which is designed to ameliorate any negative aspects of globalization while fostering globalization’s positive aspects, and addresses issues relevant to the changing political landscape of Myanmar. The LAN’s five members of its International Academic Board are also participating members of the academic board of the FLA. Academic board members include: 1. U Aung Htoo, Human Rights Lawyer and Founder of the Legal Aid Network, 2. David Fisher, Professor of International Law, Faculty of Law, Stockholm University, Sweden, 3. Dr. Suzannah Linton, Professor and Chair of International Law, Bangor University, UK, 4. Dr. Venkat Iyer, Law Commissioner and Barrister, Northern Ireland, UK, and Simon Young, Professor of Law and Barrister, Faculty of Law, University of Hong Kong. One FLA aim is to facilitate transformation of the national legal framework based on widely accepted international law, human rights laws, humanitarian law, and for equal rights and self-determination of all ethnic nationalities (Ei Ei Toe Lwin, 2016).

Even though institutions in the Kachin region were set up to accommodate further intellectual development, the question remains whether or not Kachin institutions can provide adequate mentoring for today’s young generation to help them achieve parity with students of other countries on a global level, and what modifications to existing strategies must be made. These questions are valid and pressing for all people living in the Kachin region, and especially so for the parents of children who are denied access to Myanmar’s mainstream education system. Academic institutions within the Kachin region are limited in their ability to reach out to international institutions for recognition. Lack of recognition and accreditation from international academic

---

<sup>2</sup> Legal Aid Network (LAN) was founded by U Aung Htoo, a human right lawyer, in October 30, 2012 with the mission of commitment to facilitate effort of grassroots people and activists, civil society organizations, lawyers and legal teams which aim to achieve human rights by establishing a peaceful, free, just and developed society with the underpinnings of genuine principles of the Rule of Law, mainly from legal aspect.

institutions for Kachin colleges and universities makes it more difficult for Kachin college graduates to enroll in schools abroad for further academic work. In addition, the current emergency situation in the Kachin region demands that CBOs, national organizations and the KIO all take a vital role in assisting the IDPs community to meet its education goals now and in the future.

### **3.5 Summary**

The ongoing Kachin education development process has faced numerous multifaceted challenges during the Kachin peoples' revolution beginning in the early 1960s. This chapter described the transformational politics of Myanmar after independence following the British colonial period and depicted two waves of massive displacement which occurred in the Kachin region. This chapter discussed the evolution of the Kachin educational process that contributed to the development of the KIO Education Department which facilitated improvements and expansion of the Kachin education system, as well as resilience and adaptability of the Kachin people. Transformational changes can be viewed as having both positive and negative consequences. When the KIO first took up arms in resistance against the central Myanmar military government, education institutions and facilities in the Kachin region were poorly distributed, especially in remote villages. Due to political constraints and ongoing conflict in the region, establishment of school-based education in villages was often impeded by many challenges such as destruction of school facilities by the Myanmar military. A primitive and unreliable communication and transportation network, as well as central government policies, interfered with securing aid and assistance from potential sources including international agencies and organizations.

Ongoing political struggles retarded development and provision of Kachin education in Kachin controlled territory, and areas populated by ethnic minority groups did not offer access to education at all levels. Provision of school-based education under the KIO was a key significant factor which allowed Kachin people to move forward and reap the benefits of education for their children. The KIO established its first Education Committee in 1969, although the first Kachin School opened in 1964, and initially the role of the KIO was not influential nor did the KIO financially support or control

education development. Furthermore, the KIO Central Committee showed little or no interest in prioritizing Kachin education due to KIO involvement in intense fighting with the Myanmar military coup.

In 1972, Kachin schools were allowed for the first time to teach in Burmese and introduced the Myanmar mainstream education system into Kachin schools. This became an effective strategy to bridge the gap between Kachin education and mainstream education, though no formal educational relationship was yet in place. However, in my view, teaching in Burmese and adoption of the Myanmar mainstream curriculum was a preparatory step for later integration of Kachin schools into the Myanmar education system awaiting a ceasefire agreement which then followed in 1994. Adoption of the mainstream curriculum was carried out after careful consideration, especially concerning introduction of school subjects and content. The KIO Education Department closely monitored policy and management of schools relevant to design of teaching methodology and teacher recruitment and extraction. As the education process evolved along with the ongoing political change, education principles remained in line with KIO revolutionary values and objectives, underscored by emphasis on loyalty, honor and allegiance to the Kachin nation [Kachinland] and the government [KIO].

The ceasefire agreement in 1994 was a great turning point for Kachin education and Kachin students, and the cessation of conflict provided the first opportunity for Kachin students to participate in the mainstream education examination process. This became a connecting bridge for the provision of education and benefits of social services including health, economic and political solutions. Earlier adoption of the mainstream curriculum in Kachin schools not only allowed students to participate in the examination process but also enabled them to enroll in government schools. Over a 17-year ceasefire period, thousands of students completed their studies at government schools, and returned to either work in the KIO, pursue further studies or make their own choices for future life paths. The KIO Education Department, over time, created learning opportunities within the region by establishing various institutions that bridged existing education barriers. These institutions include the Intensive English program (IEP), Maija Yang Institute of Education, Maija Yang College, and the Federal Law

Academy (FLA). When the ceasefire broke down in 2011, disruption of education access for Kachin students hoping to enter the mainstream education system created great challenges for students wishing to pursue further education. Overall, in every phase of the political disputes between the KIO and the Myanmar military, past and present, the role of the KIO significantly impacted on the lives of Kachin people, especially those who lived in KIO-controlled areas, as well as on education management of the current Kachin education in emergencies.



ลิขสิทธิ์มหาวิทยาลัยเชียงใหม่  
Copyright© by Chiang Mai University  
All rights reserved