

## CHAPTER VI

### Conclusion

#### 6.1 Research Findings

This study presents discussion and analysis of Kachin education development together with background and review of the Kachin peoples' decades-long struggle to gain political self-determination, beginning in the early 1960s. This paper also discusses the developmental process which brought changes in the Kachin education system as it evolved to become the institution we see today, one which also incorporates strategies and capacity for the provision of education to Kachin IDPs within an adequate education in emergency setting. Of particular note is the emphasis this study attaches to the role of community initiative and its prioritization which afforded a greatly improved outlook for achieving improved educational outcomes in the Je Yang IDPs camp community.

The author includes historical background of the revolutionary struggle which both contributed to massive displacement of people within the Kachin regions and negatively impacted on development and provision of education to displaced communities. The IDPs community's initiative for development of an adequate school-based educational setting as well as its determination to overcome challenges was the major driver that produced the many positive results evident in current IDPs school-based education programs.

This research project has revealed and clarified important data which adds to the understanding of complex armed-conflict related emergencies in the Kachin regions. This study may be the first empirical research concerning Kachin education development since the 1960s. It provides perspective concerning current IDPs education in the context of community initiative which is bottom-up and founded on a cooperative

collective approach providing the community important strategies to achieve a better future through both basic and school-based education. This study was successful in accomplishing its aims despite occasionally encountering challenges and difficulties along the way. This research followed from and set out to answer three main questions.

They are;

- 1) In emergency, what form of education solutions should be established and how does the KIO manage education in the context of internal displacement?
- 2) How did the IDP community organize its initiative for education? What were the contributions of the IDPs community to its initiative for education, and what were its expectations for the community and educational setting?
- 3) What challenges do IDPs face in the current displacement crisis and how do these challenges affect the teaching and learning process within the IDPs camp education setting?

Education is a fundamental right. Every child has the right to an education. This guaranteed right is embodied in the global agreement which states that every child has a right to education regardless of conditions or the circumstances in which he or she lives. In the case of Kachin education in emergencies, the KIO provides basic education to communities in its areas of control without reliance on or connection to the Myanmar Government's mainstream education system, and undertakes to open schools despite disturbances caused by the military coup. From its initial stages, provision of Kachin education had as its aim 'the promotion of knowledge over ignorance, of truth over falsehood' (Aldrich, 2008). Soon after establishment of the Kachin education system the nationalist prohibition against using Burmese written or spoken language for classroom instruction greatly influenced the purpose of education in Kachin schools. Although Kachin schools were prohibited from teaching or speaking the Burmese language, there was still no effective alternative curriculum created to replace the banned mainstream Burmese educational content, and during the early stages of Kachin education development the Kachin educational system lacked the capability and competency to provide localized content for classroom use in place of existing Burmese government educational materials. From 1964 to 1971, Burmese literature was banned, and it was

only in 1972 that some textbooks written in Burmese were reintroduced to Kachin schools. In this later adoption of much of Myanmar's mainstream curriculum, nationalist ideology and political interests were put aside in favor of furthering the academic needs of the young generation of Kachin students. Scholastic competency for young students became more important than the past policy of teaching political and historical truth rather than the misrepresentation of history presented in Burmese textbooks. The Burmese textbooks used in Myanmar's mainstream curriculum, especially History and Literature textbooks, contained content that was considered intrusive and which furthered the ideology of Burmanization and fundamental Buddhist teachings, considered locally irrelevant for people living in Kachin ethnic areas.

IDPs schools in KIO controlled areas, including the Je Yang IDPs School, are under the administration of the KIO Education Department. In KIO-controlled Kachin regions, the KIO education system is considered formal education for which the KIO Education Department has established education policy and strategies, including institutions for teacher training. The most significant single event in the development process of Kachin education administration was the decision to adopt the Myanmar mainstream education system during a 17 year-long ceasefire period (1994-2011). During this period, the KIO administration officially adopted the Myanmar curriculum and began to enroll Kachin students. KIO adoption of the Myanmar mainstream curriculum allowed Kachin students to sit for the national matriculation exam and to pursue advanced degrees at university. Therefore, there is dilemma and challenge of how to devise a curriculum that privileges Kachin education in the political goals and cultural identity but that also fosters access to accreditation (eg. Diplomas, degrees) in the wider world of the mainstream education system of Myanmar and foreign countries which required for employment and economic advancement. The historical outcome of this dilemma is an oscillating policy that has responded to changing political relation with the Burmese state – the periods 1961 to 1974, 1974 to 1994, 1994 to 2011 (ceasefire period), and 2011 to present. At present time the curriculum of KIO schools combines some elements of the Myanmar government education curriculum combined with an emphasis on Kachin literature, Jinghpaw language and the preservation of Kachin culture and traditions.

This study also documents Kachin education development evolved alongside ethnic political struggles since the early 1960s. In general, the important causes of conflict in Myanmar are disputes involving the right to govern populations, as opposed to just territorial control or natural resource management (Lenkova, 2015). The waves of displacement in the Kachin region followed the establishment of a Kachin homeland and the Myanmar military's response to monitor non-cooperative strategies. Consequently, in order to flee armed conflict, people migrated to areas near the Chinese border, either to cities or many of the displaced took refuge in isolated jungle areas in order to avoid warfare. The KIO's refusal to transform its organization into Border Guard Forces (BGF) and a dispute over the Chinese mega-dam project in Myitsone, Irrawaddy River, contributed to resumption of civil conflict and further internal displacement of the population. Internal displaced community respondents who were also parents reported that members of the displaced internal displaced community suffered challenges caused by inadequate transportation and non-delivery of social services that are easily disrupted by armed conflict. Nevertheless, people discovered creative ways of coping which allowed them to establish education solutions in their areas through setup of temporary schools and enlistment of community teachers. Displacement is both the cause and the consequence of an armed conflict which restricted the right to education and freedom of movement for people living in the Kachin region. The long-standing war led to the development of a parallel education system in conflict-affected areas. Over time, displacement of many thousands of people in the Kachin region caused urgent daily survival needs that overshadowed community commitment to education. After more than five decades of KIO revolt against the Myanmar military government, the KIO education system in the Kachin region is still evolving. Restrictions and limitations of funding, adequate human resources and technical support within the KIO organization continue to drive creative solutions for education development and progress. Both persistent fighting as well as the government's counter-insurgency policy of 'four-cuts' directly or indirectly impacts on access to education. Schools in conflict-affected areas face difficulties operating throughout the entire academic year, and in some isolated areas 'schools and health facilities became targets of attack during the course of the civil war (Lenkova, 2015).

Throughout the civil conflict in the Kachin region, Kachin schools were established to provide education opportunities to students enrolled in the primary through high school levels, and the KIO's Education Department remained the major education provider responsible for teacher and school administrator training at all levels – division, township and school; in the absence of help from the Myanmar Government education system, the KIO also became responsible for provision of school supplies. The 1994 ceasefire agreement presented Kachin students studying at KIO schools with the most opportune time for easier access to the Myanmar Government's mainstream education curriculum. There was no official memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed between respective education ministers of the KIO or the Myanmar Government. Early KIO adoption of the mainstream curriculum facilitated later integration of Kachin students into the Myanmar education system thereby providing Kachin students with opportunities for more advanced studies at local as well as international universities, and in addition prepared students for successful eventual entry into the national job market. Although conversion to the Burmese curriculum presented students with some language barrier related challenges, it also provided advantages for students to explore beyond the KIO education system boundaries and expand their academic horizon outside the Kachin region. Both shortly before and during the ceasefire period, several educational institutions based on the Myanmar curriculum were established within the Kachin region. However, as discussed in chapter 3, due to a 2011 resumption of war between the KIO and Myanmar military the KIO made the decision to abandon Myanmar's education curriculum in 2011.

A major issue which has caused difficulty for Kachin students enrolled in the KIO school curriculum is lack of official recognition of the Kachin education system by the Myanmar Government which leads Kachin students to face difficulties either entering the Myanmar education system or accessing government jobs. A further concern is the current need to meet high Kachin student demand for adequate education opportunities in Kachin regions despite insufficient KIO education resources and education officers. The need for schooling and study centers presently surpasses the available KIO Education Department's capacity to establish schools in all vital areas due to the large number of displaced people distributed throughout the KIO-controlled regions. A further consideration concerns student demand and supply of basic-education facilities

in Kachin communities which face potential hardship from limited resources, particularly for poorer displaced communities. In the past, creation of basic education for improving literacy skills in Kachin villages relied on collective community initiative which often required substantial labor and financial contributions and diversion of limited community resources, as well as overcoming issues such as teacher recruitment and teacher support and subsidy. However, new solutions may be needed to shift part of the burden for creating basic education away from sole reliance on poorer communities.

Second, this research evaluated the success of the Je Yang internal displaced communities' initiative for setting up education programs in the camp community and consequent development of an improved school setting. This research analysis applies only to the Jeyang IDPs camp which is one of the largest camps with the most residents of any in the KIO-controlled areas. The camp was established in June 2011 and now has 1637 families in 68 villages. This research also examined the role of the community in achieving common goals, and describes the community's participation in decision making and school administration; and the research measured the community's perceptions and expectations relevant to school-based education. Beginning with the initial planning phase of the Study Center program at the Jeyang camp, every stage of the developmental process included ideas and input from community members who clearly understood, even upon their first arrival at the camp, the kind of education program which would both provide maximal educational benefit and still be practicably accomplishable given the community's limited available resources.

The Jeyang internal displaced community initiative for education proceeded, since its inception, along a path of development envisioned by a small group of elders and educators. The process moved forward step by step in order to first set up a Study Center program and then, eventually, establish a more formal school-based education system for their community. The Jeyang community recognized that their first priority, even during an acute emergency situation, was to rely on collective decision making that included the entire community in order to provide successful educational opportunities for their children. Their decision to establish the Study Center program

during the first stage of development was a result of the community's realization that they needed to provide an immediate emergency response and they understood that providing education through creation of learning spaces would yield significant and broad benefits for the entire community. The community's prioritization of education and the welfare of its children revealed important elements of community knowledge involving family, children and locality. The community also understood the importance of forming a distributed education system using education sub-committees in order to provide multiple Study Center sites throughout the camp as well as other distributed educational services.

It is important to appreciate the significance of the community sacrifice which was needed to persevere toward development of an education system in the camp at a time when the community was impacted by severe hardship, insufficient resources, and ongoing worry over basic daily survival needs. Yet, the community through collective effort was able to remain resolute and committed to its initiative for education and its goals. All members of the community participated and collaborated through contributions of either labor or money or both, according to the means available to each member. After newly arriving at the Jeyang camp, the effort required of the displaced community was enormous and reflects their clear understanding concerning the importance of quickly providing education opportunities for their children regardless of the living conditions the community members endured.

The function of the Jeyang camp school and education committees is to manage and closely monitor school operations and education related matters. The committees enforce school discipline, resolve conflicts and solve potential problems between school and community, and teacher and parent. In existing studies, the role of the school committee is perceived to be organizational and involves school development work (Rose, 2003). But in the case of the Jeyang camp, the role of the school committee can be characterized as a mediator between school and community. Concerning school development and communication with stakeholders (CBOs), the school maintains direct connection with the community and community contributions flow directly to the school. In this case, genuine participation is not evident, according to Rose (2003),

because in a pseudo-participation dynamic the education committee is not involved in decision making, and only serves to give consent to decisions which have already been made.

The community's opportunity to provide input concerning the process of establishing educational programs strengthens school-community bonds and encourages community member engagement in school activities while enhancing their commitment to school development and progress. Through participation in the decision-making process community members build a sense of ownership and belonging, and shared responsibility within community. The two case studies (in chapter 5) underscored the importance of achievement of community participation at each stage of the decision-making process. Case studies also indicated that, in creating an atmosphere of dedication and commitment to education within the community, a single party or individual acting alone could not achieve significant purpose, as community itself is defined by the sharing of like values, norms, and responsibility. The study also demonstrated that the successful provision of education need not begin within a formalized educational setting, but that the community's eagerness and desire to acknowledge the importance of education can create a foundation on which a formal education system can later be built. In general, the expectations of the Jeyang internal displaced community concerning their initiative in education were simple. The community expected that their initiative would provide a better future, one in which they and their children could live better lives, and that through education they would achieve a society of peace through knowledge. Many educationists and scholars (eg. Fan and Chen, 2001; Rafiq et al., 2013) claim and suggest that expectations of community from education are more likely to affect their children when parent-child relationships are characterized by closeness and warmth, and directly affect the amount of parent-child communication about school. Unfortunately, these kinds of relationships in Je Yang community are rarely seen, and it could be due to the emergency situation in which the community continues to live.

Finally, the current Kachin internal displacement presents numerous obstacles for camp community members due to: 1) residing in remote border areas, 2) blockage of



humanitarian assistance by state authorities and transportation difficulties, and 3) limited job opportunities in border areas, and IDPs resorting to cross-border travel for day-labor employment that exposes them to human trafficking. Intensive conflict between the Myanmar military and the KIO pushed many civilians to take shelter in KIO-controlled Kachinland-China border areas where Kachin people feel safer. In reality, border areas are often conflict-prone zones in the Kachin State where transportation difficulties combine to make logistics even more difficult. These conditions add to the intentional obstruction of international humanitarian assistance by local state authorities causing delivery interruptions and difficulties for CBOs to manage and monitor the provision of services for internal displaced communities. This research also discusses the wider Kachin community contributions including the involvement of churches and individuals as well as Kachin diaspora which collaborate and coordinate aid and effort in order to improve IDPs wellbeing by any means they find available. The relationship between the KIO and Kachin society has been significantly strengthened through helping conflict-affected people living in the Kachin State. Ongoing armed conflict also constrains the ability of IDPs to gain access to social services including health care, education and livelihood opportunities. Due to insufficient humanitarian support, IDPs need to discover and develop coping strategies to survive hardship in the IDPs camps. When parents travel seeking cross-border day-labor employment, students and elderly grandparents normally remain at home in the camps. The absence of parents often may require older children to care for younger siblings, and consequently older children sometimes discontinue their education in order to help their family. Another important factor leading an older child to drop out of school is the awareness among older children of the family's financial difficulties. This knowledge of dire family finances causes children to lose interest in further study preferring to work and to help their parents. Children who drop out of school are at greater risk of subsequently being exposed to cross-border trafficking.

This research also identifies weaknesses associated with the humanitarian assistance provided to IDPs which indirectly increase cross-border trafficking and impact on the socioeconomic circumstances of families. Insufficient assistance leads to continuous worry for daily survival pushing families to seek cross-border day-work which exposes

them to increased risk. These consequences of insufficient aid also directly or indirectly affects the learning and teaching process within the IDPs education setting. And that, in turn, weakens IDPs parents' participation in school- and home-based education; and also weakens the parent's relationship with the school even if parents continue to firmly believe that education is important. It is generally assumed that, if parents invest time with their children, parental involvement in children's school-based activities, home-based activities and academic activities will yield a tangible return (McNeal Jr., 2014; Rafiq et al., 2013). Unfortunately, the involvement of IDPs parents in school was often limited by factors beyond their control, and due to family financial concerns parents could not devote time for visiting their children's school teachers; parents were instead preoccupied with securing day to day basic survival needs. This research reaffirmed that parental education level influences involvement in school, and lower levels of education tend to challenge parental involvement and can be an obstacle preventing the formation of productive relationships between parents and their children's school and teachers.

## **6.2 Discussion**

This research is best understood through comparison to and contrast with other studies on education in conflict circumstances that enlarge upon internal displaced community initiatives in education in order to examine similarities and variations. The following section is based on a comprehensive understanding of Kachin education in a conflict situation and relates to internally displaced community participation in education during the current emergency conditions in the Kachin region.

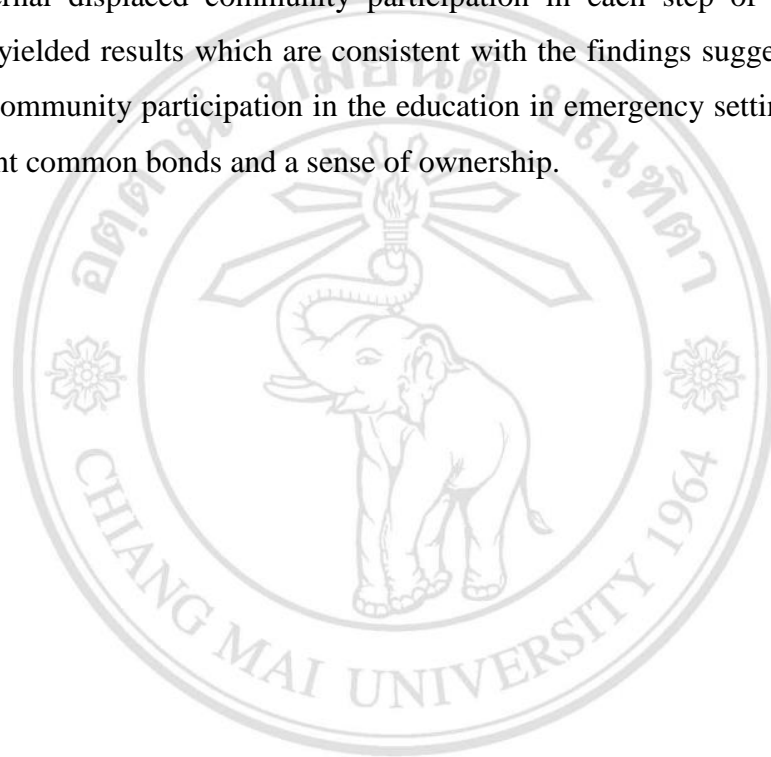
Internal displacement is not only a consequence of suffering from civil conflict but it has anticipated consequences for (Mooney, 2005) people who have fled their homes as a result of or in order to avoid the effects. Forced displacement, or involuntary displacement, is a devastating transformation (Cohen and Deng, 2009) and it influences and destabilizes political, economic and social foundations such as health and education of societies. This study explores Kachin internal displacement and the history of Kachin peoples' struggle to develop education opportunities for their communities. During the period from 1961 through 1994, grueling fighting between the KIO and the military

government resulted in a large number of people becoming displaced. In the midst of civil war conflict, the KIO established the Kachin education system. In 1994, following a ceasefire agreement, the KIO authorities and the military government began formalization of boundaries and plans for economic development (Roi Awng, 2009). The agreement primarily concerned only economic development, and social welfare services such as health care and education issues were excluded from the discussion.

The concepts of internal displacement and community initiative in education are key to the understanding of the Kachin struggle for access to education in IDPs camps from the beginning of the Kachin revolution up until present day. Weiss and Korn conceptualized internal displacement as 'sovereignty as responsible'. First, they advanced the concept that governments are responsible for the human rights of their citizens as part of the essence of statehood. People under sovereignty should be protected under the law of the nation-state or territory which guarantees political, economic, and social security. Second, failures of protection are often met with a weak international response. The implication and dimensions of international protection have had substantial normative, legal and operational consequences (Weiss and Korn, 2006). Education is a fundamental right and it is a central point of development strategies which is linked to the MDG and EFA. But in the case of Kachin internal displacement denial of access to government education was a key contradiction to the study's findings. Armed conflict and internal displacement are often obstacles to provision of education infrastructure; and schools are destroyed, safety of children is put at risk. School fees and educational materials requirements are also factors that obstruct access to education for children in emergency (Mooney and French, 2005).

In the presence of a government's lack of concern for the wellbeing of internally displaced populations, the community becomes the primary source of basic education support (Bray, 2003). Community initiatives are often basic regardless of living conditions, and involve community contributions of human labor, monetary contributions and monitoring of school-based education in order to ensure smooth operation of schools (Rose, 2003). Rose also proposed that the concept of community participation should not end with the completion of an outside project such as a school

building or renovation project. Instead, participation should broaden to allow the community to manage and maintain education facilities and infrastructure in order to ensure commitment and a sense of ownership of the school, and enhance the role of both community and parents. This research demonstrates how an internal displaced community initiative contributed to the creation of a study center program which eventually led to its integration into a more formal school-based education setting. Community contributions, especially labor and monetary contributions, and different levels of internal displaced community participation in each step of the education process have yielded results which are consistent with the findings suggested by Rose; that through community participation in the education in emergency setting IDPs could build important common bonds and a sense of ownership.



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