

# Project Overview

<b>Project Title</b>	<b>Sustaining Education for Burmese Refugees</b>
<b>Project Location</b>	Ban Mai Nai Soi (BMN) and Ban Mae Surin (BMS) refugee camps, Mae Hong Son Province, Thailand

## Project context

Refugees from Myanmar, mainly from Kayah state, have been residing in camps along the Thailand-Myanmar border since the mid-1980s due to ethnic-based violence, often instigated by the military junta that has ruled the country for much of the period after independence.

With the intensified conflict and coup in Myanmar since February 2021, the hope for return to their homeland is even less likely and the need for continued support is crucial.

Based on UNHCR data as of July 2023, there are more than 90,000 refugees from Myanmar in nine camps along the Thailand-Myanmar border. Of these, nearly 8,000 are in Ban Mai Nai Soi (BMN) and 2,000 are in Ban Mae Surin (BMS) camps constituting about 11% of the total camp-based refugee population in Thailand.

Most of the residents have fled from armed conflict in Myanmar and experienced trauma. Many are born in the camp and the average stay is 22 years. As Thailand is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol, the refugees are not officially recognised and do not have rights under Thai law. They are considered illegal aliens; they are not permitted to leave the camp, and the camps are officially called 'temporary shelters.' NGOs such as JRS are required to have approval from the Ministry of Interior to provide services in the camp, and the education provided is not formally recognised by the Thai government.



Jesuit Mission Australia and JRS Asia Pacific are working with the Karenni Education Department (KnED) to provide access to quality education at primary and secondary (middle and high school) level for 3,000 refugee children in BMN Camp and BMS Camp to prepare them for education opportunities either upon resettlement or return. The project builds the capacity of the KnED to run their schools and formal educational



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programs in the camps. KnED supports the practical needs of school operations, building teacher capacity through training and improving the curriculum.

Youth in the camps are a particularly vulnerable group with high suicide rates. The project offers opportunities for out-of-school children and youth (OOSC&Y) and youth-at-risk in the two camps by promoting alternative educational opportunities, life skills training and social gatherings.



The project also supports advocacy initiatives for the protection of refugees and the promotion of durable solutions through awareness-raising activities and networking with relevant stakeholders.

The schools in BMN and BMS require external financial support annually. This is largely because neither KnED nor the camp residents can generate enough revenue or income to fully support the schools on their own, primarily as there are extremely limited opportunities for income generation within the camp, and the residents are forbidden from leaving the camp.

## Participants

An **estimated 4,000 people** (52% female) are benefiting directly from the project including 3,000 students in school and 280 youth in out-of-school programs. Other directly benefiting participants include KnED staff, teachers and management, and some parents and camp residents through advocacy and awareness sessions. Indirect participants include a wider group of parents (2,000), and the camp populations in general (>10,000).

## Project Summary

**Goal:** Refugees in Ban Mai Nai Soi (BMN) and Ban Mae Surin (BMS) refugee camps have access to quality education, improved resilience, and capacity for alternative future pathways.

<b>Objective 1</b>	<b>Provide quality basic education to refugees in BMN and BMS camps via financial, material, and technical support to KnED.</b>
<p>&gt;90% of registered refugee school children remain in schools.</p> <p>&gt;80% of students in each academic year graduate or are promoted to the next academic year.</p> <p>&gt;65% of primary, middle, and high school teachers in each school year show improved teaching performance based on M&amp;E results.</p>	
<p><b>Activities:</b> All KnED teachers will receive training to build their capacity in areas such as early childhood care and development, teaching methodologies, and Grades 11-12</p>	

curriculum. Teachers and staff will also receive orientation on KnED policy, code of conduct, child protection and safeguarding, and their specific job descriptions.

Extracurricular, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), or Peace and Reconciliation activities (through sports, music, drama, art, debate, cultural dance, and essay writing) are offered for students.

Enhanced curriculum including Mother-Tongue Based Multi-Lingual Education, and Inclusive Education in home schooling and classroom settings are also offered.

<b>Objective 2</b>	<b>Promote positive youth development and non-formal educational opportunities to youths-at-risk or out-of-school youths in BMN and BMS camps.</b>
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- 70% of the participants in regular youth activities (e.g., weekly sharing, community services, trainings, workshops, and skills practice) demonstrate increased knowledge, awareness, and skills.
- 70% of the participants in youth activities have improved knowledge and demonstration of peace and respect in the community.
- 70% of the participants in life skills learning activities show improved knowledge and skills.

**Activities:** Youth activities including weekly sharing, leadership training, community volunteer services, SEL training or workshops, language classes, and IT skills practices will be offered to youth at risk or out of school. Youth will also be engaged to participate in life skills learning activities, including small-scale production and apprenticeship activities with local community organizations.

A youth gathering will be conducted in collaboration with school leaders and other community youth groups.

<b>Objective 3</b>	<b>Enhance the capacity of KnED staff and teachers through on-going professional development and training courses.</b>
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- >65% of designated KnED management and non-teaching staff who attended relevant trainings show increased performance.
- Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and school committees are strengthened in all schools, with increased awareness of child protection, inclusive education, SEL, and peace and reconciliation.

**Activities:** KnED management and non-teaching staff will be offered relevant capacity-building training based on their and the students' specific needs. PTAs and school committees will receive training and financial or material assistance to enable them to better provide support to their schools. All KnED personnel receive monthly compensation and support is also provided for repairs and operational costs at the KnED office and schools.

<b>Objective 4</b>	<b>Promote the rights of refugees by engaging with local communities, local authorities, and advocacy groups, which will have the added benefit of enabling quality basic education.</b>
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- In collaboration with KnED and border education stakeholders, JRS plans and implements a refugee and internally displaced persons influx response, anticipating additional education resource requirements.
- Strengthened cross-border coordination between JRS organisations in Thailand and Myanmar for education advocacy and social cohesion in the communities.

**Activities:** Learning materials and awareness raising sessions are provided at remote local schools with large refugee and migrant cohorts, to build knowledge on children’s rights to education and protection. Local communities are also engaged to organise camp-based and local events to promote cultural understanding (e.g. King’s birthday, World Refugee Day, and festival days).

Host community and refugee education networks are engaged in networking and advocacy meetings with the project partners, donor communities, and relevant government agencies on protection and durable solutions.

<b>Objective 5</b>	<b>Promote peace and reconciliation within the camp-based refugee population, which will have the added benefit of enabling quality basic education.</b>
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- JRS Thailand and KnED staff have improved knowledge and awareness of peace and reconciliation and have integrated their learnings at home, work, and in the community.
- Teachers and parents cultivate an environment that encourages healthy relationships through positive parenting and discipline among children.

**Activities:** Peace and reconciliation principles are applied in working places and will be integrated into school activities involving parents.

## Project Partners

JMA has been supporting refugees in the BMN and BNS camps since 2017 working in partnership with JRS that has accompanied ethnic Karenni and Karen refugees for more than three decades in Mae Hong Son Province and has been the primary support for basic education in BMN and BMS camps in Thailand since 1997. Working in close partnership with KnED, the project works consistently to improve teaching and management capacity of schoolteachers and leaders within the camps.

JMA also partners with JRS Asia Pacific to deliver essential services to refugees in Bangkok. Over the border in Myanmar, JMA is partnering with the Myanmar Jesuit Region to assist internally displaced people with emergency and education initiatives.