BARRIERS TO EDUCATION IN KUN HING TOWNSHIP SHAN STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to find out the common political, economic and social barriers that continue to deny the majority of children access to education across conflict-affected fragile areas in Kun Hing Township, Shan State Myanmar. A total of 64 parents of the out-of-school children, 64 out-of school children and five key informants from community-based organizations in Kun Hing Township, Shan State served as respondents of the study. School and classroom observations were conducted at Ho Pang Primary School and Karli High School in Kun Hing Township, Shan State, Myanmar to find out how school and classroom management affect the drop-out rate of the students. Data were gathered through survey questionnaires, interviews and observation checklists were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentages and frequency counts. Triangulation was used to compare the results from various instrument tools such as class observation checklists and answers from the out-of-school children, parents and key informants.

Based on the findings of this survey research, it was found that there are indeed many reasons why children in Kun Hing Township, Shan State, Myanmar remained out-of-school and had very limited access to primary school. These barriers were political, economic, and social in nature. From the findings of this survey research, conflict and political barriers were found to be the major barriers to accessing primary education. Indeed, out-of-school children, parents, and leaders of community-based organizations

have long perceived conflict as the central problem which caused them to suffer and experience violence resulting to political problems that isolated them from the other part of society and the school. Yet, barriers to education are not only limited to political matters. Economic and social factors are also barriers that are closely inter-related with the political instability of the country.

Based on the findings of this study, there is indeed a need to improve access to quality primary education in Kun Hing Township and other conflict-affected areas of Myanmar. It is with this premise that the proposed recommendations require the collaboration of government, international donors, NGOs and community-based organizations. Clearly, education projects require a positive nationwide political commitment by the government to succeed. Without a political solution to address the problems in Myanmar, education will remain in turmoil.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The principle of basic education as a human right has been accepted internationally. Lack of access to education stands in the way of human rights and development potentials. In fact, 77 million children are still out-of-school globally and, 46 million of them are in South East and West Asia (UNESCO, 2008). Over half of these children (53%) live in conflict-affected fragile states (CAFS) **(**Save the Children, 2009) and Myanmar is one of those countries.

Myanmar is one of the poorest countries in the world with 26.6% of its population living under poverty line (Central Statistical Organization, Myanmar, 2001). Significant conflicts since its independence from Britain in 1948 have had tremendous impact on the quality of life in the country, including access to education. Elsewhere in Myanmar, UN agencies have found that nearly 40% of children never enrolled in school and two-thirds to three-quarters of children drop out before reaching fifth grade. There have been substantial gains in enrollment since 1993 when Myanmar first developed its "National Action Plan for Education for All" with compulsory primary education. However, of all the countries in South and East Asia, Malaysia devotes the highest percentage of its gross domestic products (GDP) to education (6.2%), and Myanmar the lowest (1.4%). To date,

Myanmar remains far from meeting Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDG) targets by 2015.

Kun Hing Township is just one of the conflict-affected fragile areas in Myanmar. This study aimed to identify the barriers to accessing education in Kun Hing Township, how those barriers function, and the kinds of policies and programs that might prove useful in promoting increased access to primary education. Findings from the literature indicate that barriers to education fall into three broad categories: political, economic, and social barriers. These categories were used as guides in designing the case study in Kun Hing Township, Shan State, Myanmar.

Statement of the Problem

The history of insurgency and political failure in Myanmar are closely linked. Since its independence in 1948, and especially following the military takeover of 1962, representatives of Myanmar's ethnic nationalities have been excluded from meaningful participation in national politics. Historically, the "ethnic question" has been at the heart of Myanmar's protracted political, social and humanitarian crises (South, 2004).

Myanmar's independence from British colonial rule in 1948 instigated an armed conflict between various ethnic groups and the central government. A decade of civil strife followed independence, with ethnic insurgencies and political infighting amongst the urban elite, rapidly undermining the arrangements for democratic

governance (International Crisis Group, 2009). In 1958, the military staged a coup d'etat under the leadership of General Ne Win and civilian rule was restored through elections in 1960 (Callahan, 2005). Renewed political infighting in Rangoon and continued insurgencies in the countryside prompted the military to seize power again in 1962.

With the military authorities continuing a two-fronted assault against ethnic insurgencies and a broader movement for greater democratic participation, there has not yet been a return to civilian rule. These two struggles for (i) recognition within a federal system of governance by the ethnic minorities, and (ii) for democracy, led by the National League for Democracy (NLD) political party, overlap at points, but the political groups involved have maintained a distance from each other. The International Crisis Group (ICG, 2001) notes that the NLD is not the representative of the majority of anti-government forces, and "does not command the support of the main ethnic opposition groups in a way that constitutes significant pressure on the SPDC". To date, there has not been a coordinated political strategy between the NLD and independent ethnic political groups to overthrow the SPDC.

Upon seizing power in 1962, the military continued to engage ethnic insurgents in combat and pursued a policy of "ethnic assimilation", with the aim to resist calls for devolution through culturally and religiously assimilating minority groups (ICG, 2001). With the withdrawal of support by China, the latter collapsed in 1989. The military subsequently concentrated its forces against the ethnic insurgent groups through pursuing a 'divide and rule' strategy. In fighting these

insurgencies and in an effort to quell any further uprisings, the military vastly increased its ranks from approximately 180,000 in 1988, to an estimated 400,000 troops in 2001, disbursed in bases throughout the country (ICG, 2001).

The military continued its offensives against the remaining ethnic insurgent groups, particularly in the Eastern states. Numerous human rights abuses have been documented in relation to the conduct of these conflicts, particularly the 'Four Cuts' policy pursued by the military since the 1960s. This policy aimed to cut off armed ethnic nationalities groups from food, money, intelligence, and recruits (Fink, 2001). It has led to thousands of civilian deaths, and the destruction of food, crops and more than 3,000 villages (IDMC, 2009). Whilst the policy is now denied by the government, evidence compiled by UN agencies and human rights organizations suggests it was still practiced in the Eastern region offensives underway in 2008-09 (IHRC, 2009). This policy and other dimensions of the conflict had displaced an estimated 450,000 people within Myanmar as of October 2008 (IDMC, 2009), with high numbers of Karen, Karenni, Shan and Mon ethnic groups amongst the internally displaced and the refugees who have fled into neighboring countries.

Myanmar's (Burma) education system is also diminished due to long-standing neglect compared to its neighboring countries. Government expenditures are extremely low, accounting for just 1.4% of the GDP. Most children who enroll in school do not make it past the 5th grade; in fact, 57% of the children living in Myanmar do not complete primary school (Watchlist, 2009). However, despite ostensibly universal

education policies, the number of children attending school in conflict-affected areas is much lower than in the rest of the country. Estimates show that only 10% of school-age children residing in Shan, Karenni and Karen states are in school, while even lesser numbers of children are able to access education in areas such as Arakan State and Wa areas of Shan State. Indeed, the situation in war-ravaged regions is worse (HREIB, 2009).

Research Questions

This study was conducted to answer the following questions:

1. What are the characteristics of out-of-school children who have been denied education?
2. What are the characteristics of parents of out-of-school children?
3. What are the common political, economic and socio/cultural factors that prevent the majority of children from attending school?

Objectives of the Study

This study was conducted to find out the barriers to education among primary school children in Kun Hing Township, Shan State, Myanmar.

Specifically, the study intended to:

1. Describe the characteristics of the study site;
2. Describe the characteristics of the out-of-school children who have been denied access to education;
3. Describe the characteristics of the parents of out-of-school children;
4. Identify the socio-cultural, economic, and political barriers to education among out-of-school children; and
5. Provide recommendations that may be adopted by international non-government organizations and community-based organizations to increase access of out-of-school children to education.

Significance of the Study

The study tried to identify the barriers to education in conflict fragile areas of Kun Hing Township, Shan State, Myanmar. Results of this study will be able to provide a clearer picture of the conflict-affected areas and how the situations in these areas affect the lives of out-of-children and their parents.

The study also highlighted the political, economic and social barriers and how they relate to access to education for the children in conflict-affected fragile areas of Kun Hing Township. This finding will be able to serve the government in fostering to achieve its goal of education for all by 2015.

Likewise, the findings of this research can also serve as baseline information for the international non-governmental organizations and civil society in Myanmar in

developing their policy and practice toward increasing access to education. The results will also fulfill the needs of Non-Formal Education provided by cease-fired group in preparation for secondary education of the pupils.

Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study interpreted the data based on the barriers identified by out-of-school children, parents of out-of-school children, educational officials and community-based organization's staff in Kun Hing Township, Shan State, Myanmar. Nar Keng and Ho Pang villages which are under the cease-fire (insurgency) controlled areas were selected in order to capture the characteristics of conflict-affected fragile areas.

The study focused on barriers to education of out-of-school children in conflict-affected fragile areas and also tried to answer the question of what factors and how political, economic and social factors prevent large number of out-of-school children from attending schooling.

Hence, the reliability of the respondents' answers was dependent on their awareness and their willingness to open up. The level of information the respondents shared with the researcher might be limited to a certain degree due to the local context in dealing with government unit when it comes to providing sensitive information.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In order to address the research objectives in a comprehensive manner, the barriers identified from the literature have been organized into three categories: political, economic and social barriers. A vital central finding of this review is that these barriers are critically inter-related.

Political Barriers

Conflict and Violence

Undisputable are the effects of conflict and violence on access to education in conflict affected areas. Many of these have been analyzed in the following sections, including the ways in which poverty is compounded, discrimination is enhanced, curriculum is politicized, and quality and pedagogy are undermined. In addition, there are two particular aspects of the unique situation of conflict affected areas that bear elaboration as systemic barriers to accessing primary education: the physical destruction of educational infrastructure and the pervasive nature of violence and insecurity for children. First, conflict often destroys the education infrastructure in a country. The destruction is often intertwined with tensions based on language, ethnicity, or religion and comes about because schools are identified with the values and beliefs of certain

groups or ruling elite (Zartman, 2007). Second, general issues of violence and insecurity that permeate life in conflict affected areas also impact on access to education. For example, school children can be caught in the crossfire, when areas around schools become combat zones, where shooting takes place, and where there are landmines (Zartman, 2007).

Child Soldier

Wars and military conflicts inevitably impair the functioning of education system and are often associated with considerable destruction of the original educational infrastructure. Millions of children are prevented from attending school as a consequence of violent conflicts. UNESCO therefore regards conflicts and their consequences as the largest obstacles to realizing the "Education for All" objectives for many of the affected countries (Bensalah 2001, UNESCO, 2002).

In the 1990s there was a clear increase in the tendency for warring factions to recruit children as soldiers, a clear contravention of all the relevant international conventions and international law. The number of child soldiers worldwide is estimated to be at least 300,000 (Bensalah, 2001). Schools have proved to be suitable places for rebel armies and armed mobs to easily recruit children in large numbers. The International Criminal Court has accused the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda of having kidnapped over 20,000 children in past years and then abused these as soldiers or sex slaves.

As old as warfare, the deliberate use of child soldiering does not end but continues to rise. The global estimate is that over 300,000 children are being used as soldiers in different conflicts across the world at any given time (BBC; Breen, 2007; The endangered children of northern Uganda, 2006; Francis, 2007: 208; Grossman, 2007: 2; Madubuike-Ekwe, 2005: 1; Wessells, 2006: 2, 9). Of the 300,000 child soldiers, 40% are girls (Francis, 2007: 208, Wessells, 2006: 2, 9).

Myanmar Armed Forces have recruited and used children as soldiers consistently for more than 20 years. The UN Secretary-General has listed the Myanmar Armed Forces as a party that recruits and uses children in four consecutive reports on children and armed conflict to the UN Security Council (S/2003/1053, S/2005/72, S/2006/826, S/2007/757). The 2008 Global Child Soldier report estimated that thousands of children were recruited by the Myanmar Armed Forces. While the estimates on child recruitment in Myanmar are disputed, international and local NGOs have collected detailed cases that confirm that child recruitment by Myanmar Armed Forces is ongoing. The SPDC has repeatedly denied these accusations, claiming that the armed forces are an all-volunteer force consisting only of adults. SPDC's orders and military regulations, which have been widely promulgated, state that the recruitment of persons below 18 years of age is illegal. However, the SPDC's legal framework and high-level declarations starkly contrast with the well-documented ongoing recruitment of children into armed forces. While senior-level commanders give official instructions not to recruit children, they order battalion commanders to meet ambitious recruitment quotas notwithstanding high desertion rates and low volunteer rates. If battalion commanders fail to meet the quotas, they risk losing

their command position or face other disciplinary actions. In contrast, penalties for underage recruitment are weak. In 21 cases of recruitment verified by the UN between September 2007 and December 2008, punishments included official reprimands, monetary fines and, in one instance, loss of one year of military seniority.

These penalties seem particularly insufficient, given that some cases involved brutal forced recruitment and recruitment of young children. As a result of these weak penalties, local commanders often choose to commit the crime of child recruitment rather than fail to meet recruitment quotas imposed on them, which carry harsher penalties. The recruitment of children has turned into a profitable business for soldiers, civilian brokers and the police who receive money or food from recruiters for each new recruit (S/2007/666). In 2005, recruiters reportedly 'bought" recruits for 25,000 to 50,000 kyat, which was equivalent to about one-and-a-half to over three times the monthly salary of an army private, according to HRW, Sold to Be Soldiers, October 2007. Security forces might be rewarded with a leave from service or promotions for new recruits or, if they provide four new recruits, a service discharge, according to HRW. In particular, unaccompanied and poor children are more easily lured into armed forces with the promise of compensation, food and shelter.

Such inducements are usually combined with threats by the recruiters if the child refuses to join the armed forces 'voluntarily,' according to HRW, Sold to Be Soldiers, October 2007. For example, some police officers have reportedly made some children believe that it is illegal not to have a national identification and threatened to arrest them

unless they join the armed forces (S/2007/666, para.9). Military recruiters and security forces have also threatened to arrest children for minor offenses if they refuse to join them "voluntarily," according to reports of HREIB, Forgotten Future, November 2008, and KHRG, Growing Up under Militarization, April 2008.

Some children from vulnerable families carry out noncombatant functions at army bases to become enlisted upon reaching the age of 18 years ('pre-recruitment'). For example, a corporal of the armed forces recruited a 13-year-old boy from a village by promising him a job, according to the 2007 Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict in Myanmar (S/2007/666, para. 13). The boy was released after the parents wrote a letter with documentation of the boy's age to the Myanmar Defense Ministry. There are no safeguards in place for children who do not have proper age documentation.

While Myanmar law requires new recruits to be at least 18 years old, recruitment officers rarely ask new recruits to produce age documentation. In some instances, when boys volunteer documentation to show that they are under age, the document is destroyed or thrown away, according to HRW, Sold to Be Soldiers, October 2007. In many cases, recruitment officers have registered children as 18 against the child's claims, according to HRW. In defiance of its laws against underage recruitment, the SPDC army has also required boys and men to take part in "civilian army" or "people's militia" trainings, according to HREIB, Forgotten Future, (November 2008). HREIB published a letter sent

by a major of the Myanmar Armed Forces to a village chairman, demanding all men between 16 and 40 years old to attend military trainings on January 2 and 3, 2005.

As a result of the high demand for new recruits, children as young as nine constantly face the threat of forced or coerced recruitment by security forces and civilians, even in public places such as bus or train stations and markets, according to HRW, Sold to Be Soldiers, October 2007. The recruitment is often committed in the most brutal manner involving extended periods in detention cells, beating and other maltreatment, according to HRW. Moreover, the prevailing social and economic conditions in Myanmar contribute to the increasing vulnerability of children to being recruited into armed forces and groups, according to HREIB, Forgotten Future, November 2008. Some families consider the recruitment of their child in the army as their only viable option to ensure the child's survival and alleviate the family's financial burden. If forced to send family or community members, villages and families often decide to send children to the armed forces or groups to avoid losing their breadwinners. On their part, recruiters also specifically target children who are poor, out of school and potentially looking for an income. Although the army pays a meager salary, some former child soldiers reported the monthly salaries as a reason for joining the army, according to HREIB.

Conflict and Opium Cultivation

Myanmar has become the world's largest producer of opium, producing three-quarters of the world's raw opium and 50% of the heroin that reaches the US and the Western Europe (Liang, 1992). Majority of this opium is cultivated in north-eastern Shan State because of its favorable climate and geography which forms part of the much eroticized "Golden Triangle" where the boarder of Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand meet. The region's perpetual conflict and violence have encouraged the growth of the opium industry, revealingly Myanmar's sole financial success in recent years of financial decay and authoritarian rule. This has played a decisive part in the protracted violence and subsequent humanitarian emergency that has caused large numbers of the area's ethnic minorities to flee.

The State Peace and Development Council's estimate of war causality stands at 10,000 a year since independence in 1948, or over one million in total. There is also a growing health crisis with a possible 400,000 carriers of HIV (Smith, 1994). This fact, combined with widespread poverty and reports of malnutrition, led UNICEF to speak of "Myanmar's silent emergency" (Carey, 1997). A divisive colonial legacy, an ethnically heterogeneous society and chronic failure to deal with 'the ethnic question' have led to protracted, largely ethnically identified conflict pursued by insurgents with ideological goals, demands for independence or greater autonomy. Simultaneously, conflict has also led to an increase in warlordism and crime thinly veiled behind both these causes and blatant foreign occupation in the form of the Kumington (KMT). Protracted in the border

regions of Myanmar has compounded the effects of decades of economic mismanagement following the 1962 military coup and the policies of Ne Win's "Myanmar way to socialism" through autarky. This was followed by the limited 'liberalization' and subsequent foreign investment has had little effect in ethnic minority areas. Conflict in the border regions tends to be portrayed as peripheral to the 'problem' of Myanmar Development. It is however fundamental as ethnic conflict is central to problems of political stability and development (Silverstein, 1980, Smith 1991). The problem of opium as the main factor affecting conflict resolution and development likewise remains under-related by the international community (Chao Tzang, 1993).

The autarky and the economic crisis of "Myanmar's way of socialism 1970s" were countered by growth in the informal economy. The insurgents controlled the borders; they were able to control the cross-border trade in teak, jade and opium for legally unavailable consumer goods. This trade linked combatant with non-combatant traders through protection and taxation of all goods, and financed the survival of both insurgents' borders areas. It also encouraged growth in the opium trade as economic policies, politics (conflict) and natural conditions contrived to undermine both the viability of alternative crops and development and to leave opium and illegal trading as the only options.

Displacement

Globally, 42 million people were forcibly displaced at the end of 2008, including 15.2 million across international borders as refugees and 26 million within national border as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Conflict Affected States and their neighboring countries are home to the vast majority of refugees and IDPs worldwide, making displacement a particularly important issue when examining barriers to accessing education in conflict affected fragility states. Article 22 of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees binds the signatory states to "accord to refugees the same treatment as is accorded to nationals with respect to elementary education" (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1951). Yet children displaced either inside or outside of their national borders are often especially vulnerable to being out-of-school.

UNHCR (2007) identifies the barriers to access for refugee populations as restricted livelihood opportunities, lack of physical access to schools or to safe-school environments, and limited post-primary educational opportunities. IDMC (2009) similarly identifies the access barriers for IDPs as school fees and other school-related costs, opportunity costs of labor, insecurity, and lack of schools in areas of displacement. Many of these barriers have been previously analyzed; however, they can impact children in situations of displacement through slightly different mechanisms. They have usually left behind their possessions and, with restrictions on freedom of movement and the regulation of professions, often their livelihoods (Horst, 2006).

One can broadly define the three types of forced migration in Myanmar (South, 2007) according to the causes of population movement:

Type 1 - Armed conflict-induced displacement. This is either as a direct consequence of fighting and counter-insurgency operations, or because armed conflict has directly undermined human and food security, and is linked to severe human rights abuses. This type can be found across Karen State, in eastern Tenasserim Division, southern Mon State, southern and eastern Karenni State, southern Shan State, and parts of Chin State and Sagaing Division.

Type 2 - Military occupation- and development-induced displacement. This is generally caused by: a) confiscation of land – following armed conflict – by the Burma army or other armed groups, including for natural resource extraction and infrastructure construction, and b) predatory taxation, forced labor and other abuses. All border states and divisions are affected by militarization and/or 'development'-induced displacement, as are a number of urban areas (including in the context of developing tourism and 'urban renewal').

Both of the above two types of displacement are products of conflict. Type 1 is directly caused by armed conflict while type 2 is caused by latent conflict or by the threat of use of force. As such, they constitute forced migration and cause internal displacement (as defined in the Guiding Principles).

Type 3 - Livelihood vulnerability-induced displacement. This is the primary form of internal and external migration within and out of Burma. The main causes are

inappropriate government policies and practices, limited availability of productive land and poor access to markets – all leading to food insecurity and lack of education and health services. Such people make up a particularly vulnerable set of economic migrants.

Regional Isolation and Remoteness

Globally, four out of five out-of-school children live in rural areas (UNESCO, 2008). In an analysis of data from 80 countries which cover 83% of the out-of- school population, UNESCO found that 30% of children in rural areas were out-of-school compared with 18% of those who lived in urban areas (UNESCO, 2005). Living in rural areas as a barrier to access education is even more pronounced at secondary levels. Children living in the disadvantaged regions of their countries, whether in an urban or rural setting, are also considerably less likely to be enrolled in school. Yet there are some hints in the literature as to the explanations for these barriers which are especially related to the distribution of resources and the opportunity costs of schooling to families.

A second explanation for the barrier to access posed by living in a rural or neglected region of a country is the opportunity costs to school attendance. Fredriksen (2009) argues that there are more opportunity costs to education in rural areas than in urban areas in the form of firewood to collect, water to fetch, and livestock to herd. Other programs to relieve children of their household duties, such as early childhood care and the provision of water in schools can also reduce opportunity costs to families.

Systematic Discrimination in Policies and Practices

- *Curriculum*

The selection of what will be taught in schools both in contents and skills are often a difficult and contentious undertaking. It is a process of defining and selecting legitimate knowledge (UNESCO, 2006). Yet curriculum is not discussed in the literature on access as a direct barrier to children accessing education. Studies of curriculum development, social reconstruction, and ethnic conflict, however, present vivid examples of how curriculum can act as a barrier for children to accessing schools. Here, the examples deal particularly with the content of teaching, the content of textbooks, the epistemology or ideology of schools, and the language of instruction.

What is taught in schools clearly demonstrates to children the power structure in the society in which they live. They may see ethnicity and religion mobilized and politicized through education (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000). They may not understand what the teacher is saying because they do not speak the language used in schools (Brock-Utne, 2003). Disagreements and tensions over the choice of curriculum between the state, communities, and various groups with divergent views can provoke hatred and violence that makes schools unsafe spaces for children, thus hindering their access.

Human Rights Watch (2006), for example, documented 204 attacks on schools, teachers, and learners in an 18-month period between January 2005 and June 2006; and Amnesty International (2007) documented that 75 learners and teachers were killed in

such attacks in 2005 and 2006. Thus, children attended school in fear, and many families decided not to allow children to go to school as a result of the danger (Human Rights Watch, 2006). In this way, curriculum directly serves as a barrier to physically accessing schools. Disagreements over the course of curriculum development processes, and the sometimes compromised curricula that result can alienate children from their education, therefore, creating barriers to their learning in school.

In some cases, curriculum not only lacks relevance but can be insensitive to diversity or be overtly discriminatory. UNESCO (2004, 2005) advocates that curriculum adopt an inclusive approach that, if successfully implemented, could help to address the barriers that curriculum can create. There are several elements to this inclusive approach. First, the curriculum should develop understanding and respect for differences. Second, it should "recognize that while every learner has multiple needs even more so in situations of vulnerability and disadvantage, everyone should benefit from a commonly accepted basic level of quality education". Third, curriculum should be flexible so that learners need not learn the same things at the same time and by the same means and methods, but instead can learn according to their needs and abilities. While this inclusive approach was initially developed to meet the needs of disabled students, it has proven successful for all learners. In adopting an inclusive approach, teachers, curriculum developers, ministry officials, parents, and learners can accept, understand, and finally become knowledgeable about the diverse needs of learners (UNESCO, 2005). This approach leads to analyses of textbooks, for example, to illuminate the biased ways that women are presented, particularly as mothers, homemakers, and caregivers, with more limited professional

roles than men, and that reference to women decline in textbooks used in higher grades (Stromquist, 2005). Doing this kind of analysis is the first step in taking action to address the barriers to access posed by biased and alienating curriculum (UNESCO, 2005).

- *Ethnicity and Language*

Ethnic and linguistic minorities face some of the largest barriers to education worldwide. As referenced above, 68% of all out-of-school children live in some of the most ethnically and linguistically fractured countries on earth. Ethnicity as an access barrier has been generally understudied due to the lack of data in many lower income countries where individuals are identified by their ethnic backgrounds (Lewis & Lockheed, 2007). There are nonetheless several striking examples of the level of school exclusion of individuals and groups based on ethnicity and on language.

Ethnic minorities are also often linguistic minorities. They face barriers of language, such that they cannot access learning in primary school. Bamgbose (1991) argues that "language is without a doubt the most important factor in the learning process, for the transfer of knowledge and skills is mediated through the spoken or written word". While there have been numerous initiatives for mother-tongue instruction in early primary school, implementation problems often due to lack of trained and bilingual teachers have meant that often children are expected to learn in an unfamiliar language (Brock-Utne, 2003). While language of instruction is often a particular barrier to educational access for the ethnically marginalized, it can also disproportionately disadvantage girls who tend to be less familiar with languages of instruction, as they have

less experience outside of their communities (Education for All Global Monitoring Report, 2009).

The most recent research is clear that children are better able to acquire literacy initially in their first language and then to transfer those skills to the target language of instruction (Abadzi, 2006). For example, in Haiti, Creole-speaking children who learned in their mother tongue for the first four years of primary school acquired as much knowledge in French, the second language, as those who had been exposed only to the second language (Yeats, 2010). Interventions for mother tongue instruction not only improve learning outcomes but also boost enrollment and retention (Lewis & Lockheed, 2006). In Guatemala, for example, indigenous children in bilingual schools have higher attendance and promotion rates, lower repetition and dropout rates, as well as higher scores on all subject matters tests, including Spanish, than indigenous children in non-bilingual schools (Yeats, 2010). While bilingual education can be expensive, especially due to the necessary training of teachers and translation of textbooks, Patrinos and Velez (Forthcoming) demonstrate that bilingual schooling results in considerable cost savings because of the reduced repetition required for children when learning in a bilingual environment.

Language is important because knowledge and information are accumulated and maintained. Since language is a form of learned behavior by which people communicate with each other, it becomes a potent vehicle in which culture is passed on from generation to generation. The importance of language cannot be overemphasized because

it is the primary means through which culture is shared and transmitted (Francisco, 2005).

- *Quality*

The critical challenge of poor quality education acts as a barrier to educational access in conflict affected fragility states. Education quality apparently may refer to inputs (number of teachers, amount of teacher training, number of textbooks), processes (amount of direct instructional time, extent of active learning), outputs (test score, graduation rates), and outcomes (performance in subsequent employment). Additionally, quality education may simply imply the attaining of specified targets and objectives. More comprehensive views are also found, and interpretation of quality may be based on an institution's or program's reputation, the extent to which schooling has influenced change in student knowledge, attitudes, values, and behavior, or a complete theory or ideology of acquisition and application of learning (Adams, 1998). Full agreement among parents, teachers, administrators, and students as to the ingredients of quality, how to measure it, and how to initiate and sustain improvement is unlikely (Chapman, 2004).

Globally, the main obstacles to achieving universal access to primary education are related to initial admission and to reducing dropouts and improving the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills, the latter depends critically on the quality of the learning in schools (Fredriksen, 2009). Lewin (2007) argues that conceptions of access are not complete without attention to those who are "silently excluded," in that they are enrolled and attending, but learning little. Filmer (2007) asks the question, 'If you build a school,

will children come?' and Lewin suggests the necessary sub-question: 'will they stay?' Predictors of dropping out include repetition, low achievement, overage enrollment, poor teaching, degraded facilities, and very large classes (Lewin, 2009), or in other words, lack of access to quality education. Do teachers have the knowledge and skills to implement the curriculum and to teach in engaging ways? The literature is clear that teacher quality matters more than any other single factor for student achievement (Rivkin, 2004).

In these settings, with the under-investment in teacher training and compensation as described in later section, lack of quality education is an enormous challenge. Certainly, access to ineffective schools where little is learned is not meaningful access (Lewin, 2007). There is increasing evidence in lower income countries and in conflict affected fragility states, that in order to address barriers to access, analysis must incorporate indicators of quality, including attendance, achievement, relevance, and progression and completion at appropriate ages.

New research shows that learners, on the other hand, value quite different aspects of quality. In particular, what learners value the most about school is learning. Winthrop and Kirk (2008) found that across their research sites in Ethiopia, Afghanistan, and Sierra Leone learners express that attending school is not enough; it is the learning that happens in the classroom that matters to them. They connect learning well with the ability to hope for a better future. The quality of the learning also needs to be recognized by the broader community in order to be of value (Kirk, 2008). From evidence in seven articles in a special issue of *Comparative Education Review*, Davies and Talbot (2008) conclude that

learners make rational choices to attend school based on the skills they are able to acquire and skills that will allow them to enter into jobs as well as into decision-making within their community. In this way, lack of quality education can engender low demand for education and act as a barrier to children entering and persisting in school.

- *Pedagogy*

Alexander (2008) argues that "because the international debate about the quality of education has been dominated by those who operate in the domain of policy, accountability and funding rather than in the arena of practice, quality has tended to be conceived not as *what it actually is* but as *how it can be measured*". While there has been significant movement in the quality debate in recent years from a quite singular focus on inputs to one that includes 'indicators' (UNESCO, 2004), there has been a continued lack of attention to the role of pedagogy, in other words, how teaching happens and its influence on learning.

Pedagogy may be the most important aspect of quality (Alexander, 2008), and there is evidence that certain aspects of pedagogy may act as barriers to enrollment, attendance, and learning in conflict-affected fragile areas. More generally, teachers in conflict-affected states and in low income countries are not very often observed in the practice of teaching. Inspectors are over-worked and often lack funds for transportation to school sites, especially those that are remote, and school administrators often have

other things to worry about and "cannot control pedagogic practice" (Morobe, & Urwick, 2008), even if they have been trained in classroom observations.

The general finding of the studies that do exist is that dominant forms of teaching are "didactic", emphasizing transmission of knowledge from teacher to learner. In the "two-thirds rule" developed by Edwards and Mercer (1987), it was found that in a classroom, someone talks for about two-thirds of the learning period, that the teacher does about two-thirds of this talking, and about two-thirds of the time that teachers are talking, they are lecturing. In addition to being ineffective in promoting learning, teacher-centered methods can create an authoritarian culture in the classroom and make children feel powerless, decreasing their desire to attend and to learn (Sommers, 2002).

A number of explanations for why teacher-centered instruction dominates classrooms in conflict affected fragility states can be extracted from the literature. First, teachers are often impacted in their use of pedagogy by what they experienced as learners. Second, engaging in teacher-centered pedagogy may be safer for teachers in several ways. Chick (1996) describes the routine of South African teachers asking questions and learners responding in chorus as "safe talk", unlikely to place the teacher out of his or her comfort zone. Teacher-centered strategies also allow teachers to preserve authority over what transpires in the classroom and to maintain their own position of power (Moloi et al., 2008). Third, class size can limit what is possible or perceived as possible in terms of teacher pedagogy. In order to teach many learners, many teachers feel that their only option is to lecture (Nakabugo, 2008).

National Investments in Education

Globally the median allocation of national budget toward education is 16 to 17% (Brannelly & Ndaruhutse, 2008). There are issues of accountability, transparency, corruption, and leakage between national and local levels that need to be addressed in order to most efficiently invest available resources (Strategic Policy Impact and Research Unit, 2007). Yet the bottom line is that there is a shortfall of money within national systems to ensure that universal primary education is achieved by 2015.

In addition to erecting macro-level barriers around education system-building in conflict-affected fragile states, under-investment also contributes to the extent to which and the ways in which conflict affected fragile states are able to expand primary access to specific groups of out-of-school children. In particular, it provides three examples of supply-side investments that illuminate the effects of investment, or under-investment, on the outcome of interest to access to primary school. These are: the building of schools, the elimination of school fees, and teacher training and compensation.

- *Under-Investment in the Building of Schools*

First, the lack of sufficient investment in education often leads to lack of adequate supply of primary schools, especially in rural areas. Yet in more recent work with household wealth on educational attainment from 35 poor countries, Filmer (2004) finds more mixed effects. He agrees that when the distance to the nearest primary school is large, there are clear negative effects on enrollment.

- *Eliminating School Fees*

Investments in free primary schooling have improved access to school for children from poor families. Fredriksen (2009) argues that those children not in school are primarily from poor, rural families; the majorities are girls; many are disabled; and many are also orphans due to the impact of HIV/AIDS and conflict. He further argues that for these vulnerable children, "the indirect and direct cost of education to families is often the single most important factor excluding them from school. Colclough (1996) shows that school fees feature importantly in family budgets, so that even small increases in fees can have large enrollment impacts. This sensitivity to fees means that compulsory attendance laws are not closely linked to levels of enrollment (Colclough & Lewin, 1993). However in situations where costs of education are reduced or eliminated, usually with substantial support from donors, enrollment soars.

- *Under-Investment in Teacher Education*

Investment in teachers, specifically in their training and compensation, has resulted in both improved access to education and quality of learning. Teachers' salaries represent by far the largest expenditure within education budgets in low income countries. On average, they make up two-thirds of education budgets, and in some cases the figure is over 90% (Brannelly & Ndaruhutse, 2008). The absence of adequate teacher compensation in many countries results in lowered teacher morale, teacher absenteeism,

and a lack of interest in the profession. Teacher thus need to take additional work to support their families and are frequently absent (UNESCO, 2004).

Economic Barriers

Poverty

The barrier of cost was examined above as an issue of investment at a national level. Given that enrollment increases following fee elimination, it is clear that cost is a significant barrier to access for millions of children globally. The barrier of cost, not surprisingly, has a disproportionate effect on children living in poverty. Globally, 38% of children from the poorest quintile are out-of-school compared to 12% from the richest quintile (UNESCO, 2005).

In addition to the direct cost of school, there are three other primary reasons for which living in poverty acts as a barrier to access. First, Lewin (2007) argues it is the combination of direct and indirect costs that prevent children from accessing school. These indirect costs include uniforms, stationary, other learning materials and transportation. Second, areas where more poor children live are usually proximate to schools with less resources and often education of an inferior quality than areas where rich children live, serving as a barrier to initial access and persistence. Third, children living in poverty often have higher opportunity costs to attending school, meaning that what they give up in time and labor makes school relatively more expensive. These costs can exclude them from education. Often children in poverty, especially girls, have

different livelihood conditions than richer children. They take on more household tasks such as fetching water and firewood and looking after younger siblings. They also take on wage labor to support families, especially in situations such as conflict affected fragile states where adults' livelihoods are disrupted (Fredriksen, 2009).

There are additional ways in which poverty intersects with other factors to make poor children multiply excluded. While several studies find poverty to be a more important determinant of enrollment in school than gender (Lewin, 2007), girls living in poverty are doubly vulnerable to exclusion (Lewis & Lockheed, 2006). Living in a rural area and being poor interact in a similar way in serving as a barrier to accessing education. While the literature is clear that poverty is the most important determinant of access to education, understanding the interaction of poverty with these other factors may be the only way to expand access to some of the hardest to reach children who are multiply excluded.

Social Barriers

Gender

The progress in expanding access to education since 1990 has been most apparent among girls. Indeed, girls are beginning to catch up to boys in both primary and secondary enrollment (Lewis & Lockheed, 2006). Using data from an 80 country survey, UNESCO showed that 28% of girls compared with 24% of boys are out-of-school (UNESCO, 2005a). Lewin predicts that all but 24 countries will reach gender parity at

primary level by 2015 but that an additional 43 countries will still not be at parity at secondary by that time (Lewin, 2007).

Three particular gender dynamics of society and education systems help to explain the persistent gender barrier in accessing education in conflict affected fragile states, and they are explored below. They include opportunity costs associated with girls' school attendance; girl-unfriendly structures, cultures, and environments; and sexual and gender-based violence. Important to all of these analyses is how gender interacts with other barriers, such as poverty and rural residence as has been discussed in previous sections. Indeed, nearly three quarters of girls who are not in school come from excluded groups such as non-dominant tribes, scheduled casts, rural populations, ethnic minorities, and indigenous peoples, and yet these groups represent only about 20% of the population of the developing world. In this way, gender often acts as an "intensifier" of other barriers and means that girls are "doubly disadvantaged" (Lewis & Lockheed, 2006).

Disability

UN Enable estimates that 10% of the world's population experience some form of disability or impairment. And yet one third of out-of-school children are disabled (UNESCO, 2006). DFID concluded that a substantial proportion of disabilities in low-income countries are preventable, as the major cause is disease, with other causes including malnutrition and trauma caused by conflict (DFID, 2007). Given the prevalence of disease, malnutrition, and conflict, the number and percentage of disabled children

living in conflict affected fragile states may therefore be higher than in other low-income countries.

In the first multi-country analysis of disability and education, Filmer (1998) finds that youth with disabilities are substantially less likely to enroll in school in most countries and, in some countries, have lower transition rates to secondary school. He reports data on several conflict-affected fragile states, demonstrating that enrollment rates are lower for children ages 6 to 11 with disabilities than without. He shows that the degree to which disability affects school enrollment is often greater than other barriers such as gender, rural residence, or poverty. While this hierarchy of barriers is an important finding, the intersection of disability with other barriers to access is also critical.

The Education for All framework and the Millennium Development goals do not specifically mention disability, and the UN Secretary General reports "an urgent need to address the absence of more than 10% of the world's population in the implementation, review and evaluation" of these global commitments (United Nations General Assembly, 2008). While there is growing recognition of the rights of disabled people, and disabled children increasingly attend mainstream schools, World Vision UK argues that the model predominantly used is one of integration, not inclusion. Barriers to inclusion of disabled children still exist, if inclusion is defined as the "process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners to ensure participation in regular education and positive learning outcomes" (Bines, 2007).

Age

There are many reasons for which children do not begin school at the scheduled age. The barrier of cost can lead to interrupted schooling during years of poor harvest, for example, when families cannot afford school fees (Fredriksen, 2009). The inefficiencies of many education systems also lead to repetition for individual learners, resulting in additional overage children usually in early primary classes (Lewin, 2007). Children in rural areas often begin school at a later age due to the barrier of distance. Children who are overage often struggle to enroll in schools due to policies that prohibit it or due to social stigma. If they do manage to enroll, overage children are more likely to drop out than children who are the correct age for the grade level (Lewin, 2009).

In conflict affected fragile states, age is a barrier to education for several additional reasons. First, on-going conflict or displacement can interrupt schooling for many years (Sommers, 2004). Second, due to intractable poverty during times of conflict, children often delay or interrupt their education as a result of the need to work (UNESCO, 2008). Third, while the number of child soldiers is difficult to estimate, the most recent Child Soldiers Report puts the number at "many tens of thousands" actively involved in armed conflict in 19 countries or territories between April 2004 and October 2007 (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2008), Myanmar is one of those countries. Finally, distance to school, an impediment for young children in peacetime, brings with it the chance of violence, abduction, and rape in times of conflict and can result in delayed school entry (Save the Children UK, 2005).

Operational Definition of Key Terms

Barriers to education – refers to factors that hinder the primary school age children from joining school. These include political, economic and social.

Conflict fragile areas – refer to Areas which are affected by the fighting among government troops ethnic insurgencies in Myanmar. These areas also include cease-fired and arm struggling areas of Shan State.

Out-of-school children – refer to primary school aged children who are unable to access education including those who are unable to continue with their schooling.

Out-of-school children's parents – refer to the parents of out-of-school's children who are unable to access and continue schooling.

Educational officials – refer to chairpersons and senior staff of Township Educational Department.

Community-based organizations – refer to organizations basically formed by the local residents for the community's social interests.

Insurgencies – refer to the ethnic-armed groups fighting with the central government (Bama) to gain back self-determination and autonomy of the ethnic rights.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study is a survey research aimed to conduct a qualitative investigation seeking to understand the barriers to accessing primary education in Kun Hing Township, southern Shan State, Myanmar. The researcher developed a guideline to collect data from out-of-school children in Kun Hing Township, where a large number of children are denied access to education. The perspectives of the out-of-school children on barriers to education were asked and triangulated with the perspectives of the parents, community leaders, education officials, and CBO staffs in Kun Hing Township.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The researcher used purposive sampling technique to represent the study site, Kun Hing Township. Two villages were selected to represent the total population of the study, namely: Nar Keng village and Ho Pang village. Before 1996, the average households in the villages were only about 30 households. However, during the civil war from 1996-98, large populations from the other side of Pang River were forced to relocate by the government. Some were moved into Nar Keng and Ho Pang villages but some fled to Thailand.

Research Participants

In each village, 30% of out-of-school children were selected to represent the children's perspectives on the barriers to education. The study targeted out-of-school children who are in the primary school age of 8-13 years. In addition, parents of the sampled of out-of-school children from each village were also selected as respondents and were likewise interviewed on their perspectives on the barriers to education.

Community leaders, school leaders, educational officers, and CBO staff were purposively selected as Key Informants to represent the population of Kun Hing Township.

Research Instruments and Data Collection Procedures

Data collections were done using the following instruments: 1) survey questionnaires, one set for the out of school children and another set for the parents of out of school children; and 2) an interview guide for the key informants such as community based organization leaders, educational officials and cease-fire leaders. A classroom observation checklist, on the other hand, was used to observe school and classroom management in Ho Pang and Karli schools.

One out-of-school child aged 8-13 years per household was selected to represent the children's perspective on barriers to education. Parents of those selected out-of-school children were also selected to serve as respondents.

Ho Pang and Karli Schools were purposively selected to observe the discrimination and inequality in classrooms using a classroom observation checklist. Specifically, the upper primary school, Grades 3 and 4 were observed. Teaching learning styles and classroom management were observed two hours a day per Grade for three days to understand the behaviors and teaching learning styles of the teachers in respect to discrimination and inequality in classroom.

Data Analysis

The study used descriptive statistics such as percentages and frequency counts to summarize the collected data from out-of-school children, parents, community leaders, school leaders, and CBO staffs. The perspectives of out-of-school children were triangulated with the perspectives of the parents, community leaders, educational officials and CBO staff. In addition, classroom observations triangulated with the perspectives of educational officials, community leaders, CBO staff, parents and out-of-school children.

The analysis of qualitative data sought to explain ***what*** are the barriers that deny the children access to education and also ***how*** these barriers came about.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of the Study Site

Kun Hing Township is located in the middle part of Southern Shan State, Myanmar. The name Kun Hing refers to Kun Haeng "a thousand islands" in the local Shan language. It is located at 21°18′10″N 98°25′36″E and shares its regional territory boundary with Mong Paing Township in the East and South East and Mong Hsu Township of its North; Keshi Township at the North–West; Namzang Township at South-West and Mong Nai Township of its South of regional territory boundary. Kun Hing is located in the main road of Keng Tung and Taunggyi highway where many insurgency arm groups including the government military deploy their operations. This situation has caught the world's attention and has made Myanmar popular internationally and among the United Nations because of the high incidence of human rights abuses in Shan State.

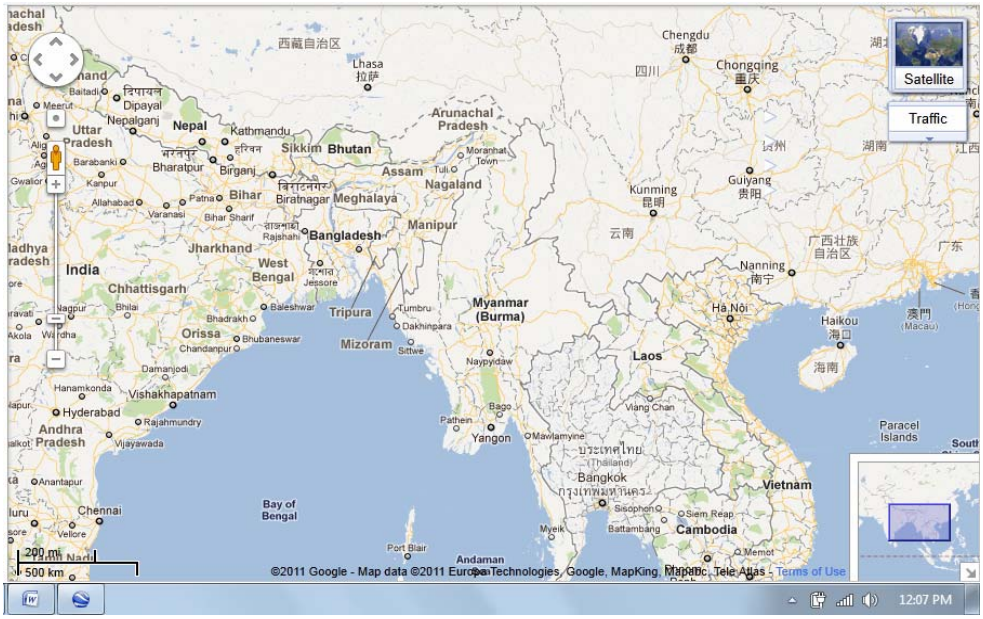

Figure 1. Map of Myanmar with neighboring countries

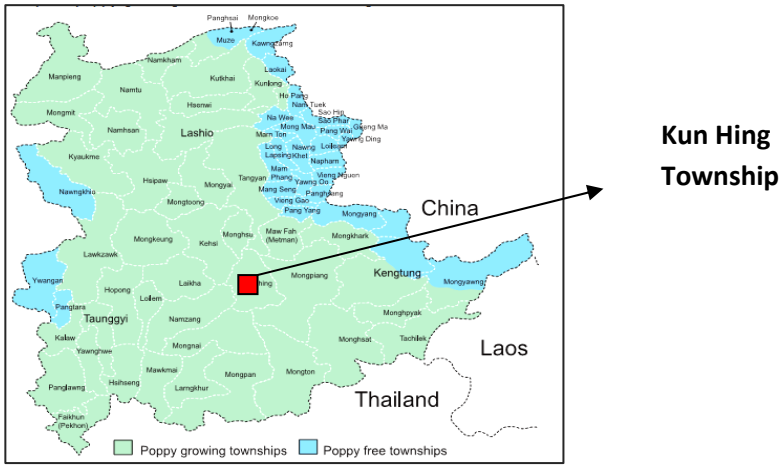

Figure 2. Shan State Map showing Kun Hing Township

The Insurgencies

The active insurgent arm groups in the area - the Shan State Army North, Shan State Army South, Ex-Mong Tai Army Militia, People Militia, illegal drugs trading group, as well as the government military use these localities to run their operations to oppose fighting against each other. These operations have led to regional conflicts and have made the people victims of the war. According to Shan Activist and Shan Human Rights foundation report, from 1996-1998 there were more than 3000 villages in central Shan State whereby more than 300,000 of the populations in the area have been forced to relocate.

The adopted constitution in 2008 and its implementation process again renewed the tension with the ethnic arm groups. The government refused to include the 23 cease-fired arm groups which demanded participation in the drafting of the constitution proposal at the National Convention. Instead, the government insisted on the adoption of the constitution without an inclusive participation. The State Peace and Development Council government party insisted on the adoption of the constitution with fraudulent voting. New tensions between the New Government and the Ethnics Resistance Armies continued to rise and fighting went on because the Border Guard Force plan was neglected under the un-inclusively adopted 2008 constitution implementation.

The Shan State Army-North (SSA-N) signed the cease-fire agreement with the government in 1989. Regional peace was maintained for 22 years before the cease-fire broke out on the 13th of March 2011. The situation was worse not only for the people

who stayed at Mong Hsu Township, but also for the people who stayed in the townships which shared bordering territories with Mong Hsu and Kun Hing.

The conflict between these two opposing groups made the people staying in the township to flee to Thailand as refugees and as IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons), hiding and seeking for a safer place. The people no longer go to the farm for cultivation for fear of their safety. Human rights violation such as gang rapes, illegal relocation, looting, illegal seizures of people's property, threats of burning down villages, torturing and killings of civilians who were suspected of being SSA supporters are happening in these areas.

These situations affected not only the physical but the psychological environments as well of the people staying in these conflict-affected localities. Basic commodities are expensive and the prices of common goods for daily use continue to rise due to the offensive operations in the areas.

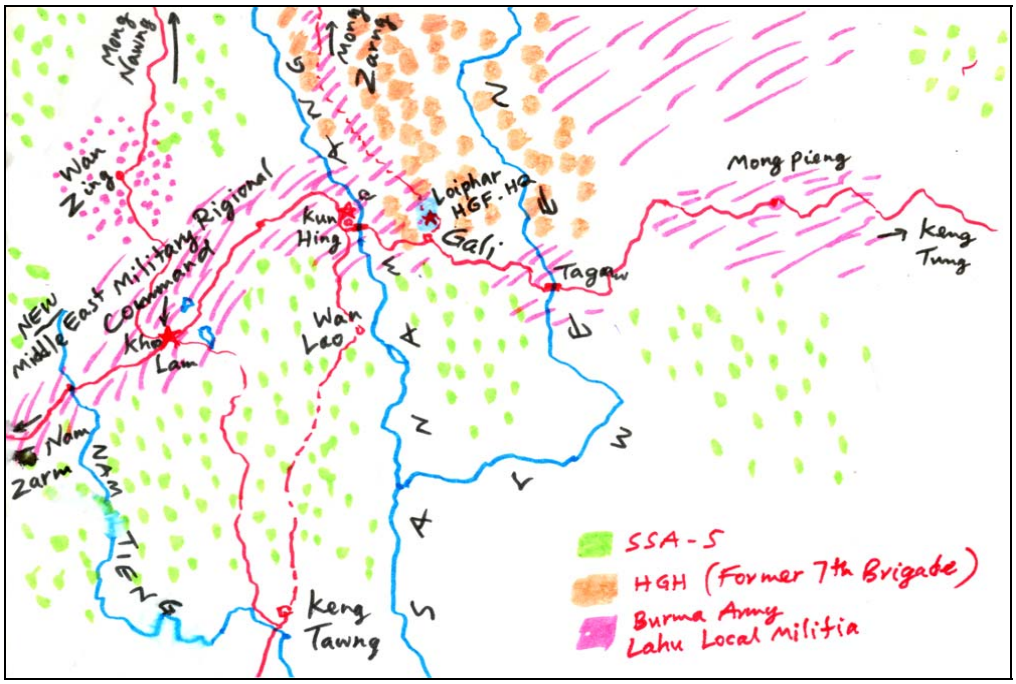

Figure 3. Map of Kun Hing Township showing areas occupied by insurgents; Source: Shan Hared Agency for News

Socio-economic Characteristics of Kun Hing Township

Kun Hing Township has an estimated total population of about 56,415 heads, 22,566 of whom are aged 18 and above while 33,849 are below 18 years. The Shan people comprise the majority people residing in Kun Kein Township while the minorities are Burmese, Chinese, Palaung, Muslim, Hindu, Lahu and so on. Because of the various tribes within the Kun Hing Township, the people follow various religions according to where they belong such as, Buddhism, Christianity, Hindu, and Islam while there are also others who had no religion. Majority of the people are Buddhists. With a large number of Shan people living in Kun Hing Township, Shan language is largely used for communication. The Burmese language is likewise largely used being the official

language of Burma. Nevertheless, Burmese language is only useful in town and within the government institutions. Because of the diverse ethnic tribes living in Kun Hing, apart from Shan and Burmese languages, Palaung and Chinese as well as Hindi are also being used for communication in the society.

The economy relied largely on farming especially in the rural areas of the township, whereas town people earned their livelihood through trading and transportation services. Aside from these, there were others who earned their living through mining in antinomy and gold and wood business, etc. Opium and rice were the popular crops in the area. Other products of the area were grain, peanut, soya bean, garlic, fruits, and various kinds of vegetables. Among these, grain, peanut, soya bean and opium were the products sold to other cities while the rest were just enough for use of the community. Although rice is one of the main crops of farming, the supply of rice was not sufficient for local use. Most of the products used daily were imported from Thailand such as clothing, cosmetics, snacks, food, beverages and cooking ingredients while other products such as petroleum, equipments for construction, vehicles, clothing, and chemical fertilizer were being imported from China.

Education System in Kun Hing Township

There are two types of education system in Kun Hing Township. One is the school operated by the Government Ministry of Education or public school while the

other type is the non-formal education provided by cease-fired army, Shan State Army North Brigade No 7.

There is neither a college nor a university in Kun Hing Township. There are two High Schools, three Middle Schools and 25 Primary Schools under the Department of Basic Education and are operated by the government. Currently, there are 3781 students and 198 teachers in Kun Hing government schools.

The other type of school is known as community-based schools provided by the local militia, SSA-N. These schools are located in rural areas and were meant for children who have no access to any education from the government. Shan language and literature are the main subjects taught in these private schools. Mathematics, Basic English, Geography, General Science and Shan History are also taught and the salaries for the teachers are paid by the local militia. There are 84 private schools built by the militia with 101 teachers and 3788 students. The militia group also holds teacher trainings in the area during summer holiday in order to improve the quality of their teachings and dissemination of information. The teacher training held every year encourages the teachers to work effectively for the community.

On the information access of the local people in Kun Hing, no public library was available to develop the knowledge of its people. Newspapers, magazines and journals were rarely up to date due to the difficulties of transportation. Furthermore, even if the use of modern technology has been increasing in all areas, the local people do not have

access to the internet. The unavailability of reading resources has made the people to lag behind in studying which also further increased the rate of illiteracy.

Transportation within Township

There are no public transportation services being run by the government in Kun Hing Township. Only private cabs are running from Kun Hing to the other cities connected with it. The roads are too old and are lacking of maintenance and so the people have to consume a lot of time to travel. As a result, the costs of transportations are much higher. The prices of commodities have also increased along with the rise in transportation cost.

Demographic Data of the Respondents

Characteristics of Out-of-School Children

Out-of-school children are the children who have never been to school and dropout students in the villages of Ho Pang and Nar Keng, a cease-fire controlled area in Kun Hing Township, Shan State. Nar Keng village is located in the very remote area which vehicles cannot reach during the rainy and cold seasons. There is no formal school in this village. Ho Pang village is 6 hours drive from the city and has one primary school. Thirty percent of the children from each village were selected to voluntarily join the interview to accomplish this survey research.

Upon arrival at the research sites, the researcher consulted with the respective village heads and requested permission to conduct the survey. Both village heads promptly discussed the matter with their respective committees and later announced to the whole village to bring their children to the interview place. The reason for the interview was also explained to help them better understand and not to be afraid.

During the interview, 17 females and 14 males showed up in Nar Keng village while 18 females and 15 males came in Ho Pang village. The females were more willing to participate more than the males who felt shy, lacked confidence in answering the questions, and felt inconvenienced to talk with strangers. The respondents were divided into two according to their age group: from *8-10* and from *11-13* with the expectation that there might be some differences in their responses on specific questions. There were more numbers of 8 to 10 age group in Nar Keng village than in Ho Pang village. However, the age group from 11 to 13 showed up more in Ho Pang village than in Nar Keng village.

As shown in Figure 3, the number of years in school was significantly different between Nar Keng and Ho Pang villages. Only three children from Nar Keng village had some experience in schooling while majority of them did not. On the contrary, majority of the children in Ho Pang village had experiences in schooling and only a few of them had none. The reason for this is the location of Ho Pang village. It is quite near the city and has easier access to school. Relatively, parents tended to prefer to send their children in schools that are near their homes. Almost all of the parents whose children showed up

during the interviews including other villagers were farmers and were involved in opium cultivation for many years. The reasons for drop-outs are discussed in the later part of this chapter.

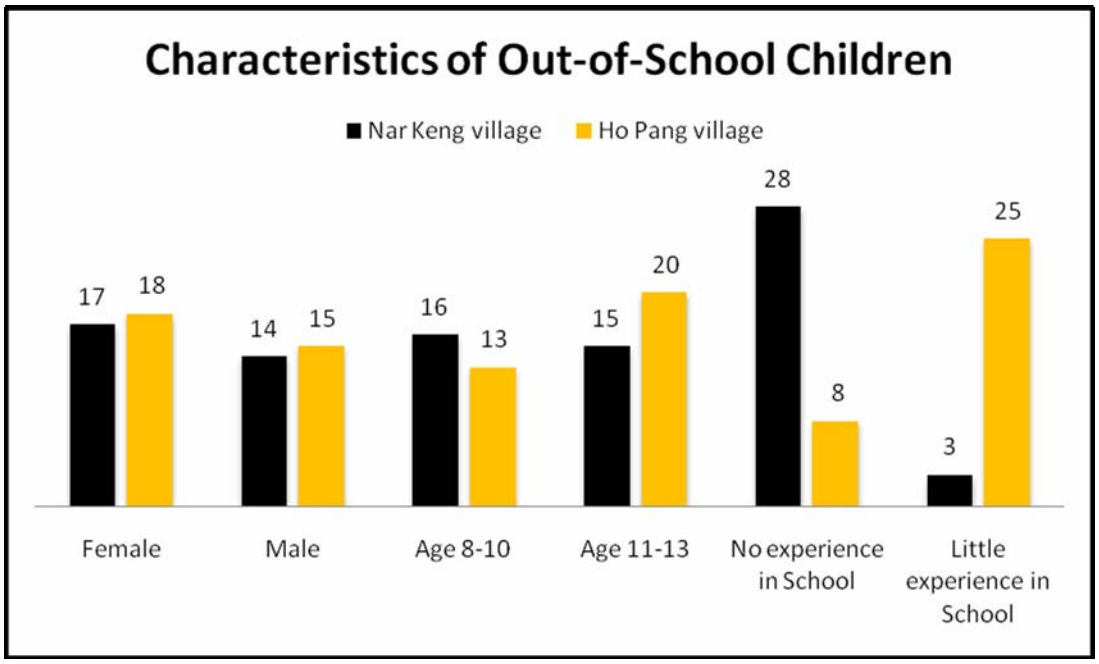

Figure 4. Demographic data of out-of-school children in Nar Keng and Ho Pang villages

Characteristics of Parents of Out-of-School Children

Parents of out-of-school children in the villages of Ho Pang and Nar Keng under cease-fired (Shan State Army Brigade No. 7) areas were selected to represent the parents in Kun Hing Township. Representing 60% of the parents from the two villages of the war

conflict areas, majority of them did not receive schooling when they were young. This incident made them to unconsciously believe in their minds that schooling is not one of the main components in their lives. For them, it is optional and thought of it as an unnecessary factor. There are many reasons affecting their way of thinking and way of life. Without appreciating the value of education and left with no choice, the people in these areas were placed as victims of the civil war since 1958 until the present.

Figure 5 shows the number of children per family ranges from 1 to 6. The number of children from 1 to 3 represented 10% in Nar Keng village and 24% in Ho Pang village. In reference to most of the parents, they had more than three children but only three out of these survived. This case seemed very ordinary to them as there were no nearby clinics and hospitals around. Giving birth to a child was mostly done by the parents themselves or by friends from the neighborhood, resulting to a high percentage risk.

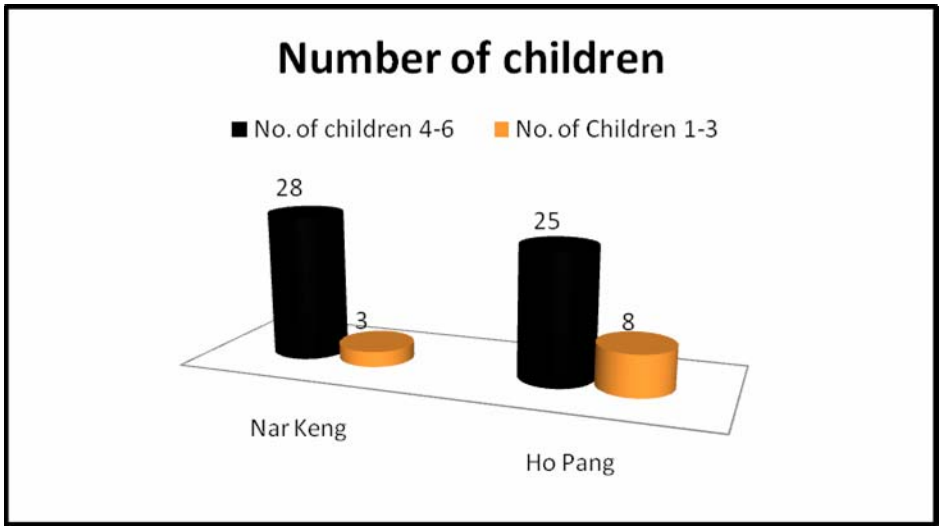

Figure 5. Number of children of parents at Nar Keng and Ho Pang village

The same was also true for parents with 4 to 6 children. According to them, while experience has taught them how to give birth safely they still believe that there would always be some child that would die. They seemed to believe this as a type of natural occurrence as it happens to all of the parents in the areas. The number of children aged 4 to 6 represented 90% in Nar Keng village and 76% in Ho Pang village.

The researcher at this point was shocked with the fact that majority of the children in the study sites do not receive schooling. All children helped their parents with their daily work in the farm, taking care of the sibling, cooking, fetching water and gathering firewood. Detailed reasons for these are discussed in the succeeding part of this chapter.

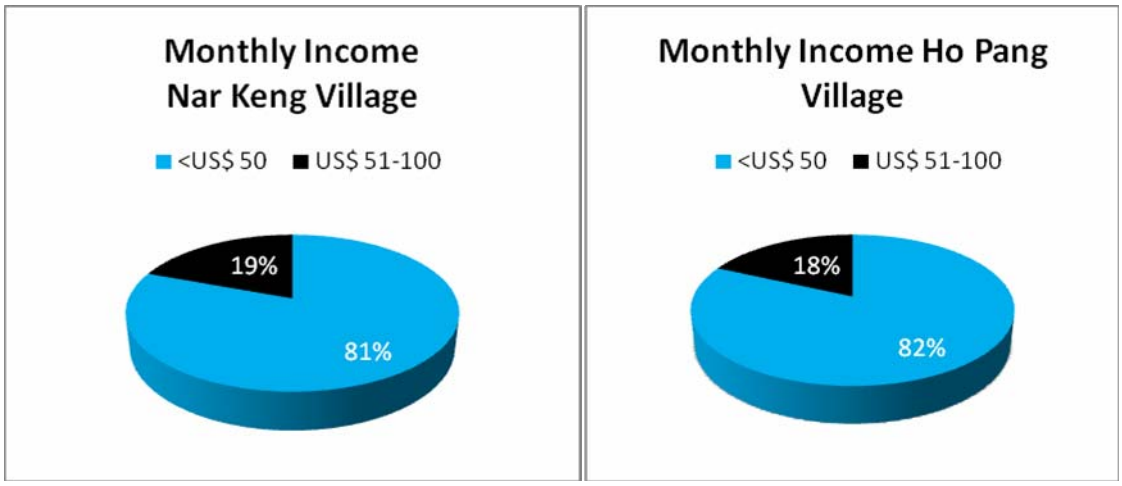

Figure 6. Monthly income of the out-of-school children's parents at Nar Keng village and Ho Pang village

All of the parents were farmers. While all of them were even involved in opium cultivation their average monthly income remained very low. An average income of US$50 a month with 3 to 6 children is a tough situation. Only 18% of the families barely got enough income for the whole year which is above US$100 per month. From US$100 income, they still had to pay tax to cease-fire army and Burmese military troops. Most of the taxes were illegal, unstandardized and irregular.

The parents, instead of receiving most of the money and profit from poppies they produced, were only able to get some catastrophic consequences. Although the traffickers or traders are the ones who get the biggest share of the money, the situation, however, forces the farmers to grow opium in order to survive, to fix their daily food, health care and other basic needs even if most of the money goes into the pockets of drug dealers.

At the same time, the growth of the poppy as the number one agricultural crop in the area stopped people from growing other crops. As poppy fields grew, other crops like rice, soya bean, ground nuts which are the basic food became insufficient and expensive. People in the areas grew only opium for their livelihood. They exchanged this with rice, soya bean and other basic needs at more expensive costs. In some years when the weather was not favorable for the poppy fields and poppy did not grow well, the amount of money the farmers got from opium sales could not even cover the cost of food and other basic needs for the whole year. Given the situation, a large number of people fled to Thailand as illegal migrant workers and sent money from their earnings back home to

help their families. Unfortunately, many of them had been sold out as prostitutes while others were hired under hard labor. They had no way of coming back.

Key Informants

The government officials were the key informants of this research and their answers were triangulated with the Community-Based Organization education program, out-of-school children, and parents of out-of-school children. Deceptively, the educational officials did not give the real situation of education in Kun Hing Township and had no confidence and trust in the researcher. All their answers were positive and implied that everything was perfect and excellent while the informants from the Community-Based Organization, on the other hand, answered in the negative and noted that there was a need for further improvement.

Township educational officials are the persons who assist, monitor, evaluate and draw the budget plan for township education annually. They are supposed to be the people who know well the barriers and challenges of the education program. However, in reality they ignore what is happening in the area and are able to maintain their positions by reporting that everything is going well. They are also afraid of any interview from the communities or any news agency. In other words, the safety and security of the interviewers could be affected as well. Their fear stemmed from the fact that they could be fired by their senior officials for whatever information they provided. So, they avoided any interview as much as they can for the sake of the stability of their positions. In this

survey research, the researcher tried to approach the officials through someone they trust, however the answers were still biased. Therefore, the researcher left out the answers from the educational officials as they were totally contradictory with the answers from out-of-school children, parents and other key informants.

Community-Based Organizations are working in the cease-fire (Shan State Army Brigade No. 7) controlled area. Their clients are the internally-displaced children from the civil war, out-of-school children, and conflict-affected children. They reach out to all war-affected villages in the areas where the government officials even never tried to reach. They provide non-formal education such as life skill trainings, basic education from grades 1 to 4 and other capacity-building trainings based on the needs of communities with the assistance of cease-fired army. CBOs are the main organizations providing education to those out-of-school children until today.

Barriers Identified by the Out-of-School Children

Political Barriers

- *No formal school close to their house*

All 64 out-of-school children respondents (100%) said they did not attend school because there were no schools close to their house. For them, it would be less expensive if there is a formal school near their homes since there will be no need for them to pay for

boarding house fees, water and other food expenses which are really more expensive in the city.

They said:

"*We have to pay for everything in the city. If we could stay at our home and attend the school we could save much money. My parents will be able to let me attend the school*".

- *Afraid to be soldiers*

There were 45 out of 64 children respondents (70%) who agreed with the statement "afraid to be soldiers" even if some of them were girls. Most of the children were afraid to be soldiers because as soldiers they will not be able to come home regularly to see their parents and will have to stay in the forest under terrible conditions (eating terribly, sleeping out in the colds, and fighting with stronger enemies wherein there is no hope of winning). As mentioned by the parents, being a monk at an early age until 17 or 18 and getting married immediately after conversion into ordinary villagers are ways out of getting into the revolutionary army as soldiers. Situations such as these are barriers which forced the respondents to stay far away from school and the formal school.

- *Displacement*

Out of 64, the families of 20 out-of-school children (31%) had experienced displacement. Five of them were displaced together with their family while 15 were born at their new homes after displacement.

There were no schools at the old village where they came from as well as in the new place where they relocated. When asked whether the displacement affected their schooling, the respondents smiled and asked innocently "*what is schooling*" and further stated that they have never been in school. Most of the displaced family did not even encourage their children to attend the NFE provided by the cease-fire group. The common reasons cited were: they could not carry their belongings from the old village struggling on their way to the new place with different geographical grounds, difficulty in finding land for agriculture and took time to adapt to a new weather. They had to start a new life from zero. They were looking for a place where they can settle and where there is land for cultivation, and they had to build a new house and start growing vegetables that they need for their daily food. During the transition of settling, some of their siblings died because of malnutrition and inability to adapt to different weather and diseases.

All the children said, *"We need to work for food"***.** Though this is a simple answer the reasons behind this may have many complicated problems that the government together with the community-based organizations should carefully consider and think about.

Economic Barriers

- *No money to enroll in school*

All the children (100%) knew that their parents have no money to enroll them in school. All of them would like to attend school until graduation from the university. They envied other children whose parents could send them to schools in the city and support their studies. Instead of schooling, they were obliged to spend their time in helping their parents with their work. Their days passed by naturally with no hope of a brighter future.

One of the children said, "*I also want to be in the city, studying, spending time with lots of friends, exploring life but I cannot. I know my parents' situation, we are poor, poor doesn't give us much options to choose in life*".

Other children were also saying that if they could attend school and become experts in any kind of knowledge that are useful for human life, they would help develop their communities and the Shan.

Those children who had little experience in schooling said they did not want to come back home even if their parents would ask them to. Being at school was fun for them because they could play with lots of friends, study about things they had never known, and learn to speak other languages.

- *Need to work to help their parents*

Poverty is a priority problem that needs to be addressed immediately in order to survive. Sixty of the out-of-school children said they needed to help their parents so that

they can get enough food to eat. Their daily routine consisted of waking up very early in the morning and preparing food for their parents so that they can go to work early, cleaning-up the house after their parents have left, washing clothes, fetching water and gathering firewood for next day's use, selecting cotton for the clothes, sewing and weaving clothes for the family, and/or sometimes binding leaves for rooftop (to use as rooftop of the house). The responsibilities were not really divided for girls or boys. Both girls and boys performed the same jobs.

Social Barriers

- *They do not speak the Burmese language*

All of the out-of-school children (100%) did not speak the Burmese language. Some of them dropped-out because they were shy to speak and have high inferiority complex on language matter.

One of the children said "*it seems that I am not a human like them, seems Shan language is not a language for the people to connect with each other. I feel isolated at school particularly with the teacher. At the same time I am happy to have other friends from the other places*."

When the researcher asked the child if it was because of the language that she dropped-out of school, she said, "*No, even if I could not speak the language properly I was happy with friends at school. They helped me to learn. We hardly get enough food from my parent's daily work so I decided to drop out as I believe I have grown up enough*

to work in the farm." There were other children who provided similar answers. There was discrimination at school, but it seemed the children can tolerate and live with that.

- *Don't know why we need to be in school*

Very seriously, 60 students (93%) said that they were confused of why they need to be in school. They said no one in their community earns their living from what they have learned from school and that those who were able to graduate could not even earn sufficiently for their living. It seems that the children could not find a role model among their communities and environment for them to strive to study hard and to develop goals in life. What they have seen every day were people going to poppy farm and getting married at the early age of 15 or 16. They have been illiterate from generation to generation and it seems that this culture has adapted into the conscious minds of the children.

- *Parents don't allow us to go to school/parents don't value education*

Thirty-one children (48%) felt their parents did not allow them to go to school even if they can afford to do so. The parents never considered using the money for their children's education and one of their reasons was because there is no guarantee that they could get good income out of poppies every year. According to the parents, there were

times when they did not get anything so they need to save for that kind of situation to avoid hunger.

Table 1. Barriers identified by out-of-school children

	Political Barriers	Frequency	Percentage
1	No School close to their house	64	100%
2	Afraid to be a soldier	45	70%
3	Displacement	20	31%
	Economic Barriers		
1	No money to enrol School	64	100%
2	Need to work to help their parents	60	93%
3	We have no food to eat	15	23%
	Social Barriers		
1	They do not speak the Burmese language	64	100%
2	don't understand why need to go to school	61	95%
3	parent don't allow to go to school	31	48%
4	parent don't value education	30	46%

Note: Number of respondents 64

Barriers Identified by Parents of Out-of-School Children

Political Barriers

- *Non recognition of the NFE by the government*

According to all the parents (100%), they could not enroll their children in formal school after finishing basic education in their villages. Most of the out-of-school children in the areas were receiving non-formal education (NFE) provided by the cease-fire army (Shan State Army). The main curriculum includes Mathematics, Shan language, Burmese language and English from grades 0 to 2. In addition to these subjects are general science and social science in grades 3 and 4. The schools were mostly located in the village and were easy for all children to access. Cease-fire education program is a community-oriented education program wherein the community is requested to share half of the expenses such as school building, teacher salaries and other facilities needed by the school.

Non-approval by the government of the NFE program created by the cease-fired army was one of the challenges attributed to barriers to education faced by the respondents. Moreover, the students who completed NFE could not enroll in formal education for their secondary school and tertiary education. Although there were some formal schools where the principals were flexible, students from ethnic minority groups were allowed to enroll but will have to start, from grade 1 or 2 even if they had already

completed grade 4 in NFE education. Legally and formally, however, the government's education system has not welcomed NFE created by cease-fired army. It has generated a large number of children left behind from schooling as many war crimes have been committed in Myanmar.

- *No formal school close to their village*

As mentioned earlier, Kun Hing Township has no good road to reach the villages by car. During summer, when there is no rain and the ground is not slippery the villagers voluntarily create their own road which could be travelled by motorcycle or other vehicles suited to mountainous and difficult roads. It is only during the summer season when the villagers could travel to the city to buy the basic things they need and to sell whatever they have.

Basically, where there is no good road to reach the village there will be no formal school. Where there is no formal school, large numbers of children could not have access to school. They are fundamentally inter-related with each other. Not only are the present age group of children denied access to education but their parents and their grandparents as well. None of them received proper formal education because there were no schools around. Even though the political structure of Myanmar has changed from time to time since 1948, the situation of those villages remained at a standstill. There has not been a government policy in place to take into account and periodically check on the status of these groups.

- *Popularity of going to Thailand*

All parent-respondents (100%) strongly agreed that the popularity of going to Thailand was one of the barriers to education. They preferred going to Thailand over school at an early age because they believed Thailand could give them more opportunities to earn and flee from poverty and at the same time they get to have the chance to escape from the tortures and violations from any armies.

With no designated land on which to reside and without having the protection of refugee status, the ability of Shan Burmese refugees to remain in Thailand might seem to be especially precarious at first glance. However, from a social entrepreneurship perspective, the uncertainty and ambiguity of their standing in Thailand can be used to their advantage, giving them the socio-cultural space for self-determination. Likewise, it was the project's organic development, flexibility, and lack of official NGO status that rendered it more effective than a formal institution might have been. Though the refugees' assertions of basic rights are usually perceived as treacherous political moves by Thai officials, social entrepreneurship has successfully shifted the political implications of school attendance in the case study community, even de-politicizing this assertion of human rights in the local Thai community's eyes (Celina Su, 2005).

- *Child soldier/soldier*

Of the 64 parent respondents, 45 (70%) believed that schooling can cause not only "child soldier" in formal school but also in the revolution armies, the Shan State Army-North (cease-fire group) and the Shan State Army-South (arm struggle group). Stories of how some parents avoided child soldiering by converting their children into monks from the early age of 9 until reaching the age of 16 or 17 were interesting. The Buddhist temples and monks are respected by both revolutionary groups (insurgencies) as the same level of Buddha. Hence, once a child enters the temple to become a monk, he could no longer be ethically and morally disobeyed nor forced to become soldier. It is for this reason that some of the interviewed parents did not send their children to school and were encouraged to put their children in the temple instead. However, most of the parents who showed up for the interview have children in the revolutionary army. As a rule of Shan State Army, if there are more than two boys in a family under their control area, the rest are required to join the armed revolutionary army and to abide by its policy which is to serve the community, national interest, and the future generation.

"As long as there is discrimination, torture, violation of human rights there will be revolutionary armies fighting back the central government" one of the fathers said. *"The same thing, if there is revolutionary armies then civil war would be at a standstill. If there is civil war only the ordinary people like us will suffer the most"* he added. He even said that *"we are not only required to support the number of fighters but also food, weapons and whatever needed by the revolutionary armies. It is difficult but this is the responsibility of being a Shan. We cannot just sit and watch when they (government arm*

troops) fire at our village, rape our daughters and relatives, we need to do something. And joining the revolutionary armies is the only way".

- *Displacement*

Twenty parent-respondents out of 64 (31%) experienced displacement during the civil war in Southern Shan State. There has been massive displacement in Central and Southern Shan States. Recently, five villages were forced to displace to the other side of Nam Pang River. Most parents who cited having experienced displacement or were involved in displacement lost their confidence and motivation to place their children in school. According to one of the respondents,

"*When we were forced to displace, we were not able to bring our belongings. The order from the military said we had to move in a day. So, we just brought what we can carry with our hands as it was during the rainy season and it would be difficult to carry more. We had to restart a new life, struggle for food which was very difficult". We also expected our children to help us with what they can, instead of going to school as food was the priority for us in that situation".*

Other parents also agreed that displacement made them poor and made them to lose confidence and trust in any kind of government service and in the government institutions, respectively. They even added that enrolling in schools could create 'child soldier' as they will have access to the names of both the children and their parents.

Forced relocations or displacements are without a doubt barriers for the children to access education.

- *Presence of armed groups in the area*

Only 20 parents out of 64 (31%) said that government services such as education, health care and other infrastructures did not reach their areas because of the presence of revolutionary armies. Compared with Shan people in the North such as Namkham, Muse, Hsenwi, Kyautkme and Hispaw, Kun Hing has been left very far behind in terms of economic and social development.

As stated by one of the fathers, *"Transportation is the main factor in the government four cuts strategy[1]". Without proper road, it is difficult for the insurgents to recruit their weapons, find food, and contact others". The government wants to keep insurgency out of the world so that they cannot equip and recruit themselves. This strategy not only affects the insurgency but all of us in the area. We cannot transport our products to other towns but we have to buy from them. This makes us poor and starving".*

Existing armed conflict has left Kun Hing to lag very far behind from social and economic development than any other townships in Shan State. Educating adolescent children is imperative for them to be able to better serve their community. Armed

[1] In the 1960s, Burma's dictator, General Ne Win, launched a new counter-insurgency strategy called the Four Cuts, designed to cut the four main links (food, funds, intelligence, and recruits) between insurgents, their families and local villagers.

conflicts and the dissolution of their communities often interrupt whatever future plans and preparations they may have made. These plans include whether or not to send the children and adolescents to middle school, high school and eventually college; to teach them how to farm; to allow them to learn a particular trade as an apprentice, or to teach them to learn through traditional educational opportunities. Moreover, children and adolescents were also forced to take on adult obligations such as being left responsible not only for their own survival but the survival of others as well even before they are ready. In all cases, without access to meaningful education, these adolescents are at risk of entering adulthood as either illiterates, poorly trained or both, thereby diminishing their potential for personal growth, economic sustenance, and contribution to their communities.

- *Hatred and tension against government*

Only 15 parents out of 64 (23%) said they did not want to send their children to public school where they are required to learn the Burmese language, culture and history instead of their mother tongue, culture and history. Systematic violence and torture created tension and hatred of the ethnic groups which unconsciously pushed through hatred among Shan and Burmese (Bama) instead of between the government and the public. Unknowingly, Shan people or people situated in the conflict areas accepted that all Burmese are the same. Apparently, not only the ordinary people, but some political groups also believed this as well. These circumstances pushed majorities of Shan children to remain out of school or to drop out after they are able to read and write. According to

some parents, the higher the grade level completed in Myanmar the more Burmese ideological mindset. According to Dr. Thein Lwin (1999), education should be inclusive without discrimination of races, regions, religions, and any differences.

- *Hatred because the government uses education to spread their propaganda*

Being aware of the political situation, only the key informants were able to appropriately answer the statement "hatred because the government uses education to spread their propaganda". While most of the parent-respondents did not clearly understand the statement because they were more concerned with their farms, there were 12 out of 64 (18%) who agreed and answered 'yes' there is hatred because the government used education to spread their propaganda. Although they did not personally experience this, according to them they saw it through the children from their neighborhood who attended formal schools.

One of the parents said "*the children who attended formal school are different from the children who attended NFE in terms of behavior and ideology. The children who attend formal school do not want to use our mother tongue in speaking … they do not want to practice our culture and more worse, they do not have the sense of helping our own ethnicity issues. They accepted what the formal school taught them such as: revolutionary armies are insurgents who want to weaken the Union of Myanmar. They*

were mistakenly provided with false information and unknowingly, the children accepted the ideology little by little."

Economic Barriers

- *Need to help in household and farm work*

Fifty-seven out of the 64 parent-respondents (89%) believed that their children should help in whatever household works they can do based on their abilities. The parents expected their children to work in opium farms during peak seasons when the daily pay is high.

As narrated by one of the respondents, "*When the season of growing poppy arrives, the daily pay per worker is US$7 while the regular pay is only US$2 during the normal season. In order to grow poppy at the right time, we need many workers to do it. So, even our small children also help a bit in the farm."*

As the annual expenses are more than their annual income, parents have to push their children to help them. Most boys worked in the farms and so do the girls. The farmers were more attracted in growing opium because of the good price it gets and grew other crops only for home consumption. The difficulty faced by farmers in growing

crops other than poppy was in transporting their produce/raw materials to other places because of poor road condition. Sometimes transportation fees were even more expensive than the materials. Even if the farmers have the potential to produce more raw materials, they focused only instead on poppy growing because the buyers go to them directly to buy and is therefore more convenient to sell and also because of its good price.

- *No money to send their children to formal school*

Generally, formal schools are available in the city and near the city. In fact, primary education in Myanmar is free and compulsory. Yet, the villagers were not informed about the compulsory education. Some teachers and schools exploited the situation by collecting enrollment fee, facilities needed for learning, curriculum and text books fees, and donation for the school activities.

In addition, all students are required to attend the extra-tuition which was being conducted by each instructor for their extra-money. It is not a rule, though it is understood and accepted as a culture of schooling since teachers' salaries are very low (US$30 a month). According to the respondents, for a student of pre-school to grade 2, they needed at least US$1500 a year to survive in the city and to pass the exams. For a student of grade 3-4, they needed at least US$1800 to US$2000 a year which was much more than their annual income. For these reasons, they could not send their children to school even if they wanted to.

Social Barriers

- *High investment but little benefit from schooling*

Almost all (60) of the parent-respondents (93%) thought they did not get any benefit from sending their children to school. For them, investment and benefit are not balanced. Spending US$1500 a year for education until a child graduates is a large amount of money but there is no guarantee of a better job after graduation. Moreover, if the child gets to work as a government staff, the monthly income is even worse than the farmers. They thought of where their children should use their abilities to get back the amount of money invested for their education. For them, education and employment opportunities are just not as attractive compared with growing opium.

By growing opium, they were able to buy vehicles and other luxuries especially when the weather permits or when they are able to produce more opium. They are very proud and satisfied with what they have.

However, not all opium cultivators were enjoying benefits from the opium market. As one of my respondents said,

"When the weather is not on our side, we were in debt as we need to borrow from others to pay for the labor, food and other needed materials during the cultivation." During those times we were left with nothing to eat for the whole year. So what we did was, we moved from place to place to work as daily-paid workers."

In this kind of circumstances the children were required to work for the family more as hunger becomes the first priority to address.

- *Culture of early marriage*

Fifty-six parent-respondents out of 64 (87%) said they were happy to see their children married at an early age. Throughout the world, marriage is regarded as a moment of celebration and a milestone in adult life. Sadly, the practice of early marriage gives no such cause for celebration. Young girls and boys are robbed of their youth and are required to take on roles for which they are not psychologically or physically prepared. Many have no choice about the timing of marriage or the political situation. Early marriage deprives them of the opportunity for personal development as well as their rights to full reproductive health and wellbeing, education, and participation in society.

One respondent cited to avoid becoming a soldier in the revolutionary armies, and to have more family members because more family members mean more workers as reasons for early marriage.

- *Children are too young to be apart from home*

Majority (52) out of the 64 parent-respondents (81%) agreed that their children were too young to be apart from home. According to them, the nannies from the city would not be able to take care of their children as they do. They were also concerned that sometimes their children will not get enough food provided by the boarding house or will

not get enough water to use and other many things that they were worried of. For the parents, children aged 5 are too young to take care of themselves. They were also worried that if their children were unhealthy or sick, there would be no one to carefully and warmly take care of them. "*As a mother and a father we just do not want to send our children away when they are very young. If there is a school near our home, we will definitely send them to school*", said the parents.

- *No future plan for their children*

Fifty out of the 64 parent-respondents (78%) had no future plan for their children. Growing up without education is an extreme barrier for them. They have been constantly ignored because they do not know or are not aware that they are continuously being ignored. They do not even notice that they are being exploited by other people. Because of their lack of education, they are not even aware that they have free access to education. How would these people fight for their rights when they do not even know what rights they should fight for?

"*I have been living my life without a plan. I grew up, got married, borne children, and struggle for family life. These things are happening naturally according to human life. I have no plan. My children will also grow up, get married and struggle for their life just as I did*" as narrated by a mother respondent.

- *Too old to go to school*

According to 25 out of the 64 parent-respondents (39%) when their children are strong enough to be apart from home, they become too old to enroll in school. The children respondents, on the other hand, felt shy to study with classmates who are much younger than them.

Table 2. Barriers identified by parents of out-of-school children

	Political Barriers	Frequency	Percentage
1	Non recognition of NFE by the government	64	100%
2	No formal school close to their village	64	100%
3	Popularity of going to Thailand	64	100%
4	Child soldier	45	70%
5	Displacement	20	31%
6	Presence of armed groups in the area	20	31%
7	Hatred and tension against government	15	23%
8	Hatred because government using education to spread their propaganda	12	18%
	Economic Barriers		
1	Need to help household and farm work	57	89%
2	No money to send their children to formal School	40	60%
	Social Barriers		
1	High investment but little benefit from schooling	60	93%

2	Culture of early marriage	56	87%
3	Children are too young to be apart from home	52	81%
4	No future plan for their children	50	78%
5	Too old to go to School	25	39%

Note: Number of respondents 64

Note: Total number of parents of out-of-school children respondents in Nar Keng village is 31 and 33 in Ho Pang village.

Barriers Identified by Community-Based Organizations

Political Barriers

- *Content of curriculum*

As mentioned by all community-based organization leaders, the curricula vary among ethnic nationality areas. Shan has the NFE provided by cease-fired army. The other ethnic brothers like Kachin, Chin, Mon, Arakrine, Karen, Karreni also have their own curriculum in non-formal education system but all of which are not recognized by the government. One of the respondents said "*There is a major divergent conception of the school curriculum between the regime and ethnic nationalities. The government's*

curriculum leads to Burmanisation. On the other hand, the school curricula in the ethnic nationality areas induce excessive nationalism, which can lead to xenophobia[2].

The perspectives of the respondents were clarified by the literature of Lwin (2000). According to him, both government schools and Mon national schools start to teach history at Standard III while the syllabi are fundamentally different. The government schools teach about Burman kings and heroes such as Anawyahta, Kyansittha, Bayintnaung, Alaungphya, Bandula, Bo-myat-tun and king Mindon. Mon national schools, on the other hand, teach about Mon kings, heroes and wise men such as king Thamala, minister Minkansi, minister Dane, hero Tha-mane-bayan, hero Ma-san, wise man Ba-yarn, king Yaza-darit and hero La-gon-ein. Moreover, the Burmans and the Mons have conflicting views on history in that those who are considered as heroes on the Burman side are seen as invaders on the Mon side following the occupation of the latter by the former. If the ethnic groups including the Burmans are willing to build a federal union, coherent education policies and curricula should be aimed at. This includes an agreed syllabus concerning the history subjects.

Most of the community based organization leaders mentioned that the regime uses education as a political tool preventing children from learning how to think. More seriously, youngsters are expected to be disciplined in and out of school under the military regime. For example, the Head of State, Senior General Than Shwe gives an official line in education: In pursuing education, moral, discipline and education are of

[2] Xenophobia: Too excessive nationalism of ethnic curriculum may also lead to xenophobia or create more hatred and tension rather than solving the problem.

prime importance. It is also important for students to be desirous of studies and well in discipline. If their discipline is lax, they will be weak in learning and outstanding performance. Only when they possess good discipline, will they be able to serve the interest of the state. The notion of 'discipline' invokes ideas of loyalty and the image of obedient citizens.

- *Ethnicity and language*

According to most of the community-based organization leaders the systematic strategy of government, ethnic cleansing and Burmanisation lead parents in ethnic nationalities area to distrust the educational system of Myanmar. This discourages a large number of children in the ethnic nationalities states from attending public schools. One of the respondents said "*The official language in school seeks to assimilate in the name of national unity*." It was true according to the source from Lwin 2000, he said since national independence, Burmese has been used as the medium of instruction in all state schools. Before 1964, from 1956 to 1964 children in the Shan State had a chance to learn their mother tongue, Shan language as a subject in primary schools. After 1964, the regime no longer supported the teaching of ethnic languages and ordered the Shan subjects teachers to step down from their positions. Many teachers had to resign. More badly, the government did not even allow the Shan language to be taught in temples and in any other places from 1964 to 1969. Until now, teaching Shan language is not allowed in some cities and the government gave the reason that there could be political activities involved in language teaching.

Many other literatures also support the perspective of the community-based organization leaders that the absence of ethnic language teaching clearly constitutes a violation of the language rights of ethnic nationality children. The thought of the possibility that the school curriculum might be used as a tool to assimilate the minorities is not unlikely. Koskinen (1995) argues that 'schools have always been the most important weapon of the state in assimilating minority children'. One of the reasons why ethnic groups in Burma have been fighting against the regime is 'language rights'. The ethnic rebel forces have been maintaining and promoting their language and culture while fighting for equality and self-determination in their territories (Koskinen, 1995).

- *Under-investment in education*

All community-based organization leaders mentioned that the government allocates very low investment in education especially in ethnic areas. The statement was proven true in an article in the AFP Bangkok Newsletter (August 22, 2000 issue) which reported that the money allocated to education is only 0.5% of the Gross National Product compared to an average of 2.7% in other Southeast Asian Countries.

Likewise, to quote Dr. Thein Lwin's reply to the researcher's mail interview, he said: "*Current investment in education is not satisfactory. Compared with Thailand, investment in Burma is very low. Thailand's education budget is 30% of the total national budget (Bangkok Post June 24, 2011, page 10) while Burma is less than 3%. Due to lack of investment in education, financial burden is put on the shoulder of parents and many*

children are unable to go to schools. Besides, quality of education is low due to lack of training and resources for teachers."

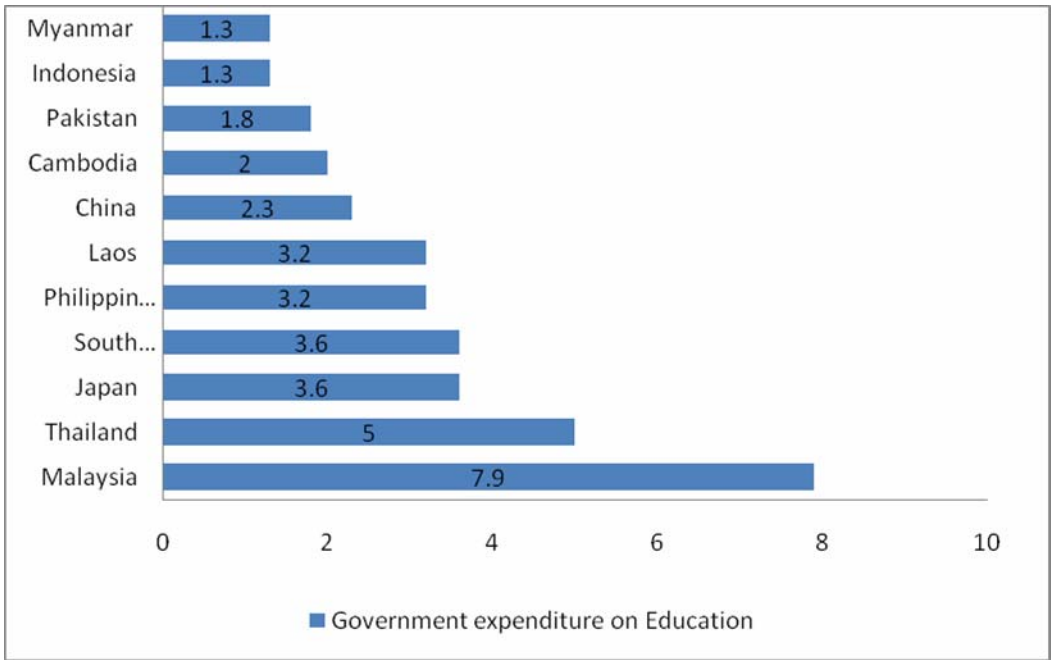

Figure 7. GDP Expenditure on Education: A Comparison of Myanmar with East Asian Countries (Malik, 2006)

As shown in Figure 7, compared with other Asian countries, Myanmar was obviously found to spend least in Education.

- *Teacher quality*

Most of the community-based organization leaders said that the quality of a teacher has become one of the barriers that contribute to low enrollment rate in school. When teachers are not able to teach and manage the students very well, the earn

disrespect from the students and parents. Traditionally, in Myanmar, pupils accord the same respect for their teachers as they have for Buddha and parents. Teachers are supposed to enter the classroom with goodwill, interest and self-sacrifice (seidana, wadhana, anina). However, all the respondents said that the role of teachers nowadays is depreciated due to the fact they earn very low salaries and also because they lack material academic supports such as housing and transport privileges and pre-service and in-service trainings, respectively. The lack of trained teachers affects the quality of teaching which in turn affects the respect of children. In general, a university degree is the minimum qualification required to become a primary school teacher. In some places, where there are not enough university graduates, people who have passed only the Basic Education High School (Standard X) examinations are allowed to teach primary grades. These new recruits enter the classroom without initial teacher training. Some receive training after several years of teaching. In addition, over two-thirds of the primary schools are understaffed, especially in sparsely populated rural areas as further explained by one of the community-based organization leader.

According to a government report (Ministry of Education, 1998), some 57% of primary school teachers, 58% of junior secondary school teachers and 9% of senior secondary school teachers have never attended a teacher training. For example, after a first year training, only qualified trainees can continue to attend the training for junior secondary school teachers. Those who fail to qualify go to primary schools to be teachers. This programme therefore downgrades the importance of primary education as the foundation of social, moral and academic progress for this system allows unqualified

candidates to teach primary school children. Again, after the second year training, qualified trainees can continue to attend the training for senior secondary school teachers while those who did not do so well will go and teach at junior secondary schools. In like manner, after another two-year secondary school teacher training, many have no other alternative but to go to senior secondary schools to be teachers due to unsatisfying examinations results. The best-qualified graduates can move on to post-graduate courses and pursue master's and doctorate degrees to become university lecturers.

- *Quality of the education*

All community-based organization leaders said the quality of education has been diminished since 1964 when the socialist government reformed the educational system. Its quality is undermined by under-investment in State education. The State education system is gradually diminishing due to low quality teaching staff, lack of classroom resources and poor quality teaching methods. Due to the declining quality of the state education system, students and parents crave for better qualifications and study opportunities abroad which only the rich and upper classes can afford. Because of the poor state of the economy, many students from lower class family are left far behind.

However, thanks to the strong tradition of monastic education, the literacy rate has been high all along the history of Myanmar (Figure 8). A system of education founded on Buddhism as interpreted by the genius of the people is another reason for the high literacy rate. In the system of monastic schools run on a voluntary basis, the boys

are taught to learn not merely their letters or how to make a living, but how to live as members of the national community.

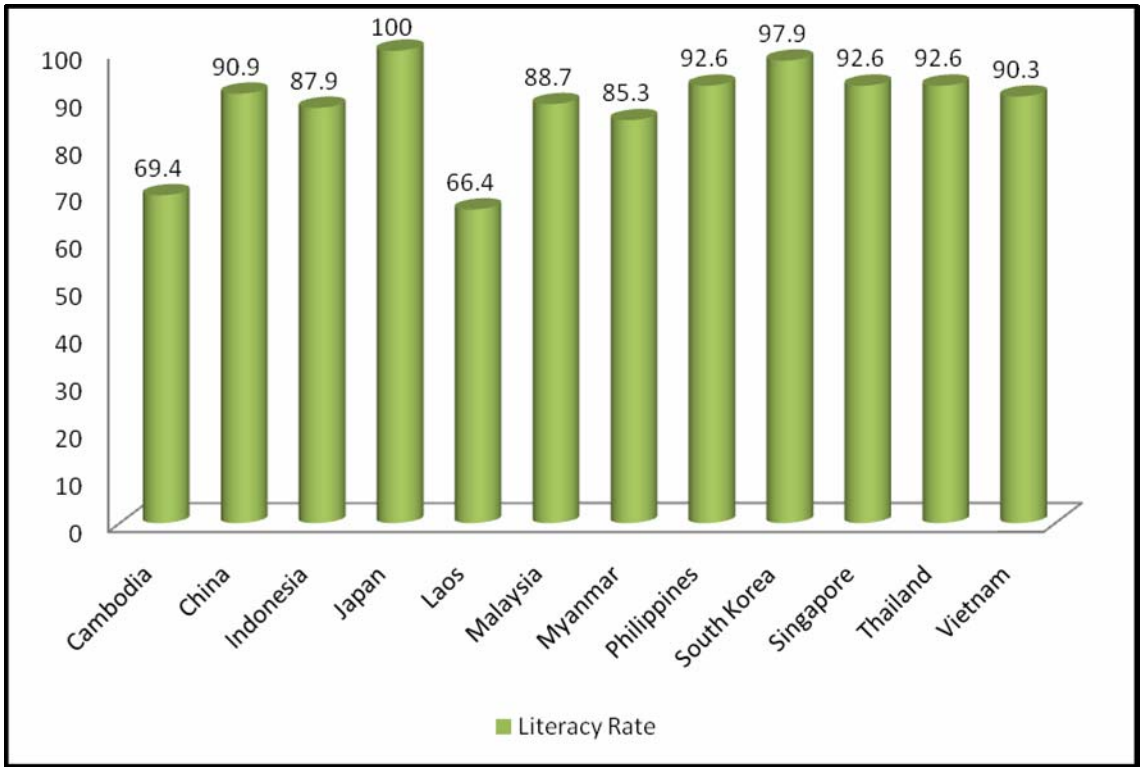

Figure 8. Literacy Rate: A comparison of Myanmar with Asian Countries
Source: UNDP, Human Development Report 2004.

- *Regional isolation and remoteness*

One of cease-fired leaders cited insufficient number of public schools in Kun Hing Township as one of the reasons why they created the NFE program. However, this is not only the case in Kun Hing township but is also the case in other ethnic areas of Myanmar. The number of schools is not sufficient to cater to the demand for education at

the level according to the norms considered desirable nowadays. The number of primary schools ranges from one in five villages in the prosperous districts in the heartland of Myanmar, to as low as one in 25 villages in the border regions. Therefore, most primary schools, especially in the public sector, are crowded. Each teacher has to take care of a large number of students. Most teachers have also not been trained to modern standards, and schools are very poorly equipped with teaching resources. Likewise, most children in the border regions cannot enroll in schools due to the distance and barriers of transportation (Figure 9).

CBOs leaders said that the remote border regions, inhabited by the ethnic minorities, were put on the edge of disaster. These regions, geographically mountainous terrains, do not have good road networks and communications with the major cities and economic centers of the rest of the country. This idea was supported by the literature from Khin Maung Kyi 2000 that the earning activities in these areas were limited, while the people were often lacking in human capital, reflecting a lower level of educational achievement because these groups were mostly uncovered in the literacy campaigns in Burma during the 1970s. Since arable land in the region is scarce, a shifting cultivation or slash and burn farming is a common practice, further reducing the soil fertility and productivity as the shortening of the rotation system sets in over time.

Although the land to man ratio is relatively better in these regions, the access to land for the poor was jeopardized by the prolonged period of armed conflict between the central government and the ethnic organizations. The poor in these ethnic villages were

frequently the victims of war, forced relocation and porter age. Worse still, the poor also suffered from the special counter-insurgency operations, better known as "four cuts" strategy, which involves the cutting of access to these areas and depriving social services such as health and education to the population.

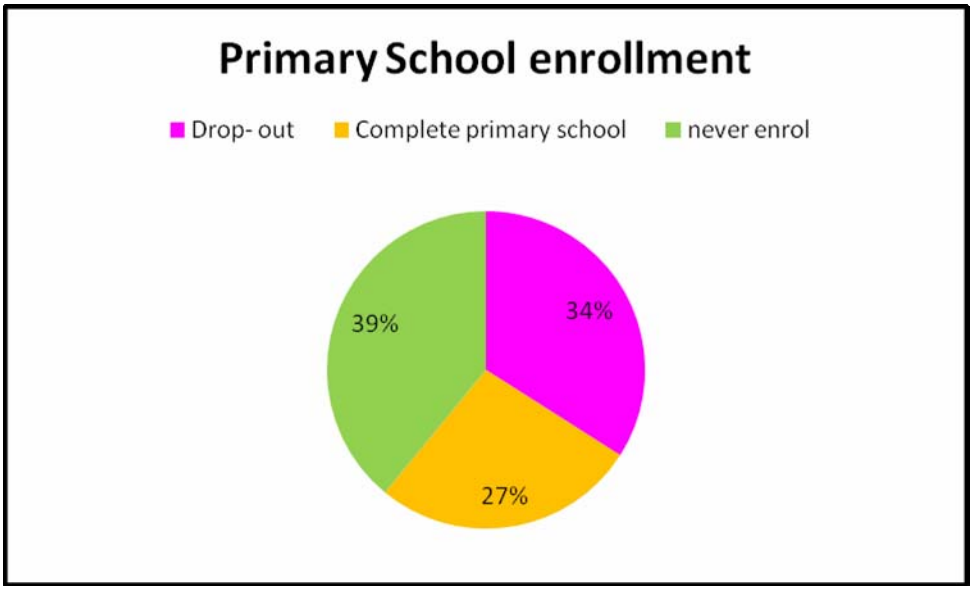

Figure 9. Primary School enrollment Myanmar 1995, Source: UNICEF, 1995

- *Pedagogy*

All leaders of CBOs said almost all public school teachers do not understand the importance of pedagogy because Myanmar education system forbids and discriminates other indigenous languages. Without concern for those children whose mother tongue is not Burmese, the system does not consider multilingual instruction. Much worse, it was in 1988 when the Ministry of Education created a new curriculum for primary schools in

which children are expected to be passive obedient students rather than emphasizing critical thinking skills.

As mentioned by Lwin (1999), there was a question on why Myanmar schools practice rote learning teaching technique even if critical thinking is its tradition. Observably, children's rote learning has conquered Myanmar education. It is believed that rote learning technique has been practiced in Myanmar since the Buddhist Scriptures were committed to memory. Monks learn the Pitakas (the three repositories of Buddhist Scriptures) by rote. Rote learning was the only technique during the time of Buddha as there were no scripts to perpetuate Buddha's teaching in its original form.

For these reasons, rote learning has been utilized extensively among teachers and children in the teaching and learning process. Teacher teaches the students to memorize the verbs, irregular from, and essays. However, rote learning without proof of understanding does not prove useful in modern education. Therefore, even in subjects such as science and social studies, Myanmar pupils are still learning to absorb and memorize the facts and knowledge in a passive way without having critical thinking, brainstorming, and thinking deeply on the essence of the lessons. They learn to memorize and to pass the exam. In these circumstances, the quality of education is lost as it was not emphasized that as pupils they need to understand the lessons and not merely memorize them, presumably they will forget.

School and Classroom Observation

School and classroom observations were conducted at Ho Pang Primary School (School No. 1) and Karli High School (School No. 2) in Kun Hing Township aimed to find out how school and classroom management affect the dropout rate of the students. Ho Pang Primary School is located about 6 miles from the city which is quite far while Karli High School is situated along the main road of Taungyi to Keng Tong and is only 2 hours away from the city. The observations were noted using a checklist answerable by 'yes' and 'no'.

Physical Environment of the School

Findings showed that both School No. 1 and School No 2 have terrible conditions in terms of physical environment such as unsafe toilets, not enough rooms, desks, chairs, lack of library and clinic facilities, lack of an open area where the children can play. However, both school buildings were adhering to safety measures.

Table 3. School and classroom observation checklist

SCHOOL AND CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS	HO PANG	KALI
Physical environment of the School		
School building adheres to safety measures	Yes	Yes
There are separate toilets for boys and girls	No	No
Toilets are safe	No	No
There are enough rooms, desks and chairs, library, clinic, open	No	No

SCHOOL AND CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS	HO PANG	KALI
area where children can play		
Content: Gender Sensitivity		
Use gender sensitive language (address) for both boys and girls	Yes	Yes
Lesson objectives match the abilities and needs of both girls and boys	Yes	Yes
Topics reflect the needs and interests of boys and girls	Yes	Yes
Acknowledge the diversity of knowledge and experience of the students	Yes	Yes
Classroom interaction: Gender sensitivity		
Attention is given equally to girls and boys	Yes	Yes
Encourage and praise both girls and boys	Yes	Yes
Distribute tasks equally between boys and girls	No	Yes
Assign leading roles equally for boys and girls	No	Yes
Cultural and Linguistic Sensitivity		
Teacher avoids using racial and ethnic slurs inside and outside the class	No	No
Teacher discourages children from using racial and ethnic slurs by helping them to understand that certain words can hurt others	No	No
Teacher uses visual aids, gestures and physical prompts in interactions with children who do not speak the language	Yes	Yes
Teacher uses bilingual or multilingual languages in teaching learning process	Yes	Yes
Teacher has patience in dealing with cultural diversity in class	No	Yes
Teacher gives fair treatment to all students in classroom	No	No

SCHOOL AND CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS	HO PANG	KALI
Classroom Interaction		
Non-discrimination among rich and poor students	No	No
Attention is given equally to all students (no discrimination among rich and poor students)	No	No
Encourage and praise all students (race, religion, poor and rich)	No	No
Encourage poor students to participate and ask questions	No	No
Students who attend extra-tuition do not get more attention by the teacher	No	No
Distribute tasks equally among the students	No	No
Students who attend extra-tuition do not get more praising and better grades in the exam	No	No
Pedagogical consideration in giving instruction		
Teacher has clear goals/objectives	Yes	Yes
Has fair student evaluation procedures	No	No
Provide explicit guidance	No	No
Provide clear demonstration and presentation	No	No
Child-centred approach	Yes	Yes
Use easy and comprehensible words	Yes	Yes
Has variety of teaching techniques	Yes	Yes

Content: Gender Sensitivity

Surprisingly, both schools showed positive sense of gender sensitivity in content matters. Teachers use gender sensitive language to address both boys and girls equally. Lesson objectives were matched according to the abilities and needs of girls and boys.

Assigned topics for both individual and group activities also reflected the needs and interests of boys and girls. The diversity of knowledge and experience of the students were also acknowledged accordingly at some points.

Classroom Interaction: Gender Sensitivity

Moreover, teachers also gave equal attention to girls and boys. However, in Ho Pang School tasks distribution and assigning leading roles for activities were sometimes mostly given to boys. According to one of the teachers "*boys are more admired and respected by their peer than girls, therefore, assigning boys are sometimes more effective*". Contrary, in Karli School, girls were performing well. They were getting more attention and respected from their peers. From this point, the researcher has learned that girls are confident when they get more attention from the teachers and their peers. The more confident they are, the more they can perform well in classes, exams and extra curricula activities.

Cultural and Linguistic Sensitivity

Unfortunately, both schools showed very low cultural and linguistic sensitivity in classroom and school management. Teachers used racial and ethnic slurs inside and outside the class which made Shan, Lahu, Palaung students feel uncomfortable and

develop inferiority complex. Yet, even if the Burmese students were only minorities in class they received considerable attention from the teachers as they understood the language well and also performed well in classes and exams. Unfortunately for students of other ethnic groups in class who could not understand the language, most of the teachers were not exerting much effort to help them better understand the lessons such as by using visual aids, gestures, physical prompts or dictionary. There were only few teachers who could understand the local language and use bilingual or multilingual in teaching learning process. However, most teachers seemed to be impatient in teaching at cultural and language diversity classes.

Classroom Interaction: Discrimination among Poor and Rich Students

Even gender sensitivity showed positive sign as can be seen in the discrimination among rich and poor students which showed drastically negative. Discrimination was obvious among the rich and poor students. Teachers gave more attention to rich students and to those students who could attend her/his extra class outside the school hours. Rich students got more attention, encouragement, and praise from the teachers. Students who attended extra tuition however got better grades in the exams.

Pedagogical Consideration in Giving Instruction

Most teachers have clear goals and objectives for instruction and even teaching techniques have also been included in text books. The education system has been set

from the top, making it so easy for the teachers to follow. However, it could also hinder the creativeness and critical thinking of the teachers which also in effect could drive them to be unproductive teachers. Student evaluations were mostly done by reviewing exams, test results, or grades of the students. Grades on the other hand were based on the tests alone, without the inclusion of extra curricula activities and other school activities. Therefore, no grades were given for extra curricula activities even if the students performed well.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study was conducted to find out the political, economic and social barriers that continue to deny the majority of children access to education across conflict-affected fragile areas in Kun Hing Township, Shan State Myanmar. Specifically, the study aimed to: 1) describe the basic characteristics of the study site; 2) characterize the children who have been denied access to education; 3) identify the barriers of access to education and; 4) provide recommendations that may be adopted by international non-government organizations and community-based organizations to increase access of primary school children to education.

A total of 64 parents of the out-of-school children, 64 out-of school children and 5 key informants from community-based organizations in Kun Hing Township, Shan State served as respondents of the study. School and classroom observations were conducted at Ho Pang Primary School and Karli High School in Kun Hing Township, Shan State, Myanmar to find out how school and classroom management affect the drop-out rate of the students. Data were gathered through survey questionnaires, interviews and were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentages and frequency counts.

Triangulation was used to compare the results from various instrument tools such as class observation guides, answers from the out-of-school children, parents and key informants.

In common, all the parents, out-of-school children and key informants identified the barriers to education similarly. The major political barriers identified by both parents and out-of-school children were: 1) no school close to their homes because of its conflict-affected fragile situation; 2) afraid to be child soldier; and 3) popularity of fleeing to Thailand because of political situation and also for seeking a better life. The key informants, on the other hand, perceived politics as the main barriers to access to education. The region has remained remote and isolated for so long and its people have become victims of violence because of political issues. Politics created animosity of the people not only toward the military government but also to all government institutions including public schools. As supported by the review of literature and key informant interviews, the school curriculum were also considered barriers for children to accessing schools particularly on the content of teaching, content of textbooks, epistemology or ideology of schools, and the language of instruction which were manifestly inter-linked with the political structure of Myanmar government. Myanmar government uses education as a tool to maintain its power by systematic burmanization and persuasion through school policies and curriculum as identified and described by the key informants.

The common economic barriers were: 1) no money to send the children to school in town, and 2) need to work to help their parents. The workers of the community-based organizations also pointed out that even if the local people were cultivating poppy for

basic survival, they remained poorer. There is only one main road from Taunggyi (capital city of Shan State) to Keng Tong, the border city. The lack of proper road infrastructure from village to village made it extremely difficult for the people to transport their raw products to other places. Economic policies of both Myanmar government and insurgency pushed them to grow poppy, aside from the fact that for them poppy cultivation seemed to be their only option. Poverty and being poor do not provide much opportunity in life. While large numbers of urban children could not go to school because of poverty, it was more obvious and impossible for the people in the conflict-affected and remote areas to access education. They could not send their children to city school which was enormously expensive for them. Aside from this, the children would have to face many social barriers in city school.

The major social barriers identified by parents and out-of-school children slightly differed. While the parents were more concerned on the money to spend on education, the children were more concerned on the language and cultural barriers they would face in school and society. Ninety percent of the parents did not want to spend their money on their children's education because they believed that there would be no better benefit after schooling. This behavior has consciously dwelt on the minds of majority of the parents for so long. Generally, this seemed to be true as good job opportunities are almost always not available after graduation. No one could blame them though as they have been ignored and have been victims of protracted violence and civil war for more than six decades in a place where no proper education and public services are provided.

Working instead of attending school to help their parents was also one major reason why children dropped-out of school. Moreover, the children also felt discriminated and humiliated by the teachers when they speak the language incorrectly. The children had strong feeling of inferiority complex because they were poor, they came from the jungle, unintelligent and slow learners. At any rate, most of the children said they were happy to be in school even in spite of the many difficult situations they had to cope with.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this survey research, it was found that there are indeed many reasons why children in Kun Hing Township, Shan State, Myanmar remained out-of-school and had very limited access to primary school. These barriers were political, economic, and social in nature. The barriers found from this study are similar to the barriers described in the review of related literature as common to conflict-affected fragile areas. From the findings of this survey research, conflict and political barriers were found to be the major barriers to accessing primary education. Indeed, out-of-school children, parents, and leaders of community-based organizations have long perceived conflict as the central problem which caused them to suffer and experience violence resulting to political problems that isolated them from the other part of society and the school. Yet, barriers to education are not only limited to political barriers. Economic and social factors are also barriers that are closely inter-related with the political instability of the country.

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. *'No school close to their home'* was found to be the major barrier in accessing education for the people in Kun Hing Township, identified as one of the conflict-affected fragile areas in Myanmar. This is politically connected with the government policies toward insurgencies, specifically through the implementation of its special counter-insurgency operations better known as "four cuts" strategy. While the government is only concerned in keeping insurgencies isolated from other areas of Shan people and the outside world by cutting-off their access to good road, proper health care program, education, and other infrastructures they failed to realize that the ordinary people were also being largely affected because they too were being cut-off of their rights to access provisions from the government which are also due them, thus creating more problems.

2. The second major barrier is insurgency. The Shan State Army did not want their non-formal education program to be linked with that of the formal public school. The main concern of the Shan State Army was for the political and economic survival of the army. They did not want any government institution to be in the area which could more or less counteract their activities and weaken them. However, both the Shan State Army and the government do not take into account to consider the sufferings of the ordinary people because of the existing of civil war.

3. The fear of young children being recruited to become soldiers is the third major barrier identified in this research survey. Recruiting children to become soldiers disheartened both parents and children and for this reason they sought ways to avoid enrolling in schools. Most of the parents sent their children to the temple to become monks starting at an early age of 9 until the age of 16 or 17. They believed that by being a monk, neither the insurgent nor the government could force the children to be soldiers. However, the Shan State Army does have a policy that for every household under their (cease-fire) controlled area which has more than two sons, the rest are required to serve the army as soldiers. Consequently, the people tended to avoid giving the real number of their family members to the Shan State Army and also to Myanmar immigration. For this reason, the government immigration and Shan State Army have no accurate population numbers of the people in the area. This fear kept the children away from school. They believed that by being enrolled in school the government could easily get their names and recruit them in the troop anytime. Similarly, by attending the non-formal education, the Shan State Army can also easily recruit them.

According to the findings of this research survey, it can be concluded that political barriers are the main reason for keeping a large number of children out of school. Economic and social factors also acted as barriers to access education but for those who were under conflict-affected fragile situation, political barriers seemed the

most severe problem and the root cause of every problem for the people of Kun Hing Township.

Recommendations

Clearly, education projects require a positive nationwide political commitment by the government to succeed. Without a political solution to address the problems in Myanmar education will remain in turmoil.

Based on the findings of this study, there is indeed a need to improve access to quality primary education in Kun Hing Township and other conflict-affected areas of Myanmar. It is with this premise that the following actions which will require the collaboration of government, international donors, NGOs and community-based organizations are suggested:

To break the political barriers:

1) There should be a curriculum reformation to break the barriers of "ethnic tension on burmanization". There should be an inclusive education without discrimination of ethnic group, gender and disability wherein political ideology of any group to influence in curriculum and syllabi will not be allowed. Education should be a tool for peace instead of a means to spread propaganda.

2) Non-formal education system should be integrated into the education system of Myanmar to break the barriers of "no school close to their home". The system

should allow community-based organizations and other interest groups to help in NFEs. The system should develop a national standardized test to maintain the quality of education.

3) There should be a nation-wide cease-fire to stop the barriers of "child soldier and displacement". The government should be more flexible in dealing with ethnic minorities who have been in conflict fragile zones for more than six decades.

4) Peace is a necessary condition to stop the barriers to education and other public services. Peace should be based on broad political agreement within key stakeholders of the conflict such as the government, democratic forces led by Daw Aung Sam Suu Kyi, and ethnic nationalities. Peace should be guaranteed for the self-determination of the ethnic nationalities within the genuine federal union structure; only through this way will the inclusive education for all be generated.

5) Vocational education for both literacy and life skills should be introduced to the people in the conflict-affected areas by cooperating with the government, cease-fired armies and community-based organizations in Kun Hing Township.

6) The cease-fired army (Shan State Army-North Brigade No. 7) should link their non-formal education program with public school to increase enrollment rate in

both public school and NFE. This way, the students from NFE will be able to seek for secondary education.

To break the economic barriers:

1) The government should promote local products for poverty alleviation.

2) Small and medium enterprise or microcredit program should be introduced in Myanmar especially in conflict-affected areas to help promote local business.

3) The government should increase budget allocation to education to break the barriers of "no money to send their children to formal school". Budget allocation should take into account the elimination of enrollment fee, school lunch project, government loan, and scholarship.

To break the social barriers:

1) The government should increase budget allocation to education to break the major social barriers such as quality of education, quality of teacher, and pedagogy. The budget allocation should take into account the following:
    a. The training for teachers;
    b. School building;
    c. Teachers compensation;, and

d. Teaching learning tools such as libraries, laboratories, playground, and other teaching learning facilities.

2) As adopted from Lwin (1999), compulsory education should be reviewed and enhanced in Myanmar in accordance with the fundamental purpose of education as contributing to the human development and in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 26 'everyone has the right to education…' Schools should provide all pupils with a curriculum that:
   - is balanced and broadly based;
   - promotes their spiritual, moral, cultural and physical development; and
   - prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life in a multicultural society.

3) Curriculum should be federal-multicultural in order to promote 'language rights' and the rights to 'cultural identity' for all ethnic nationalities in Myanmar.

4) Bilingual and multilingual education should be introduced in Myanmar to enhance effectiveness, quality of education and maintain the ethnic identity. UNESCO has a strong commitment to support mother tongue instruction and bilingual/multilingual education to improve the quality of education, especially for disadvantaged groups, and to promote cultural and linguistic diversity in all societies.

5) The government should engage in broad-based advocacy campaigns using a variety of media as well as local, community-based programming to foster the desire for education among children and to encourage parents to send children to school.

Long-term

1. The government should open a space for political dialogue with key stakeholders of conflict for the sake of development of the country and its own people. The government should realize that conflict did not benefit both the government and the insurgencies. As a result conflict has kept Myanmar way far behind any Asian countries in terms of economic and social development.

2. The United Nations together with the international community should work closely to solve the problem of Myanmar as it is no longer a regional problem but has created transnational threats such as illicit trafficking of human beings especially women and children, weapons and drugs. These threats are widespread and far-reaching enough to pose threats to the security and well being of the whole states and regions. The problems are not limited to one country or one region alone, but spill over into an ever-widening geo-political context, with increasing consequences for world security as a whole.

Lessons Learned

The researcher personally experienced the many constraints and challenges in conducting survey research in conflict-affected fragile areas. The lessons learned were captured to ensure better survey research in the future.

Government Officials

It is difficult to approach township educational officials for any information. Wrong approach can cause unreasonable arrest and imprisonment. They seldom provide the correct information to any person even to the district senior officials. Township provides dishonest information to the district and also from the district to state. There is a lack of accountability and transparency in every level of the government institutions.

The researcher was asked many questions instead of getting information from the officials whom the researcher felt were distrustful and suspicious of people. From this point, the researcher realized that selecting government officials as respondents for future research should be avoided.

Shan State Army North (SSA-N) and Shan State Army South (SSA-S)

On the other hand, it is difficult to approach the leader of Shan State Army to ask about the barriers to education of the people in their area. Having experienced working in SSA-N controlled area for several years, the researcher realized that SSA-N leaders believe they are doing their best for the communities. It is good to avoid asking sensitive

questions to any armed group. Likewise, it is hard to question why they selected Kun Hing for their army base and why they still want to control this area. Without a doubt, where there is conflict, there is displacement, torture, and several human rights violations. For future research, the researcher suggests to approach senior officials rather than second line leaders who seemed to have difficulty in providing answers and lack confidence with their answers. A major question that the researcher would like to leave to the leaders of SSA-N and SSA-S to consider in this study is: "Is fighting the only way to achieve lasting peace and justice and the only way to improve the way of life of Shan people?"

International-Non-Government Organizations, Non-Government Organizations and Community Based Organizations (INGOs, NGOs and CBOs)

INGOs and NGOs can support the people in conflict-affected areas only through border-cross funding due to the regime's policy of disfavoring international aids. Yet, because of the regular checking and threats of the government officials, people in the areas are afraid to receive any humanitarian assistance from outsiders for fear of imprisonment. Likewise, even the distributors of the aide can also be penalized through imprisonment.

Only CBOs are able to survive in the areas. However, funding from other parts of communities alone could not cover the needs of the people in Kun Hing Township. From

this point, the researcher felt that INGOs and NGOs should support the local people through CBOs in the area.

Out-of-School Children and Parents of Out-of-School Children

Of all the respondents the researcher had met, the out-of-school children and parents of out-of-school children were the most active participators in the survey research. They were willing to share their experiences, their ideas and their time, which is the most valuable. Due to the embarrassing order of displacement in April 2011, the researcher had to travel back and forth to the study sites several times. However, the researcher and her friends are thankful because they were always warmly welcomed by the villagers.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1. A poppy field in Kun Hing Township

Appendix 2. NFE provided by cease-fired army (SSA-N)

Appendix 3. Teachers and CBOs Staffs at NFE School provided by cease-fired army (SSA-N)