Creating Leaders from Refugees: Progress and Problems with the
Refugee Education Program on the Thai-Burma Border

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to explore the benefits and the challenges of providing higher education in protracted refugee situations through the use of a case study on the refugee camps on the Thai-Burma border. The study relies on data obtained through qualitative research, including a review of secondary sources, as well as in-depth interviews conducted during field research on the Thai-Burma border. Findings indicate that the community-based organization emphasis on higher education in the form of post-ten programs has the positive effect of providing refugees with greater knowledge and essential skills that are very much needed within the refugee communities. However, it also has built-in liabilities, as basic education has become neglected. This thesis concludes that an unbalanced emphasis on either basic education or higher education education will have negative outcomes for refugee populations due to the lack of integration of educational program delivery.

August 27, 2012

1

Table of Contents

List of Acronyms

CA Capability Approach
CBO Community-Based Organization
CCSDPT Committee for Coordination of Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand
EE Emergency Education
EFA Education For All
GED General Educational Development
GMR Global Monitoring Report
HE Higher Education
IHE Institute of Higher Education
IIEP International Institute for Educational Planning
INEE Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
KED Karen Education Department
KnED Karenni Education Department
KNU Karen National Union
KRCEE Karen Refugee Committee Education Entity
MDGs Millennium Development Goals
MoE Ministry of Education (Kingdom of Thailand)
MoI Ministry of Interior (Kingdom of Thailand)
NGO Non-Governmental Organization
PRS Protracted Refugee Situation
RTG Royal Thai Government
TBBC Thai-Burma Border Consortium
UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR United Nations High Commission for Refugees

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1. Introduction

Today, there are approximately 7.1 million refugees living in 'protracted refugee situations'. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) defines protracted refugee situations as refugee populations of 25,000 persons or more who have been in exile for five or more years in developing countries (UNHCR, 2004, p. 2). Using this definition, UNHCR reports that there are 31 protracted refugee situations, with refugees living in 26 host countries (UNHCR, 2012b). A lack of aid for and security concerns surrounding refugees has resulted in refugee 'warehousing'. This approach is "the practice of keeping refugees in protracted situations of restricted mobility, enforced idleness, and dependency [...] containing them within camps in host countries" (Smith, 2004, p. 38). While in these camps, refugees are frequently denied their basic human rights, such as the freedom of movement and residence, the right to work, the right to an adequate standard of living, and the right to education (1951 Refugee Convention, UNHCR).

There is a developing consensus in the international humanitarian community and relevant scholarship that the provision of education in times of instability should be deemed one of the fundamental pillars of humanitarian aid, in conjunction with health care, shelter, and food and water (Machel, 2001). However, it is often the case that in protracted refugee situations education is over-looked as it 'falls between the cracks' of humanitarian aid budgets and development budgets. Education in general, and higher

education in particular, has traditionally been seen as a development activity, whereas refugee situations are regarded as temporary emergencies in need of *basic* humanitarian relief. Because of the perceived 'temporariness' of refugee camps, the funding and management of *higher education* has been greatly neglected by UNHCR, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and governments. As a result, many refugee youth find themselves without sufficient education to engage in productive activities throughout their displacement.

Why is higher education important in a protracted refugee situation? There are some who argue against higher education because it is not deemed a necessity and could potentially add to the permanency of refugee camps.[1] However, for many refugees, life in a camp is already a permanent situation and, therefore, it is not enough to simply aim to meet basic needs. Protracted refugee situations often involve restrictions on refugee movement, which creates a deadlock situation. As a result, whole generations have been born and raised in the artificial environment of a refugee camp and have no knowledge of life beyond the barbed wire surrounding them. Education in protracted refugee situations needs to move beyond the basic education that is provided in emergency situations towards education as a development goal. Higher education has the ability to foster development efforts by building the refugee population's capacity. It is an empowering process that could increase their ability to control and direct the resources which they receive and have the power to initiate and manage projects which meet the needs of their communities to foster their self reliance (Demusz, 1998).

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[1] For a further discussion on this debate see: Sinclair (2001), Saint (2009), and Boyden and Ryder (1996).

The protracted refugee situation on the Thai-Burma border presents an interesting case study for analyzing and understanding the dynamics of providing higher education for refugees. The refugee community in this particular region has strived to provide their youth with a unique opportunity for accessing post-basic education within the confines of the camps, and continue to look for ways in which to strengthen and expand the higher education sector of their education system. The restrictions that are placed on refugee movement limit their ability to attend higher education institutions such as university and, therefore, the Thai-Burma border offers a potential model for providing further education opportunities within the camps. This study seeks to explore the challenges faced by the organizations and the people that plan, implement, and manage the higher education programs on the Thai-Burma border.

1.2. Refugee Situation on the Thai-Burma Border

As of January 2012, approximately 416,000 Burmese refugees resided in Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, and Thailand, making refugees from Burma the largest refugee population in Southeast Asia. Of this number, approximately 150,000 refugees reside in Thailand in the nine camps along the Thai-Burma border (UNHCR, 2012a), making this situation one of the most protracted in the world. These refugees have been confined to closed camps since they began arriving in the early 1980s as a result of armed conflict between the Burmese army and several ethnic armed forces. Those seeking refuge are from diverse ethnic groups which have been displaced by Burmese military incursions into and control of ethnic areas of Burma. In addition to those caught in the conflict, pro-democracy supporters and those who were deemed to be in opposition to the

State Peace and Development Council (SPDC)[2] from the urban areas also entered

Thailand and made their way to one of the camps along the border. While Thailand has

over the last four decades been a major country of asylum for refugees from surrounding

countries, it is not party to the 1951 Refugee Convention, which means the Thai

government does not officially recognize persons arriving from Burma as refugees.

Instead, they are considered temporarily displaced persons who are tolerated as long as

they remain in the designated camps. According to Thai law, refugees in Thailand are not

legally permitted to engage in gainful employment and those found outside the camps

without permission are subject to arrest and deportation.

With no option for integrating into Thai society and the option of repatriating back

to Burma being seriously limited by the ongoing conflict, the only other option for

leaving the camps is resettlement to a third country. In 2005, the Thai government

approved the option of resettlement to third countries from all refugee camps. This large-

scale, multilateral resettlement program has changed the situation in the camps

dramatically, as tens of thousands of refugees, mostly the 'educated elite', applied for

resettlement (Banki and Lang, 2008). Yet, this does not present an end to the refugee

situation. Following the general elections in November 2010, there was an influx of

16,000-18,000 people from Burma after clashes between ethnic armed groups and the

Burmese army erupted along the border. While those that fled were allowed to stay

temporarily, Thai authorities encouraged them to return to Burma shortly after fighting

ceased. An estimated 5,000 of these refugees still remain in areas along the Thai-Burma

border (UNHCR, 2012a). Recent reforms undertaken by the Burmese government,

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[2] SPDC refers to the military regime in Burma, which seized power in 1988. After the November 2010 elections, the SPDC was replaced by a quasi-civilian government.

including the release of political prisoners, the easing of media censorship, and the allowance of opposition parties to take part in the April 1, 2012 by-elections, have led to individuals within the Thai government suggesting it is time for refugees to return to home. However, several recent reports by humanitarian and human rights groups demonstrate that the ethnic areas within Burma, from which most refugees fled, are not yet safe enough for refugees to return.[3]

For those refugees that remain in the camps, the provisioning of all resources and services, including education, is done entirely within the camps. At the state level, the Thai Ministry of Interior (MoI) and the Ministry of Education (MoE) have jurisdiction over the types of education programs that may be offered in the camps. Management of general education and adult education programs in the camps, however, is coordinated by NGOs, community-based organizations (CBOs), and other providers and funding bodies. Education in the camps follows the same structure found within Burma - a twelve year system with two kindergarten levels and ten 'Standards' forming the basis of the learning process. Primary schooling consists of kindergarten A and B, and Standards 1 to 4, middle school consists of Standards 5 to 7, and high school runs from Standard 8 to 10. While it is evident that the camps on the Thai-Burma border do provide access to secondary education, this education ends at Standard ten, which leaves students as young as 14 without any productive activities to engage in. Many educators and students felt that this was insufficient to prepare students for their futures, whether it was further study or employment. This perceived need for higher education led to the establishment of community initiated 'post-ten' programs, with approximately 27 post-ten schools

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[3] See Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, The Network for Human Rights Documentation-Burma, and ALTSEAN-Burma for further discussion.

currently in operation along the border. With the absence of formal higher education institutions (i.e. university) in the camps and opportunities for further study outside the camps being severely limited, post-ten programs have offered youth an alternative.

These post-ten programs, also referred to as junior colleges or higher education programs, were created by community-based organizations, including women's organizations, youth groups, and camp education committees. Courses are offered in such areas as English language instruction, community management and leadership, teacher training, office skills, accounting, economics, health, and agriculture. The role of the post-ten sector has been noted to be one of "providing schools with teachers, community based organizations with junior staff, adding to the human resource pool within [Burma] and preparing students for higher level academic programs" (Purnell, 2008, p. 17). Many of the programs have a particular focus on guiding students towards working for their community within the refugee camps and it was reported by representatives of the community education system that this is the main function of the post-ten courses (Purnell, 2008, p. 17).

The immediate implications of the post-ten programs is that they allow refugee youth to increase their knowledge and skills beyond the high school level, as well as the opportunity to become involved in their communities in meaningful ways. The community in turn benefits by having educated people to fill positions left open by refugees who have resettled to a third country. The long-term benefits of post-basic education for refugees are also widespread. Youth are integral to their nation's future, and without higher education, post-conflict states face challenges in the rebuilding and recovery process.

1.3. Argument

The community-based organization emphasis on higher education in the form of post-ten programs has the positive effect of providing refugees with greater knowledge and essential skills that are very much needed within the refugee communities. However, it also has built-in liabilities, as basic education has become neglected. An unbalanced emphasis on either basic education or higher education will have negative outcomes for refugee populations due to the lack of integration of educational program delivery.

1.4. Aims and Rationale

The last two decades have seen a tremendous increase in research and progress in policy and practice on refugee and emergency education. However, while there has been much written on the need for education in the short term, there is a lack of research on education in refugee camps from a long-term perspective. Additionally, research that has been done on education in emergencies tends to focus solely on the provision of basic education. The importance of higher education in protracted refugee situations will be explored within this thesis, through the use of a case study on the refugee camps on the Thai-Burma border. Despite the fact that the ethnic conflict in Burma is one of the world's longest running, and this conflict has resulted in the largest number of refugees within Southeast Asia, it is comparably under-researched. For these reasons, this thesis seeks to contribute to the field of emergency education, refugee studies, and above all, the discipline of education and development.

The following research question will serve to guide this thesis throughout:

1. *What are the key challenges and difficulties to implementing higher education*

   programs in refugee camps, particularly those on the Thai-Burma border?

Other questions considered throughout this thesis include:

1. *How do protracted refugee situations affect education and development for the*

   refugee population?

2. *What is the role and purpose of higher education in refugee camps?*

3. *How are higher education programs integrated with the basic education system?*

1.5. Methodology

This thesis relies on primary data collected during field research in Thailand, which took place between January and February 2012. Qualitative data was collected and compiled from a series of semi-structured, in-depth interviews with representatives from the community-based organization the Karen Refugee Camp Education Entity (KRCEE), several non-governmental organizations working in the field of refugee education, and administrators from various post-ten schools located on the Thai-Burma border. In order to improve the quality of this study and to supplement the findings of the primary data, secondary sources were also widely used. This includes both published and unpublished sources from journals, books, policy documents, NGO reports, and internet sources.

1.6. Overview

This thesis begins with a theoretical framework (Chapter 2), which examines the issues surrounding higher education in protracted refugee situations. Chapter 3 presents the case of the refugee situation on the Thai-Burma border. This includes a description of the historical and current refugee situation, as well as an overview of the methodological principles employed in this thesis to investigate the research questions previously outlined. Chapter 3 also provides a discussion and analysis of the results of the data collected during field research, while also linking the data to the previously mentioned theoretical framework. Chapter 4 concludes the study by providing a summary of the findings. It also presents recommendations for policy and practice, as well as further study or analysis to address the challenges of providing higher education in refugee camp situations.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

2.1. Education and Development

The idea that education contributes to development is widely acknowledged. The dominant view of education is that it is one of the most important tools for economic growth and poverty reduction (Kagawa, 2005). Education is considered a tool for increasing human capital, whereby "human beings invest in themselves, by means of education, training or other activities, which raises their future income by increasing their lifetime earnings" (Woodhall, cited in Psacharopoulos, 1987, p. 21). This approach to education, known as Human Capital Theory, is primarily concerned with increasing human capital as a means of increasing economic opportunities in the future. Human Capital Theory is considered to work in the framework of the Modernization Theory, in which development means economic growth following in the footsteps of Western industrialized countries (Kagawa, 2005). A similar view is held by the World Bank,

> The expansion of educational opportunity, which can simultaneously promote income equality and growth, is a win-win strategy that in most societies is far easier to implement than the redistribution of other assets, such as land or capital. In short, education is one of the most powerful instruments known for reducing poverty and inequality and for laying the basis for sustained economic growth, sound governance and effective institutions. (cited in Mundy, 2006, p. 33)

However, Galtung (1996), Haavelsrud (1996), and Pike and Selby (2000), among others, believe it is too limiting to target education as serving only the cause of economic prosperity. Instead, they argue that development is a multidimensional process and that

education's central concern is the improvement of the quality of life for all in order to meet the needs of human and non-human nature (Kagawa, 2005).

There have been numerous initiatives put forth in the international arena to promote education as a means to development. Often, they have included time-bound, measurable targets for set educational priorities. While a wider and more sophisticated array of goals was adopted at the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000, it is the two education goals outlined in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (universal primary education and gender equity in education) that have been endorsed as part of a common platform by governments and international organizations (Mundy, 2006).

There is ongoing debate as to whether the narrow view of education espoused by the MDGs can, in fact, foster development. Hyneman (2006) argues that universal primary education, has become a "restrictive ideology [...] which treat[s] other important areas of the education sector as being of low priority and tantamount to poor economic strategy" (p. 19). Torres (2002) takes the debate further by arguing there is an inherent dichotomy between what donor countries advocate as the best education policy for developing countries and what they, themselves, have adopted. She describes this dichotomy as being one of basic education, on the one hand, and lifelong learning on the other. Lifelong learning, defined as promoting active citizenship and the necessary knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes toward employment and work, has been largely adopted in the North as a key political, societal, and educational organizing principle. At the same time, basic education – narrowly understood – is being applied as the equivalent organizing principle for the South. In the South, livelihood becomes the issue, not active

citizenship, nor critical thinking, nor building capacities for development (Torres, 2002, p. 4).

2.2. Education and Refugees

2.2.1. Emergency Education

After the end of the Cold War, the world saw an increase in organized violence in the form of war, civil strife, armed conflict, and political oppression (Kagawa, 2005, p. 487). What emerged was a new discourse on humanitarian interventions, one which accommodated for the increase in 'complex humanitarian crises'. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination of humanitarian assistance, defines 'complex emergency' as:

> A humanitarian crisis in a country, region, or society, where there is total or considerable breakdown of authority resulting from internal or external conflict and which requires an international response that goes beyond the mandate or capacity of any single agency and/or the ongoing UN country programs. (OCHA, 1999)

The need for an inter-agency approach to these new crises, led to education becoming a major concern for the international community. Tawil and Harley (2003) speak of the "long-term and destructive impact of armed conflict on formal education systems" (p. 43). Considering the fact that 42% of the reported 67 million out-of-school children live in conflict affected countries, it is clear that conflict has a devastating effect on access to education (UNESCO, 2011). With the recognition of education as the 'fourth pillar' of humanitarian response alongside food, shelter, and health (Machel, 2001), academic research concerning education during emergencies has been growing. However, as Talbot (2005) points out, there is an urgent need for more literature on emergency

education, as much of what exists comes in the form of unpublished documents and reports from NGOs and humanitarian agencies.

Education has been a fundamental operational aspect of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) since the 1960s. Kagawa (2005) discusses how "education in emergency situations has a long history in the form of refugee education" relating strongly to the mandates of UNHCR and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for refugee assistance and protection (p. 488). However, since the beginning of the twenty-first century, there has been a tremendous push towards increased implementation of education in emergencies. There are a number of reasons for which education is now on the agenda, particularly for refugees. The nature of contemporary conflicts means that refugee situations are increasingly protracted, such that refugees can spend their entire school-age years displaced. It is important to note that worldwide, the average length of stay in these states of virtual limbo is approaching twenty years, up from an average of nine years in 1990 (Loescher and Milner, 2009, p. 9). Moreover, the availability of education for refugees reflects what refugee families seek. Refugees have long been arguing that future security, whether it be economic, social, or political, is inherently connected to skills, capacities, and knowledge that can accompany an individual no matter where they may be geographically. Buckland (2004) notes that communities often have a strong desire for education for their children, with Sommers (1999) explaining how "before many international agencies either visit a humanitarian emergency site or import assistance there, many refugee and displaced communities are already educating their children themselves" (p. 1). It is also not uncommon for community leaders to ask the World Food Program (WFP) to provide teachers with

additional food rations to encourage them to stay in the community and educate the children, or for parents to sell their food rations to pay for their children's school fees (Dryden-Peterson, 2012).

The World Declaration on Education for All (EFA), adopted in 1990, also helped pave the way for the field of emergency education to gain more prominence. The 1996 Mid-Decade meeting on Education for All in Amman highlighted the importance of the "delivering of basic education in situations of crisis and transition" (UNESCO, 2000a, p. 7). Recommendations included creating safety zones during the conflict, better understanding of the role of education for conflict management and prevention, and developing education systems to meet the needs of traumatized and displaced populations (UNESCO, 2000a). Following the growing recognition of urgent demands for education in emergency situations, the 2000 Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All (UNESCO, 2000b) highlighted deprivation of educational opportunities due to emergency situations as a major barrier to accessing schooling. The Framework calls for national EFA plans to include provisions for education in emergency situations. One of the twelve stated strategies is to: "Meet the need of education systems affected by conflict, natural calamities and instability and conduct educational programs in ways that promote mutual understanding, peace and tolerance, and help to prevent violence and conflict" (UNESCO, 2000b, paragraph 8). The Thematic Study on Education in Situations of Emergencies and Crisis, presented at the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar, expanded upon the Framework, explaining that "conflict, instability, and natural disasters take their toll on education and are a major barrier towards attaining EFA." It added that "the capacity of governments and civil society should be enhanced to rapidly assess

educational needs in contexts of crisis [...] to restore learning opportunities in secure and friendly environments" (UNESCO, 2000b, p. 19).

Humanitarian agencies have also shown a stronger commitment to working together to develop the emergency education sector through the Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies (INEE). INEE, which was conceived at the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000, is an open network of 5,700 representatives from NGOs, UN agencies, donor agencies, governments, academic institutions, schools, and affected populations. The INEE *Minimum Standards,* first created in 2004 and updated in 2010, are now the normative framework for practice in the field, including for refugee education. INEE's *The Multiple Faces of Education in Conflict-Affected and Fragile Contexts* (2010) also discusses interfaces between education and conflict, stating that "limited investment and availability of economic resources, uncoordinated and/or disconnected service delivery and the lack of transparency and accountability in conflict affected and fragile situations can leave education systems vulnerable to corruption, neglect, and poor management" (p. 15). INEE (2010) argues that a focus on "nuance", or "the subtlety, the detail and the context-specific nature of the relationship" is critical to education design and implementation, where planners must consider the "who, how, what and why" (p. 15). However, INEE does not have the mandate to implement or coordinate education during crises. Instead, it enables network members to share information and encourage collaboration towards defining minimum standards for education in emergencies. This means that the responsibility for planning, implementing, and managing education in refugee situations falls on local organizations, along with international humanitarian organizations.

2.2.2. Right to Education

Waters and Leblanc (2005) explain that in terms of policy formulation for humanitarian responses, there is a new emphasis on refugees as part of a community (p. 136). This community implicitly has a right to a past and is presumed to have a future. This principle is consistent with a 'rights-based approach' to providing social services, including education programs to refugee children. According to the 1951 Refugee Convention, refugees are entitled to a range of civil, political, and socio-economic rights, including protection from *refoulement*, the right to work, housing, social security, and schooling. In general, refugees are entitled to the same human rights and assistance as other foreigners. Article 22 of the Convention deals with the right to public education and specifies that there is no requirement as to residence or lawful stay in the country of asylum for the enjoyment of this right. With respect to elementary education, states have obligations to accord to refugees the same treatment as they accord to their own nationals. This should, as a minimum, include access to pre-school and primary school. As elementary education is compulsory for everyone, refugee adults and children who have not completed such education are entitled to receive it on the same terms as the citizens of the country of asylum. Education other than elementary, such as secondary and higher education, should be accorded to refugees as favourably as possible. This implies access to studies; the recognition of foreign school certificates, diplomas, and degrees; the remission of fees and charges; and the award of scholarships (Anselme and Hands, 2012).

International human rights law complements international refugee law and broadens the scope of the right to education for refugees. In that respect, the right to education is safeguarded in a number of other international instruments, including: the

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948); Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (1949); UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child (1959); Convention Against Discrimination in Education (1962); International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1981).

Nevertheless, in situations of conflict, it becomes more difficult to ensure rights-based approaches to education. This is often because there is disagreement between states and international organizations on who should provide assistance and to what capacity. Smith and Vaux (2003) note the weakness of a rights-based argument for education in emergencies, stating that while the approach is "useful in terms of international discussions between states, especially in relation to budgets and allocation of aid [...] the problem of a hierarchy of rights is likely to emerge [...] where issues of life and death will take precedence" (p. 14). If education is not viewed as a key aspect of the humanitarian response, even international law will not assist refugees without international support.

2.2.3. Psychosocial Benefits to Education in Emergencies

Besides the recognition of education as an inalienable human right, emergency education is advocated by the international humanitarian community for the role it plays in the psychosocial wellbeing of refugees, as well as the physical and cognitive protection it provides (Smith and Vaux, 2003). Surveys show that education is valued and prioritized by crisis-affected communities themselves for its stabilizing effects (INEE, cited in Zeus, 2009; Sinclair, 2002). Machel's (2001) report outlines the significant

21

impact of war on children, recommending a focus on psychosocial support as a means to reintegrate children back into society after they have experienced physical and emotional trauma. Sinclair (2002) discusses how providing education in emergencies can help restore normalcy to children and their community, meeting psychosocial needs through structured games, exercises, and participation in supervised peace programs.

Through education, children can learn the skills and knowledge to cope with increased risks, which in turn, allow them to protect themselves (Nicholai, 2003; Nicholai & Triplehorn, 2003). UNESCO argues that education can be a tool for protection of children living in violence, helping to protect them "from recruitment into fighting forces, forced labour, prostitution, criminal activities and drug abuse" (cited in Wright, 2010). However, Boyden and Ryder (1996) deliver a word of caution to those who consider education a panacea for young people in conflict situations, as it "delays participation in the world of adults and lengthens childhood dependence. This is bitterly resented by many youth. When it does not guarantee employment, education can also raise false expectations among young people" and lead to depression (p. 12).

2.2.4. From Victimization to Empowerment

The 'refugee experience' is often generalized, and all too often the entire global refugee population receives blanket characteristics, such as hungry, helpless and dependent. Refugees become primarily regarded as victims in the international system of refugee relief. In this discourse, refugees have no action or agency and the international refugee regime's role is feed, help, root, heal, and control (Malkki, 1995). One of the most predominant arguments against encampment of refugees is that camps engender

22

passivity, "breaking down all initiatives and self-worthiness of refugees" (Malkki, p. 8). The thought is that relying on others to provide all one's needs eventually translates into complete dependency.

However, there are many who refute this 'dependency syndrome'. Kibreab (1993) argues that dependency is not the issue since he has been witness to overwhelming evidence of refugees' willingness to work when given the chance. Using the example of Somali-Ethiopian refugees in Somalia in the 1970s and 1980s, he explains "the majority of refugees in the camps were willing to expend their labour on economic activities, often for very small return, and also, in some cases, to take the risk of relinquishing their ration cards for the uncertain alternative of self-sufficiency" (Kibreab, 1993, p. 346). Clark (1985) also contests the concept of dependency among refugees. He asserts that "the apparent dependency of refugees derives from their removal from their social, political and economic coping systems" (cited in Abdi, 2005, p. 8). While he acknowledges the presence of dependency, the reasons for such are based on structural constraints, not "laziness" or a "welfare mentality". In fact, many theorists (Agier, 2002; Kibreab, 1999; Malkki, 1995) have found that refugee camps can present a creative space in which refugees actively negotiate and redefine their identity. Education, and in particular higher levels of education, provides refugees with the opportunity to do so. To this end, it is worth examining Amartya Sen's ideas on empowerment.

Amartya Sen's Capability Approach (CA) lends itself well to the refugee experience. The Capability Approach focuses on the ability of human beings to lead lives they have reason to value and to enhance the substantive choices they have (Sen, 1999). The core concepts of this approach are functionings and capabilities, with a functioning

being an achievement and a capability being the ability to achieve (Saito, 2003, p. 18).

According to Sen, the process of development has to be the expansion of human

capability for people to lead freer and more worthwhile lives. CA tells us that every

effort must be made to enable people to convert resources into capabilities and finally into

achieved functionings (Sen, 1999). In other words, the resources that refugees are given

are important; however, it is the opportunities each person has to convert their resources

into valuable outcomes that really matters for development. This is particularly important

for camp refugees who often have very restricted access to limited resources.

From this perspective, education can play an important role in converting

capabilities into achieved functionings. In contrast to human capacity approaches to

education in which the benefit of education is directly judged for its effect on

employability, Sen argues that the "bettering of a human life does not have to be justified

by showing that a person with a better life is also a better producer" (Dreze and Sen,

1995, cited in Walker, 2006, p. 168). Education is also of intrinsic importance, in that

being educated is a valuable achievement in itself, for its own sake. Understanding

education as a tool to expand people's capabilities has very different policy consequences

than conceptualizing education as an investment in human capital. The kind of education

that a capability perspective would include is not only education that maximizes one's

chances on the labour market, but also education that empowers an individual in all

dimensions of life (Robeyns, 2006, p. 370). The economic rationale for excluding certain

groups, such as refugees in this case, from education is undermined. Refugees are largely

excluded from the labour market in host countries; however, they still have the ability to

gain considerable capability-enhancement from education. Considering refugees reliance

on aid and other additional services, refugee camps are sites of highly structured and power laden relationships. Empowering refugees through education is one way in which refugees can reclaim some of their power and, in turn, become agents for development.

2.3. Higher Education for Refugees

2.3.1. Relief Model vs. Development Model

Humanitarian assistance in emergencies, including refugee situations, is often considered 'relief work'. Relief suggests short-term, life-saving measures and a certain degree of action taken 'on behalf of' refugees rather than a participatory and empowering process of self-help and community building (Demusz, 1998). Relief reflects a 'top down' management of activities in relation to camp administration and includes what are sometimes referred to as 'care and maintenance' functions. The relief focus often excludes education, as prioritized urgent needs are intended to be short-term, such as the distribution and provisioning of material aid, constructing temporary shelters, and providing support for post-traumatic stress. In fact, education accounts for just 2% of humanitarian aid. Furthermore, no sector has a smaller share of humanitarian appeals funded – just 38% of aid requests for education are met, which is around half the average for all sectors (UNESCO, 2011). As such, the top down management of activities related to care and maintenance is often critiqued for disempowering, "pathologizing, medicalizing, and labeling" refugees, and for creating tensions between sectors and populations that receive aid and those that do not (Wright and Plasterer, 2012).

With the reluctance of countries to accept large numbers of refugees for resettlement, the inability to repatriate, and host countries often unwilling to allow local

25

integration, extended care and maintenance has become the norm in many refugee camps. Smith (2004) in fact argues that it is a de facto fourth durable solution to the refugee problem, stating that this solution, known as 'warehousing', is "the practice of keeping refugees in protracted situations of restricted mobility, enforced idleness, and dependency [...] containing them within camps in host countries" (p. 38). Wright and Plasterer (2012) note how 'care and maintenance' programs for long-term refugees not only create donor fatigue, but also confines refugees' personal and community development in particular ways by creating dependency on aid. The relief model is not only unsuitable in protracted refugee situations but it is extremely limiting because it excludes refugees from decision-making and participation and it overlooks root problems and potential solutions for refugee populations as well as host countries. For this reason, policy makers and scholars began to consider the use of development programming in refugee camps as a significant component of refugee assistance (Melanson, 2004).

As previously discussed, the view that education must be a priority of emergency assistance has been growing and the dichotomy between humanitarian intervention and development activities among donor agencies has been criticized by Pigozzi (1999) and Sommers (2002), among others. UNHCR describes the need for refugee education as the most critical element in bridging the gap between relief and development (Zeus, 2009), while Pigozzi (1999) suggests that emergency education should take a 'development approach', in which education is regarded as a tool for nation building from the very beginning of the humanitarian intervention. She claims that emergencies can provide "an opportunity for transforming education along the lines envisioned at the Jomtien World Conference on Education for All" and further states that emergencies "allow for the

26

possibility of reconstructing a social institution that helps develop and form the human resources that determine the way a society functions" (Pigozzi, 1999, p. 4). Along the same lines, UNESCO (2000a) points out that "education in emergencies is a humanitarian imperative which has development-promoting outcomes" (p. 9).

The development model implies a high degree of both participation and self-sufficiency by the beneficiary population (Demusz, 1998). It is a continual and time consuming process that aims to involve iterative learning, human dignity, choice, flexibility and freedom (Wigley, 2006, p. 160). Development often means 'self-reliance', which can be measured by the ability of the international refugee regime to allow refugees to manage programs and resources. This approach to refugee education is particularly crucial in protracted refugee situations where refugees are barred from becoming economically self-sufficient and are thus resource dependent. Research "suggests that those refugees who achieve higher levels of adaptation are those most prepared to return to their homes when that becomes possible. The development model is about giving people choices, rather than inducing passivity and a feeling of helplessness" (Mimica and Stubbs, 1996, p. 283).

Despite this recognition of the need for a development approach to protracted refugee situations, Kaiser (2005) notes how the inherently political nature of refugees' presence makes the implementation of a development response incredibly difficult. The emphasis on policy considerations becomes especially acute in refugee situations because, both overtly and covertly, different actors have different political goals in the operation of refugee camp schools and these are often difficult to reconcile (Waters and Leblanc, 2005). For example, the UN and host governments may regard schools as an

important institution through which policies about voluntary repatriation and camp management can be transmitted. NGOs have a particular perspective on education shaped by the global movement towards Education for All. Refugee parents are often concerned with the development of literacy and numeracy needed for effective functioning in whatever society they imagine at the end. Political parties regard schools as an important tool for political mobilization, and activists often regard schools as an important medium to teach peace education and anti-hate curricula.

In refugee situations, like elsewhere, defining the contents of learning and teaching can be highly controversial. In refugee situations, there seems to be two tendencies: resumption of previously used curriculum, on the one hand, and renewal of curriculum by infusing new elements, on the other. However, the two are sometimes mixed and a choice of one or the other is not always ideological and philosophical but practical and pragmatic (Kagawa, 2005). UNHCR often ties the emphasis on education to frequent political demands for voluntary repatriation and the smooth operation of refugee camps. 'Education for repatriation' involves using a home country curriculum for refugees. The main rationale for education for repatriation is that familiar classroom materials provide practical convenience and a sense of security and identity for refugee children who have been uprooted from their own place and national education system (i.e. national curriculum, textbooks, assessment and evaluation procedures, teacher training and validation, certification, familiar languages of instruction) (Sinclair 2001, 2002). However, it also speaks to the reluctance of host countries to encourage permanency of refugee camps. The result is that the rights-based approach to education becomes compromised by political demands to resolve political tensions. In a 1995 policy seeking

28

to integrate a child's right to education with practical questions about what curriculum

and pedagogy to use, UNHCR defined the purpose of education as follows:

> The content of schooling should follow the principle of education for voluntary repatriation, with refugee teachers providing a familiar type of education, using familiar languages of instruction. The content should follow the basic curriculum of the country or areas of origin. If repatriation is delayed, there should be discussions between refugee and host government educationists, regarding the possible introduction of "mixed curriculum" which faces both ways, incorporating elements of the host country curriculum where this is substantially different. A primary reason for supporting refugee education programmes, and supporting them as soon as possible[,] is thus psychosocial. Children regain emotional balance by coming together for games and study. . . . [Thus,] education and training can contribute to the durable solution of "voluntary repatriation," through giving children the knowledge, skills and emotional stability to successfully re-enter the education system in their home country. (cited in Waters and Leblanc, 2005, p. 137)

Waters and Leblanc (2005) point out that what is missing from the above rationale for

education of refugees is the more traditional emphasis of schooling, such as literacy,

numeracy, and civic education, in other words, the basic standards for achieving the goals

normally pursued by schools. This seems to be because the schooling provided in refugee

camps is often done on an ad hoc basis, focused on immediate needs like relief of

psychosocial stress or voluntary repatriation without much reference to broader questions

to do with the kind of future refugees will have (Waters and Leblanc, 2005).

How water, food, shelter, refugee protection, and social order are provisioned has

implications for the type of future that can be imagined. But perhaps more than any other

form of relief, decisions made about education have the longest term implications. How

schools are organized, who is in charge, and the languages of instruction all tell refugees

who will retain power after the camps are closed. Leblanc and Waters (2005) argue that

the question that educators should ask is: What will such policies mean for a refugee

population in one, five, ten, or twenty years? This is a question that agencies focused on

food rations, medical care, or water systems can ignore. The questions that educators must ask, by contrast, are inherently political. Decision making in seemingly technical areas to do with curriculum, pedagogy, and school administration plants the seeds of a future. Whether that future is repatriation, resettlement, or local integration, education plays a significant role in preparing refugees.

Because the short-term, relief model persists, basic education remains a priority over secondary and tertiary education in nearly all humanitarian situations. Anselme and Hands (2012) provide an important insight here. They explain that in the case of refugees, and in terms of international funding policies, the different stages of education are often perceived as independent compartments, instead of interdependent and interactive links in the educational process. However, the perspective of lifelong learning in refugee situations is essential. In that respect, for instance, it has been proved that high rates of enrolment and the achievement of learning outcomes at primary level depend significantly upon the availability of post-primary educational opportunities. Likewise, retention at the secondary level largely depends on the availability of higher education opportunities (Anselme and Hands, 2012). It is not enough to simply provide basic education to children in refugee situations, particularly in protracted situations. If development is to take place throughout displacement and during the reconstruction phase post-conflict, then opportunities for higher levels of education, as well as education for adults and out of school youth, need to be integrated into the refugee education system.

2.3.2. Benefits of Higher Education for Refugees

Higher education (HE) has numerous benefits for refugee populations. According to Jones (2008), there has been no society that has come close to universal literacy by relying on primary school alone (p. 35). Those that have come closest have seen their primary schools complemented by a range of other educational opportunities, including secondary and tertiary education. Higher education has been proven to bolster parental and community support for primary and secondary education initiatives, particularly for gender equality programs. It also has the ability to inspire youth to attend class and successfully complete high school, as well as improve the quality and capacity of the primary and secondary education system by increasing the number of qualified teachers (Wright and Plasterer, 2012). This is particularly important in protracted refugee situations, where refugee resettlement programs have led to the shortage of qualified teachers in the camps, as the best qualified education personnel tend to be the first ones to resettle to a third country.

Higher education also plays an important role in development efforts within the camps by building the refugee population's capacity. Access to HE contributes to the rebuilding of individual refugees' lives and the realization of durable solutions. Dryden-Peterson (2012) points out that refugees who have completed secondary school almost universally voice the desire to attend higher education institutions. This desire may be linked to possible economic benefits made more likely through further education. It may also be an alternative to the labour market since "if access to the labour market is limited for young people, as it often is in situations of emergency and reconstruction, they need the stimulus and challenge of education to absorb their energies and lessen their

31

frustrations and anxiety about the future" (IIEP, 2009, p. 271). Providing more than a basic education can increase the ability of refugees to control and direct the resources which they receive, while also giving them power to initiate and manage projects which meet the needs of their communities to foster self-reliance (Demusz, 1998). A recent report by the NGO Network of Integration Focal Points (2007) indicates that efforts in education, vocational training, and language learning assist refugees to play an active role in their own integration, enabling them and their children to "be more successful and more active participants in society" (p. 1). With the average time spent as a refugee doubling from nine to almost twenty years over the last decade, Zeus (2010) argues that "we cannot afford to have human potential linger around until a durable solution is found [...] we need to look at the immediate and long-term development needs of refugees in protracted contexts" (cited in Wright and Plasterer, 2012). To do so, the international community should provide refugees with the essential capacity building opportunities during displacement to cultivate skills for future integration and community/nation building efforts. Unlike a focus on survival, which generally reduces people to passive recipients and does not recognize the desire for knowledge acquisition that enables one to think about the future and plan and strategize for one's family, experiences with HE allow for a shift in thinking toward considerations of the possible and potential (Martone and Neighbor, 2006, p. 3).

Investment in higher education is especially critical in post-conflict situations, as education is a tool for reconstruction. Investment in HE not only meets the needs of individual refugees and their individual durable solutions, but also contributes to the development of the human and social capital necessary for future reconstruction and

32

economic development in countries or regions of origin (Dryden-Peterson, 2012). When a generation or more has missed out on higher education, the labour force will be short on members with more than a basic education (IIEP, 2009). Once the conflict has ended, positions in government, productive enterprises, and professional fields, such as doctors, lawyers, and teachers, will be filled with those lacking adequate levels of formal education and training. Higher education also has the benefit of increasing a country's economic growth. National competitiveness, especially in high value added modern sector economic activity, depends on knowledge, skills, and competencies associated with abstract reasoning, analysis, language and communication skills, and applications of science and technology (Lewin, 2004, p. 6). Without this competitiveness, economic growth will stall and government revenues will stagnate. The Task Force on Higher Education and Society (2000) states that HE "is essential to national social and economic development," with benefits including: increased tax revenue, better national health, reduced population growth, stronger government, and improved technology (Bloom, Canning, and Chan, 2005). This applies not only to repatriation but to local integration as well.

Dryden-Peterson (2012) points out that just as within the broader global education movement, lack of investment in higher education is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, prioritizing resources for primary and secondary education meets the needs of the vast number of children and youth who do not have access to these levels of education. It addresses equality goals over the short-term. On the other hand, ignoring the development of HE has negative long-term consequences both for individuals and society.

2.3.3. Challenges to Providing Higher Education for Refugees

There are numerous challenges to providing higher education for refugees, from restrictive host country policies and high programming costs, to conflicting global education priorities. Higher education is often linked to long-term development, and therefore, many host governments do what they can to discourage it for fear of encouraging permanency of the camps. Host governments may also neglect to provide higher levels of education in camps as a way to protect their borders and discourage further refugee movement. Host governments are aware of the risk of refugees fleeing to their country solely to access the education system within the camps, especially when the education system in their country of origin is lacking. Finally, host governments may be concerned that their relations with the refugee-producing government will be weakened or compromised by providing extensive resources and services to their fleeing citizens (Wigley, 2006, p. 165).

At the same time, donors are often unwilling to invest significant resources in a sector that is known to be more expensive than basic education (Brown, 2005). Higher education requires more skilled teaching staff, school infrastructure, equipment, and learning materials, all of which come with higher costs. There is also a high degree of specialization required at the post-basic level. Recruitment and training of qualified teachers in specialized fields, such as computers, maths, sciences, technology, health, and languages is very difficult and expensive to fund. This is compounded by the fact that many refugee camps suffer from high teacher turnover rates due to resettlement programs. High teacher turnover is a serious challenge for education provisioning in

refugee camps as teacher training systems are simply not equipped to handle constant turnover and the low education qualifications of new recruits.

Budget lines available for funding for higher education programs can also be hard to identify. Donors continue to be unsure whether higher education for refugees falls under short-term relief or long-term development. There is uncertainty as to whether education beyond secondary school is for the benefit of the individual or the needs of the community. For these reasons, donors often have to decide whether to spread funds thinly without jeopardizing quality or to focus on selected refugees who can climb the education ladder and eventually help their communities as professionals and leaders (Brown, 2005). The structure of funding is such that it reproduces the universal imbalance between low cost, mass provision of primary schooling and high cost, selective provision at the secondary and tertiary levels (Preston, 1991).

Contributing to this imbalance is the argument that HE has a tendency to serve the elite, so that investment in basic education would not only be more egalitarian but also yield higher economic returns in developing countries (IIEP, 2007). Education in general carries a connotation of being a 'positional good' and higher education in particular is believed to have been creating elites in professionalism, by elevating the educated ones while automatically downgrading the uneducated (Zeus, 2009). Within protracted refugee situations, access to HE still remains a luxury catering for the privileged classes (Saint, 2009), rarely touching upon the lives of the majority of forced migrants caught in long-term encampment who generally receive only what is deemed necessary in responding to their basic needs and rights.

While there now appears to be increasing consensus among academics and practitioners on the importance of higher education, HE still remains largely outside the global education movement, within which the focus has instead been on primary education. Access to a complete course of quality primary education is the main objective of the global education movement outlined by the Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals. Dryden-Peterson (2012) explains the global priorities for education are rooted in both the geography and the philosophy of the movement. They are borne of a recognition that the greatest challenges to educational access are in the least developed countries, geographically centred in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, particularly countries affected by conflict or undergoing reconstruction. There has been remarkable progress in many countries toward educational access for all, such that, globally the number of out of school children decreased from 106 million to fewer than 70 million between 2000 and 2010 (UNESCO, 2011). Progress, however, in conflict affected states has been more difficult. UNESCO estimates that 28 million out of school children live in low and lower middle income conflict-affected states, which represents 42% of the world's total. Furthermore, countries which have recently universalized access to primary education have often done so at the expense of quality, such that even children enrolled in school are not gaining the desired skills, knowledge, and competencies (UNESCO, 2011). In this situation, the immediacy and pressing nature of barriers to accessing quality primary education overshadows concurrent barriers to HE. This has led to calls for more explicit safeguards for higher education, as the focus on EFA is unlikely to mean an increase in funds

allocated to the education sector as a whole, but would rather imply shifting scarce resources from higher education to basic education (Zeus, 2009).

There is some emphasis in the Dakar Framework for Action and the MDGs on secondary education, life skills training, and adult literacy and continuing education, but HE is not mentioned in these seminal documents (Dryden-Peterson, 2012). UNESCO barely refers to HE in its yearly Global Monitoring Reports (GMR) on EFA progress. GMR 2011 and 2010 discuss the role HE plays in skills development and the expansion of employment opportunities. GMR 2009 mentions HE only in relation to health benefits to children of tertiary educated mothers, while GMR 2008 and 2007 mostly mention HE in relation to the gender equality goal and the importance of providing teachers and administrators. In this regard, HE is portrayed in terms of its externalities, the benefits accruing to immediate and wider society, rather than an individual right. As Hyneman (2006) points out the donor community has become infatuated with basic education, and specifically with 'Basic Education for All'. He argues that what began as simply common sense has become a restrictive ideology, which treats other areas of the education sector as being of low priority, adding that this low priority is aimed at secondary and higher education, vocational education, engineering, medical and other professional education, capacity building in education research and policy analysis, as well as science and technology. Treating Education for All as the single most important priority reduces the sector to being little more than one of humanitarian assistance. This one-dimensional view of the purpose of education diminishes the professional respect for the sector and makes it politically difficult to take an interest in any part other than basic education. Because international assistance to education has become ideological,

organizations which might have had an interest and expertise in higher education, have lost interest, as no organization would want to be accused of not adhering to basic education priorities (Hyneman, 2006).

2.4. Higher Education for Refugees in Thailand

The focus of this thesis is on a particular type of higher education found in the refugee camps on the Thai-Burma border referred to as 'post-ten' education. Post-ten programs are separate from the formal education system in the camps and require students to have completed Standard Ten education. They are created and run by refugees themselves through community-based organizations, with financial and technical support from local and international organizations. The creation of these post-ten programs within the camps indicates the strong desire amongst refugees from Burma to learn and to develop their skill base beyond what is provided for by the basic education system. The role of post-ten programs has been one of providing schools with teachers, community-based organizations with junior staff, adding to the human resource pool in Burma and preparing students for higher level academic programs. The main role of the post-ten programs, however, is to guide students towards working for their communities within organizations that promote community health, education, advocacy, and human rights issues (Purnell, 2008). Post-ten programs geared towards teacher training also have a particularly valid function in terms of addressing the short falls of teachers and education staff available in the camps due to resettlement programs. It is evident that these higher education programs have numerous benefits for individual refugees, as well as the larger refugee community. However, there are also many challenges to providing

this type of education to refugees within a camp setting where the goals and agendas of the various actors involved in refugee education often conflict, leading to unintended consequences for the refugee education sector as a whole.

CHAPTER 3

Fieldwork Data and Analysis

3.1. History of the Refugee Situation on the Thai-Burma Border

Burma's independence from Britain in 1948 ushered in a decade of tumultuous

democracy, followed by two coups and the rise of an authoritative military regime called

the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). When Burma achieved independence

from the British, minority ethnic groups[4] failed to gain the autonomy or independence

they had sought (Baron, 2004, p. 15). The ethnic Karen, who had been friendly with the

British, felt betrayed and vulnerable when they left and soon after started what has

become the world's longest armed rebellion. Other ethnic groups, such as the Karenni,

the Shan, and the Mon also went into rebellion. The Burmese government regarded these

armed opposition groups as insurgents threatening national unity and determined to stop

them at any cost. In January 1984, Burmese troops entered ethnic areas sending almost

10,000 mainly ethnic Karen into Thailand. Over the next ten years, the Burmese army

launched annual attacks[5], taking control of new areas, building supply routes, and

establishing new bases. As territory was lost, new refugees fled to Thailand, increasing

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[4] The ethnic geography of modern Burma is generally described as having a Burman-dominated, central heartland surrounded by over one hundred ethnic sub-groups from four main Tibeto-Burman, Karen, Mon-Khmer, and Shan (Tai) linguistic groupings. Non-Burman ethnic minorities make up between one-third and one-half of Burma's ethnically diverse population and the border areas constitute some 40% of Burma's land mass (Banki & Lang, 2008, p. 61).
[5] The response of the Tatmadaw (armed forces) to insurgents has been the Pya Ley Pya ('Four Cuts' strategy) officially endorsed in 1968 and still in operation today. Designed to suppress internal insurgency by cutting the insurgents off from their support system, it is targeted at cutting off civilian support systems in ethnic areas by denying food, funds, intelligence, and recruits to opposition forces. Over time, the Four Cuts strategy has forced more and more civilians to flee their homes, as insurgency and counterinsurgency warfare has blurred the boundary between combatants and non-combatants (Banki & Lang, 2008, p. 61-62).

the number to about 80,000 by 1994. Many of these refugees were student activists, who in 1988 staged mass demonstrations against the military regime. The uprising, which was also supported by many monks, was crushed by the army on the 18th of September, 1988, which left thousands dead (TBBC, A Brief History).

After refugees first began arriving in Thailand from Burma in 1984, the Thai Ministry of Interior invited voluntary agencies working with Cambodian, Laos, and Vietnamese refugees in the East to provide limited emergency assistance to the people now entering from Burma. The grouping of agencies that made up the Committee for Coordination of Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand (CCSDPT) quickly sent a mission to the border. According to Jack Dunford, a member of the first mission, the new arrivals were "[...] extremely well organized. There seemed to be no issue over land. The Thai authorities were letting them build camps that felt more like villages. Rudimentary schools were already in place. Rice and medical aid were starting to come in as Karen Christian leaders were writing letters for help to any and all their contacts" (Baron, 2004, p. 19). Over the next few years, as refugees continued to enter Thailand, it was felt that any radical change to the administrative system in the camps would jeopardize the communities' sense of self-reliance, as well as interfere with potential resolutions of the conflicts (Baron, 2004, p. 24).

In 1997, however, there was a significant change in the way the camps operated. By that time the Burmese army had gained tenuous access to and control over the entire border region, which had previously been controlled by ethnic nationalities (Baron, 2004, p. 26). The end of the 'buffer-zone' between Burma and Thailand, and the clear jeopardy into which the cross-border attacks had thrown the safety of the refugees, sparked

concerns over the security of the camps. As a result, the Thai government consolidated many of the smaller camps into a reduced number of large, sprawling camps. Refugees also became subject to far more restrictions on their movement and, therefore, restrictions on employment. As Thailand is not party to the 1951 Refugee Convention, the Royal Thai Government (RTG) does not officially recognize persons arriving from Burma as refugees. Instead, they are considered temporarily displaced persons who are tolerated as long as they remain in the designated camps. According to Thai law, refugees in Thailand are not legally permitted to engage in gainful employment and those found outside the camps without permission are subject to arrest and deportation. This has caused the refugee population to become increasingly more dependent on outside aid for even the most basic forms of support.

In 1998, an agreement was made between the RTG and UNHCR which allowed UNHCR to become officially operational on the border. However, unlike most other refugee situations, UNHCR has only been assigned a limited advisory role in Thailand (Banki & Lang, 2008). At present, the CCSDPT and the Thai-Burma Border Consortium (TBBC) continue to oversee the relief effort in coordination with UNHCR. The UNHCR takes as its mandate the protection of refugees, not education. In the realm of education, it only provides funding for adult English and Thai language lessons in the camps. The RTG's decision to permit such a limited role for the UNHCR means that decisive power remains with the Thai government. This allows the Thai government to have greater flexibility and independence in response to its 'refugee problem'. The encampment policy, being part of that response, allows for easier control of refugees and alleviates Thailand from the financial responsibility for meeting refugees' needs by shifting it to the

international donor community. The refugee situation continues to be seen as temporary, with the camps themselves being referred to as 'temporary shelters'. In line with this mentality, no building within the camps is allowed to be constructed out of permanent materials, such as concrete or stone.

In 2005, the Thai government approved the option of resettlement to third countries from all refugee camps. This large-scale, multilateral resettlement program has changed the situation in the camps dramatically, as tens of thousands of refugees, mostly the 'educated elite', applied for resettlement (Banki & Lang, 2008). Yet, this does not present an end to the refugee situation. Following the general elections in November 2010, there was an influx of 16,000-18,000 people from Burma after clashes between ethnic armed groups and the Burmese army erupted along the border. While those that fled were allowed to stay temporarily, Thai authorities encouraged them to return to Burma shortly after fighting ceased. An estimated 5,000 of these refugees still remain in areas along the Thai-Burma border (UNHCR, 2012a). Furthermore, gross human rights abuses, as well as repressive laws, continue to make it unsafe for refugees to return, despite recent reforms implemented by the government.

Today, the number of refugees who have fled Burma stands at over 416,000, with approximately 150,000 residing in the nine camps along the Thailand-Burma border (UNHCR, 2012a). The nine camps include: Ban Mai Nai Soi (pop. 13,833), Ban Mae Surin (pop. 3,668), Mae La Oon (pop. 14,670), Mae Ra Ma Luang (pop. 16,434), Mae La (pop. 48,861), Umpiem Mai (pop. approx. 17,787), Nu Po (pop. 15,766), Ban Dong Yang (pop. 3,833), and Tham Hin (pop. 7,342). There is also one resettlement site, Wieng

Heng (pop. 584), that is not counted as a refugee camp, though it does house persons

fleeing Burma from Shan State (TBBC, Camp Populations, June 2012). (See Appendix 1)

Map 1: Thai-Burma Border with Refugee Camps
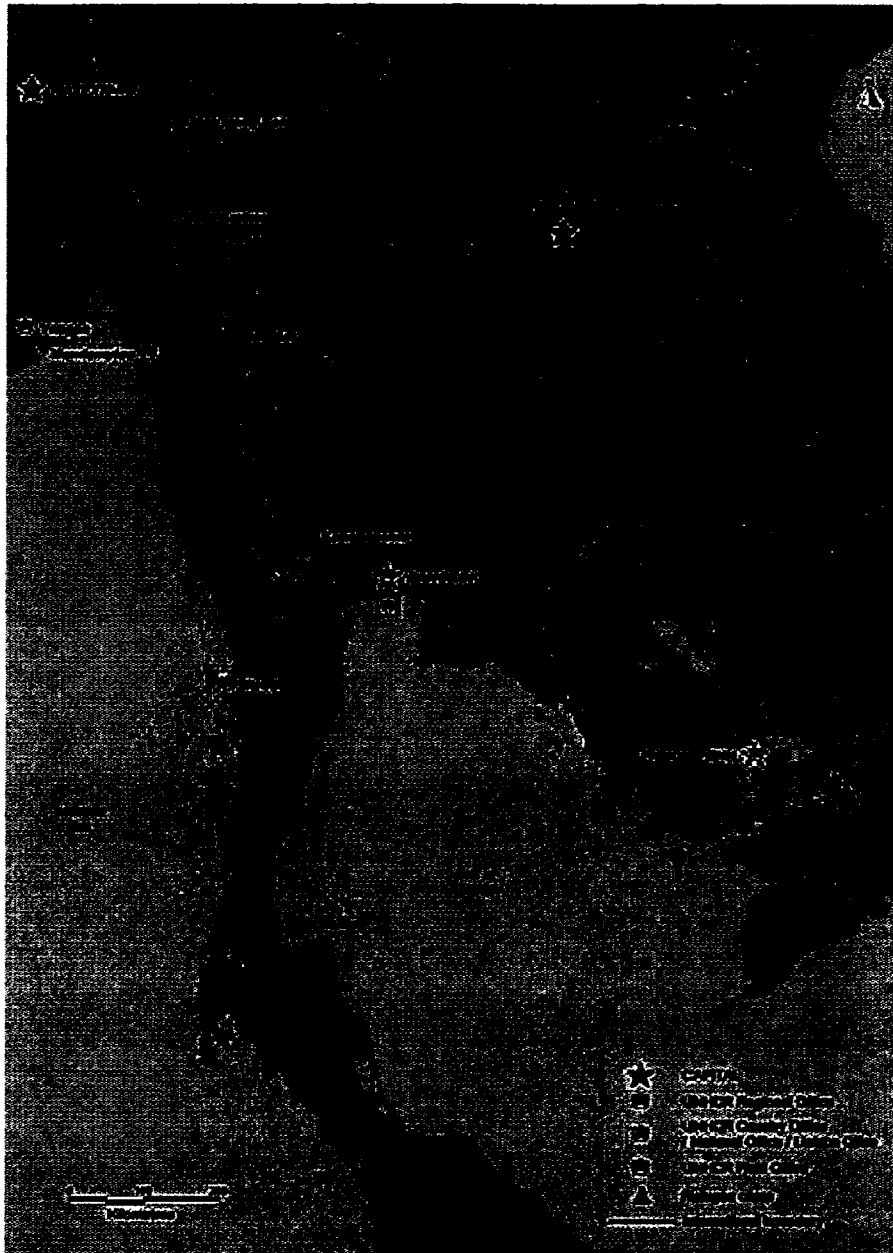
Source: UNHCR, 2012

3.2. Methodology and Limitations

Field research was carried out in Thailand, along the Thai-Burma border, from January to February 2012, in an effort to explore the overall research questions on the benefits and the challenges to providing higher education in a protracted refugee situation. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives from three groups. The first group was the community-based organization the Karen Refugee Committee Education Entity (KRCEE), which is responsible for managing the education system for seven refugee camps. KRCEE is composed entirely of members from the refugee community. The second group that was invited to participate in this study was the humanitarian aid community. Representatives from several non-governmental organizations that specialize in refugee education were interviewed. These organizations are both local and international and work to plan, implement, and manage basic and higher education. The third group consisted of administrators from various post-ten schools located outside the refugee camps. These administrators were chosen for their ability to provide more specific information regarding the post-ten programs. All participants were purposively sampled, as they included key people in their area of expertise and employment.

Participants were initially contacted by email, in which I explained the nature of my research and invited them to take part in an interview. Interviews were conducted in person at a location of the interviewee's choosing. Some interviews were also conducted by phone due to time and geographical constraints. All participants provided oral informed consent. Where appropriate, interviews were recorded with a digital audio recorder and supplemented with written notes. To maintain confidentiality, the names of

46

all participants, as well as the name of their respective organizations (with the exception of KRCEE) have been withheld. All interviews were conducted in English.

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were used to gather data. A set of open ended questions were used to guide the interview; however, other questions were posed throughout the interview as new topics arose or further clarification was needed. Furthermore, within the responses, participants would often raise other issues, ask questions of their own, or provide answers to questions never specifically asked of them. This particular research method was chosen for the numerous benefits it presents. As a qualitative method, it provided a means through which to gain an understanding of the complex issues surrounding forced migration. The informal nature of the interview allowed participants to feel comfortable enough to volunteer information they had not been specifically asked, thus adding new insights to the research. By keeping the interview private, conducted one individual at a time, participants did not worry about possible repercussions of being open and honest, which may have been the case if focus groups had been used. Finally, by conducting oral interviews, as opposed to written questionnaires, the research was able to tap into stories and information that would have otherwise been missed. In order to improve the quality of this study and to supplement the findings of the primary data, secondary sources were also widely used. This includes both published and unpublished sources from journals, books, policy documents, NGO reports, and internet sources.

Highly restricted access to refugee camps by Thai authorities meant that no interviews could be conducted with individuals inside the camps, where most post-ten schools, as well as all primary and secondary schools, are located. As a result, the

majority of interviews were conducted with representatives from NGOs, whose offices were located outside the camps. While the individuals chosen to participate in this study are all highly knowledgeable with regards to the refugee education system and were able to provide detailed information on planning and policy measures, this study would have benefitted from greater participation of the refugee community.

It is also important to note that there is a large migrant population from Burma residing in Thailand, particularly along the Thai-Burma border. As refugees and migrants are defined differently by the Thai government, the policies and provisions of services for them are developed and delivered quite separately, usually by different organizations. While the migrant population is a concern for Thailand and the many NGOs that work with them, this particular group is too distinct and varied to be assessed in a study of this scope and scale.

Information in this thesis regarding the formal basic education system for refugees focuses on the seven predominantly Karen camps (Mae La Oon, Mae Ra Ma Luang, Mae La, Umpiem Mae, Nu Po, Ban Don Yang, Tham Hin). This education system is managed by KRCEE. The education system in the two predominantly Karenni camps (Ban Mae Nai Soi and Ban Mae Surin) is managed separately by the Karenni Education Department (KnEd), representatives of which were not interviewed during the course of my field research. Information regarding the post-ten education system, however, pertains to post-ten programs located in and around all nine refugee camps.

3.3. Refugee Education on the Thai-Burma Border

For the refugees on the Thai-Burma border, there has been a long held acknowledgement of the importance of education. Upon their arrival in Thailand in the early 1980s, schools were one of the first institutions to be established and education has continued to be one of the major priorities of the refugee community over the past three decades. The Royal Thai Government has overall authority over the implementation of education services for the refugees living in camps in Thailand. At the camp level, the management of general education, as well as adult education, is coordinated by two camp education committees - the Karen Refugee Camp Education Entity[6] for the seven predominantly Karen camps and the Karenni Education Department for the two predominantly Karenni camps. The camp education committees are responsible for curriculum development, teacher training, school inspections, standardizing the curriculum, making textbooks available to all schools, liaison between education non-governmental organizations and local organizations, and distributing teacher salaries. Both the KRCEE and the KnED work in collaboration with NGOs, community-based organizations, and other providers and funders. All teachers, principals, caretakers, trainers, school committee members, and camp education committee members are drawn from the community, resulting in a high level of community ownership over the education system in the camps.

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[6] In April 2009, responsibility for education in the seven camps was transferred from the Karen Education Department (KED) to the newly created KRCEE. One of the reasons for this change was due to the restrictions that some NGOs and donors faced in working with the KED as it is part of a political organization, the Karen National Union (KNU). In addition, this was part of a process of streamlining to ensure more coherence and efficiency in managing the different education programs and sectors in the camps (Oh et al, 2010).

As of 2010, there were approximately 70 schools in the seven predominately Karen camps, which are staffed by 80 head teachers and 1,600 teachers (Oh, 2010, p. 1). These teachers support the learning of more than 34,000 students. There are also approximately 11 schools in the two predominately Karenni camps. Compared to other emergency education situations, the basic camp education system is relatively autonomous, standardized, and comprehensive; however, it is not all encompassing as organizations and individuals may set up schools independently (Oh et al, 2006). Education in the camps follows the same structure found within Burma - a twelve year system with two kindergarten levels and ten 'Standards' forming the basis of the learning process. Primary schooling consists of kindergarten A and B, and Standards 1 to 4, middle school consists of Standards 5 to 7, and high school runs from Standard 8 to 10. With the long-term view of repatriation, KRCEE created a curriculum that was largely based on curriculum found in Burma, with the addition of many components found in education systems around the world. Despite the changing ethnic makeup of the camps, the camp education system is Karen-centric, with the language of instruction being Skaw-Karen and the curriculum conveying the 'Karen version' of Burma's history (Zeus, 2009, p. 50). Oh and Van der Stouwe (2008a) note that KRCEE's powerful stand within the camp education system grants them the monopoly on discourse production, which has been found to have negative implications for other ethnicities. Furthermore, because school curriculum was created by KRCEE and not adopted from existing government approved education systems in Burma or Thailand, the certificates students at all education levels receive are not recognized outside the camps.

Despite the lack of accreditation, refugees take great pride in their education system, which for years has been thought to be more valuable and of a higher quality than education in Burma. The system strives to provide education for all children and young people, as well as more technical education for adults. At present, nursery, general (basic) education, post-secondary schooling, and vocational and adult learning are available in the camps. High primary enrolment rates are linked to good access to schools due to proximity and also a lack of employment opportunities which decreases the indirect and opportunity costs of attending school. With students progressing through the basic education system and no end to the refugee situation in sight, community members began to see the need for higher education opportunities. This led to the establishment of community initiated post-ten programs, the number of which has expanded rapidly since 2005. According to the NGO, Curriculum Project, there are currently 27 post-ten schools along the border, operating both within and outside the camps.[7] KRCEE also states that in 2011 there were over 1,000 students in post-ten education programs, with approximately 183 teachers.

Zeus (2009) outlines two main reasons for the strong desire among Burmese refugees to pursue higher education. The first reason is historical. In Burma, universities have been sites of political resistance. University students have played a crucial role in the country's struggle for independence, as well as the struggle to topple successive military governments. Student leaders are revered as heroes, and their pictures can often be found in many refugees' homes along the border. The desire for higher education stems, in part, from the eagerness of young refugees to follow in the footsteps of those

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[7] Curriculum Project only counts post-ten programs that are longer than one year and does not include training courses run by CBOs. As a result, the actual number of post-ten programs is much higher.

student leaders. The second reason is situation specific. The pace of life in refugee camps is slow, with very few facilities for entertainment and limited employment opportunities. Education, in this case, serves as a means to keep oneself occupied (Zeus, 2009, p. 53). A third reason should also be considered and that is the desire of many refugees to make a difference in their own lives and their communities. Because of the protracted nature of the camps, refugees on the Thai-Burma border are largely dependent on assistance from outside organizations. Education, and in particular higher education, gives refugees the ability to gain control of their situation and break this cycle of dependency.

When the post-ten programs began on the Thai-Burma border, they were born out of the idea that the basic education system did not provide refugees with enough education – a view that still holds strong today. There were also those within the refugee community that believed the quality of basic education was not sufficient. What resulted was the creation of specialist programs with more qualified, experienced teachers who addressed the needs of the brightest and the best. Many of the early post-ten programs were part of a niche that received extra funding to hire the top teachers and had very competitive entrance requirements. However, the expansion of the post-ten sector has led to its being an essential part of the refugee education system. There is now a post-ten program for everyone who wants it and, in fact, there are more post-ten students than there are high school graduates (Interview with education NGO, 08/02/12). It should be noted, however, that most post-ten programs still require applicants to have a high school degree, and the number of secondary school graduates is significantly lower than the number of primary school graduates.

The initial reasoning behind offering post-ten education in the camps was based on the idea that refugee youth wanted to attend university and what was stopping them from this was a lack of required skills and knowledge. However, over the last few years, there has been an increasing realization that no matter how much education refugee youth received, most would never be able to access that desired university education due to a lack of scholarships and/or a lack of university placements for refugee students. Furthermore, the scholarships that do exist are rarely given to recent high school graduates. Instead, they much prefer individuals with a background in community work, as those who attend university straight out of high school are "more likely to fail, resettle, or drop out" (Interview with education NGO, 08/02/12). In light of this, there has been a shift in focus from the expansion of the knowledge and skills of the individual refugee to the needs of the broader refugee community, leading to the introduction of an internship component following the completion of many post-ten programs. As Purnell (2008) notes, the role of the post-ten sector is one of "providing schools with teachers, community based organizations with junior staff, adding to the human resource pool within Karen State and preparing students for higher level academic programmes" (p. 17). This focus on the community also means that most post-ten programs will not recruit students who are eligible or plan to resettle in the near future. Instead, many post-ten schools seek out students whose main commitment is to work for a CBO or local school. In fact, as part of the recruitment process, post-ten schools often require their students to agree to work in the camps for a year or two after graduation.

Despite it being an essential part of the education system, the post-ten sector is not standardized. Mandates, curriculum, entrance requirements, and overall standards can

vary greatly between each post-ten program. Schools are run and funded by private organizations/individuals and donors, and as one education NGO explained, this has resulted in a system of really uneven, unequal schools in terms of quality and funding (Interview, 01/03/12). One school may have secure funding and highly qualified teachers, while another school may struggle to find funding and teachers from year to year, which ultimately affects the quality of the program. The problem that arises is that it becomes very difficult to determine the value of a certificate from a post-ten school when the quality varies so drastically between schools and between years.

For an education department, as KRCEE tries to be, managing such a system can be a nightmare. With funding coming from different donors directly to the schools, the authority and decision-making power bypasses KRCEE entirely. Therefore, to address the lack of standardization among post-ten programs and the resulting variations in quality, in 2008, KRCEE decided to create their own integrated institution called the Institute of Higher Education (IHE). IHE consists of seven previously independent schools, across seven camps, which joined together and agreed upon a standard curriculum, learning outcomes, and rules for how their institutions would be run. The IHE program, similar to a university bachelor program, is four years of schooling in which the first two years are spent on general education subjects, followed by two years in a specialized subject such as health, education, or community management. While IHE is still in the preliminary stages, the goal is to have one institute in each camp, with each institute specializing in one major.

Within the NGO community, there are those who do not believe there should be a 'university' in the camps because of the lack of resources and isolation from practical

learning experiences (Purnell, 2008, p. 27). However, IHE does present an alternative model for higher education for refugees. This model presents an opportunity for more equal access to higher education, which does not require students to compete over limited scholarships to study abroad. It also presents a solution to the further 'brain drain' from the camps from students having to leave to access higher education. Putting the lack of resources aside, the presence of a university-like institution within the confines of the camp could facilitate the process of opening up the camps and fostering exchange with the outside world (Zeus, 2011, p. 266). It could even attract further human capital from outside the camps, just as current post-ten programs already benefit from the involvement of foreign volunteer teachers. As Brock-Unte (1996) explains, indigenous universities and institutions of higher education are of the greatest importance if the developing world is to build up its "own counter-expertise capable of evaluating and criticizing aid packages being offered" (p. 185).

For such an institution to be successful, however, KRCEE must strive for inclusiveness and diversity. Oh and Van der Stouwe (2008a) point out that the challenge here is that the Karen leadership have shown themselves to be more inclined to reinforce traditional power structures and to promote a certain version of Karen culture rather than to embrace and endorse the concept of diversity. A traditionally excluded group, the Karen, have become the majority in the camp and in imitation of the Burmese system, they tend to dominate and exclude other groups (Oh et al, 2007). However, in light of military losses to the Burmese government and the changing ethnic makeup of the camp population leading to a steadily decreasing Karen majority, it might be in the Karen's interest to establish a university as a locus of knowledge generation and dissemination to

ascribe renewed validity to the ethnic/national category 'Karen' (Zeus, 2011, p. 266). Not only would this perpetuate discrimination against ethnic minorities already found in so many institutions within Burma, but it would hurt the credibility of the institution itself and undermine the education that its students received. Therefore, KRCEE must endeavor to provide quality education that is inclusive of all ethnicities and nationalities and one that encourages students to look beyond the dominant politicized rhetoric found within the camps.

3.4. Addressing the Relief vs. Development Dichotomy

The Royal Thai Government's adherence to a policy of voluntary repatriation has greatly shaped the camp education system for refugees on the Thai-Burma border. From the beginning, Burmese refugees were allowed to set up and administer their own schools in the camps. However, it was only in 1996, 12 years after the camps had been set up, that an official mandate for NGOs to provide support for education was granted by the RTG (Bowles, 1998). Prior to that, locally based organizations were responsible for organizing education for refugees, as the Thai government thought that provision of educational assistance to recognized refugees would draw more people from Burma to Thailand (Sawade, 2008, p. 5). Support initially focused on formal education at the primary level; however, in 2003, education at the secondary level was permitted and, soon after, the RTG expanded its support to include nursery schools, special education, libraries, vocational training, non-formal education, sports and recreation activities, adult literacy, and other aspects of education, including post-ten programs (Interview with education NGO, 27/04/12; CCSDPT and UNHCR, 2009).

Thailand's Ministry of Education explains the increased interest and involvement in refugee education as part of its commitment to the Education for All movement. The first step by the MoE in support of refugee education was the sending of Thai teachers to the refugee camps. The second step came in the form of addressing the issue of accreditation of the camp education system. In 2007, accreditation of refugee learning programs appeared prominently on the MoE's agenda. This shift in RTG policy, combined with the prolongation of the refugee situation, also prompted educational NGOs to a significant shift in their own policy and planning – from operational and reactive to strategic and proactive (Oh and Van der Stouwe, 2008b). The 2007 *Comprehensive Plan* drawn up by all NGOs providing services to refugees along the border, together with UNHCR, confirmed that long-term encampment was having an extremely negative impact on the psychosocial well-being of refugees. In addition to this, NGO's also recognized the negative impact encampment had on refugees' opportunities for involvement in economic and educational activities, and as a result, the Comprehensive Plan stressed the importance of linking the provision of in-camp services with initiatives to help refugees use their human potential outside the camps, either in the short or long-term (CCSDPT and UNHCR, 2007). The certification process was envisioned as part of broader development efforts to shape the agenda on refugee policy, which increasingly focused on assisting communities to prepare for a future outside the camps (Oh and Van der Stouwe, 2009, p. 150).

The proposed plan for accreditation was that 70% of the curriculum would consist of the subjects and content of the Thai curriculum, specifically math, science, Thai, and English, while the other 30% would allow for the refugee community to teach their own

history, language, and culture (Sawade, 2008, p. 5). Sawade (2009) points out that there are a few problems with this plan. For example, with the limitation on refugees' freedom of movement within Thailand, a Thai curriculum may not be relevant for refugees who resettle abroad or return to Burma. Another issue is local ownership, in that given the pride of the local education authorities in the curriculum they helped to develop, transitioning to a largely Thai curriculum will most likely be met with resistance from the camp education committee (Sawade, 2009, p. 146). This resistance was confirmed by several education NGOs during interviews, with one interviewee explicitly stating that the accreditation process will never come to fruition due to KRCEE's reluctance to adopt a Thai curriculum (Interview with education NGO, 11/02/12). This reluctance is mainly related to the fear that children will lose their Karen identity and values as taught in the Karen curriculum. KRCEE fears that the content relating to Karen identity and values will lose its prominent place in the curriculum once the Thai MoE becomes involved, and that it will lose its institutional control over the curriculum (Sawade, 2009, p. 153).

The RTG's shift in policy away from a 'relief' model may also be explained by its recognition of the protracted nature of this particular situation. When the RTG began the process of resettling refugees to third countries in 2005 they also gave the green light in terms of granting opportunities and skills to refugees in vocational training and greater access to further education and employment opportunities for those not opting for resettlement (Zeus, 1999). According to the International Office of Migration (IOM), more than 96,000 refugees in Thailand - the majority of whom are from Burma - have resettled to 13 different countries. Most of those who have resettled were well-educated, which has had a significant and somewhat devastating impact on the refugee community.

The education and health sectors have been particularly affected by the resettlement program. One interviewee expressed their frustration over this issue: "UNHCR took all the teachers and the medics. Sixty-five people - medics and their families - left Mae La clinic in one week. [...] If the camp is falling apart it is because the third countries and UNHCR together destroyed any chances the people in the refugee camps have of getting an education" (Interview with education NGO, 14/02/12). The RTG's allowance of higher education programs, such as post-ten programs for youth and vocational training programs for adults, were a way in which to combat this sudden decrease in human resources within the camps.

While the RTG has clearly allowed for greater educational opportunities in the camps, its increased interest in educating the refugee population should not be taken at face value. Thailand's commitment to EFA was made in 1990, and yet refugee education reform efforts, such as accreditation and allowing for the provisioning of higher levels of education, emerged only recently. The RTG's primary concerns have been, and continue to be, national security and establishing control over refugee institutions, including schools, operating on Thai territory (Zeus, 2009). In fact, the shift in educational provisions occurred around the same time that the MoE was attempting to better manage Muslim schools in the conflict-ridden Southern provinces of Thailand (Kalnin, 2010, p. 25). Furthermore, cooperation between NGOs committed to refugee education and the RTG has largely depended on the personal commitment of MoE staff. One education NGO explained that government support largely depends on the region, with some provinces being more supportive than others (Interview, 30/01/12). For example, in Tak Province, where the largest refugee camp is located, NGOs have had a difficult

relationship with government officials in the past. However, that relationship has greatly improved in recent years due to the personal commitment of the current MoE point person.

The RTG has maintained the perspective that the inflow of refugees from Burma is a temporary situation, thus, even while extending physical sanctuary, official Thai policy has always stressed the temporary and minimal nature of its humanitarian commitment and has emphasized the imperative to "prevent these minorities from engaging in any activities which may affect Thai-Burmese relations" (Lang, 2002, p.86). The RTG's policies towards the Burmese refugees have encouraged the confinement of refugees in camps, rendering them dependent on relief. While Thai authorities have loosened restrictions on education and vocational training in the camps, persisting restrictions on freedom of movement and employment limit the potential benefits of higher education. Students might gain valuable skills and knowledge but the opportunities for refugees to earn a living with these skills are sorely lacking as the camp economy is too small to accommodate for the increase in graduates. As a result, graduates find themselves competing for a limited number of NGO, educational, and health related jobs. With few open career paths, they often accept whatever is available, regardless of their interests, leaving them further frustrated and disillusioned about their futures. This limitation on employment means that education runs the risk of becoming an end in itself. Instead of using their skills in paid jobs after graduation, refugees may opt to attend courses in different fields. For example, post-post-tens have emerged for students who have graduated from post-ten programs. These programs generally offer courses in more specialized subjects or courses that prepare students to write the General

Educational Development (GED) test in order to apply to foreign universities. Graduates may also choose to seek employment outside the camps, risking possible exploitation and deportation.

The economic limitation placed on refugees risks being used as an excuse for not providing refugees with an opportunity to access higher education. The complete dissolution of refugee camps and/or local integration would be an obvious solution; however, after three decades, it is evident how unrealistic this proposition is. One suggestion for addressing the economic limitation attached to higher education for refugees is to create stronger links with local host communities and the dissolution of parallel service systems, including educational opportunities, for refugees and local communities alike (Brees, 2008; Dick, 2003; Slaughter and Crisp, 2009). However, such an endeavour would require a significant change to the RTG's refugee policies. Nevertheless, the lack of employment opportunities for graduates does not take away from the inherent value of educating refugees, or the belief that education is a basic human right that should be enjoyed by all persons. Despite the generally low economic return of education in this protracted refugee situation, the post-ten programs do provide numerous benefits to both individual refugees and the broader refugee community that should not be dismissed. As Amartya Sen's Capability Approach suggests, the purpose of education is not simply to maximize one's chances on the labour market, but to empower an individual in all dimensions of life.

3.5. Refugees as Agents of Development

At the most basic level, KRCEE describes the post-ten programs as "fulfilling students' dreams for higher education" (Interview, 07/02/12). As already noted, education is highly valued within the refugee community, with young refugees striving to attain higher and higher levels of education. Beyond that, though, post-ten education provides refugee youth with a range of skills not provided for by the basic education system. Those skills range from an increased proficiency in foundational subjects, such as math, science, social studies, and computers, to more advanced subjects, such as accounting, health, community management, and teaching. Some post-ten schools, particularly those that operate outside the camps which also house students for the duration of the program, provide students with practical skills, such as how to harvest food or take care of farm animals. One of the most reported skills that students gain from the post-ten programs is English language skills. As one education NGO explained, most students leave school after ten years of compulsory English with very little ability to express themselves in English (Interview, 08/02/12). The post-ten programs are meant to address this deficit. As English is widely spoken on the border due the wide scale presence of international humanitarian organizations and donor organizations, English is seen as a valuable to skill for refugees to possess.

Several interviewees also noted that one of the greatest benefits that come from the post-ten programs is that students gain critical thinking skills. One education NGO explained that there is something "uniquely different" about students that come out of these programs compared to those that only have the traditional education background attained through the basic education system (Interview, 30/01/12). They explain that

some students will write in their reports "I think differently than other people in my organization," or "I see things going on and I really look at it from a different perspective" (Interview with education NGO, 30/01/12). Many programs encourage students to reflect on and analyze the dynamics of what they see going on around them in the camps and what they hear of the situation back home in Burma. This is seen as an important aspect of the higher education process, particularly because of the lack of information available to refugees in the camps. The RTG does not allow internet access inside the camps and other mediums of information are greatly controlled. Furthermore, basic education in the camps continues to rely on rote memorization, thereby encouraging students to take a passive role in their learning. The post-ten programs teach students to break out of this and to begin questioning the information they do have access to.

The post-ten programs also have significant benefits for the refugee community. As previously discussed, resettlement has had a devastating impact on the operation of the refugee camps, particularly in the areas of education and health. Higher education for refugees tries to address this problem by providing organizations, clinics, and schools with qualified personnel, both in the camps and inside Burma. One education NGO explained that the post-ten programs they support were mainly developed for community development purposes, not for individual student purposes – "When we look at the final impact of these programs, it's not to get 24 students to get to this level of English or this level of critical thinking, it's to get 2,000 community members in x community a higher quality of living, more access to quality education, etc. That's our real goal" (Interview 30/01/12). This same organization explained that many of their students have gone on to

work full-time for CBOs and NGOs, including some who have become directors or gone on to work for the United Nations.

Beyond the immediate effect that post-ten education has on the capacity of human resources within the camps, providing higher education to refugees has long-term benefits for both the camps and for the rebuilding of Burma. As one interviewee pointed out, "if you have the aim to change communities, as the majority of organizations operating on the border do, you cannot do this with basic education alone. You can let people maintain the status of their communities with basic education, but you are not going to affect any change" (Interview with education NGO, 01/03/12). Though not all refugee youth will attend a post-ten program or other institute of higher education, having individuals with advanced knowledge and skills is important for the growth and betterment of the refugees' own communities, as well as the future development of Burma. As evidence shows, refugees who have led a productive life in exile, received an education, developed practical skills, and accumulated some resources are actually better prepared and equipped to go home and contribute to the reconstruction of their country than those who have languished in camps for years, surviving on minimal levels of humanitarian assistance (Crisp, 2003).

While current RTG policy regarding encampment does limit refugees' access to resources, refugee camps also possess great human potential that should not be ignored. Refugees are all too often seen as 'victims' and 'burdens', and yet power structures in the camps restrict refugees from becoming self-reliant and contributing to the development of their own communities and their host communities. Higher education offers an avenue for refugees to become empowered and to effectively change the negative discourse

surrounding this group into a positive one. HE helps to improve refugees' own self-image by allowing them to use their time in the camps in a meaningful and productive way. It helps them to realize their own personal goals, as well as to take an active role in improving the lives of others in their communities. HE also teaches youth to become critical thinkers and, in doing so, helps to instill greater confidence. Recognizing refugees' potential and acknowledging them as agents who can contribute to the development of their communities and their host communities would help to dismantle the power structures found within the camps and lead to refugees becoming self-reliant. Higher education offers one way in which to empower refugees to participate in, and ultimately, to control the planning and policy making regarding their own lives during displacement.

3.6. Problems with the Refugee Education Program

"Education is like a bridge across a river. On the one side, you have home and on the other side, employment. There are three pillars holding the bridge up. If one pillar is bigger and stronger than the others, then that puts more strain on the other two pillars."

(Interview with education NGO, 27/04/12)

It is evident that the post-ten programs have numerous benefits for both individual refugees and the refugee community. All interviewees recognized the importance of offering refugees the opportunity to gain greater knowledge and specialized skills that they can put to use in the camps or inside Burma when they are able to return. However, it is also apparent that the increased attention that higher education has received since 2005 has led to the neglect of other education sectors, particularly basic education. In an effort to provide refugee youth with higher and higher levels of education, attention and resources have shifted away from basic education, leading to the decrease in quality of primary and secondary education in the camps. During Purnell's (2008) study on expanding access to higher education opportunities for refugees on the Thai-Burma border he found that, during the course of interviews, "it was said that higher education will always take away resources from primary and secondary education" (p. 64). Simply put, costs are higher for higher education, so funds get diverted away from basic education to higher education programs. Purnell presents two consequences of this: 1) the focus and guiding influence of the education system (i.e. curriculum and teaching) is geared towards higher education at the expense of the majority of students; and 2) the greater status attached to being a teacher at a higher level means more and better qualified teachers tend to take up positions at higher level institutions (p. 64). This is also reflected

in the salary that teachers receive at different levels. Teachers at higher education levels receive higher subsidies than teachers at lower levels.

While Purnell's study largely focuses on future access to tertiary education, a level of education higher than the post-ten level currently found in the camps, his observations were supported by several interviewees during my own field research on post-ten education. One interviewee explained that post-tens are "sexy", whereas primary education is not (Interview with education NGO, 08/02/12). Another interviewee explained that donors are never satisfied with covering basic education. Instead, they are always looking for more "innovative" programs to fund (Interview with education NGO, 27/04/12). This has led to both better resources and better qualified/ better paid teachers for the post-ten sector. Foreign volunteer teachers are another example of the draw that post-ten programs have. The overwhelming majority of foreign teachers that come to the border end up teaching for post-ten programs. While this may contribute to the lack of standardization and overall cohesiveness (and varying levels of quality) of the post-ten sector, it does expose those students to a range of diverse teaching styles, as well as the introduction of ideas and information about the outside world that students do not necessarily attain from basic education. Students at the post-ten level also benefit from having access to native English speakers, which is seen as important for obtaining jobs in the NGO sector.

The emphasis on higher education, however, is not just donor driven. Donor attraction to more innovative education programs is largely supported by the community-based organization focus on higher education. In 2009, the Committee for the Coordination of Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand, the organization responsible

67

for coordinating NGO and CBO work in the refugee camps, drafted their *Five Year Strategic Plan.* The education strategy outlined in this plan included such things as capacity building, links with Thailand, information and communications technology programs, and post-secondary education. What was missing, however, was coverage of basic education. This meant that NGOs had to base their plans on this education strategy, which made it very difficult to obtain funding for basic education (Interview with education NGO, 27/04/12). CCSDPT's 2011 *Strategic Framework for Durable Solutions* also focused on similar goals as their 2009 plan, thereby, continuing to influence NGO activities towards higher education and other non-formal education sectors.

At the heart of this emphasis on higher education is KRCEE's own desire for a highly educated population. The mandate of KRCEE is "to build up a true and lasting peace and justice by producing graduates who are critical and creative thinkers, leaders, good citizens and proud of their ethnicity" (Sawade, 2009, p. 144). The Karen remain the largest minority group in Southeast Asia without a state of their own, in any meaningful sense. As a long persecuted population, the Karen, like other ethnic groups in exile, strive to one day return to a state where they have some measure of autonomy and control. With this goal in mind, they have fiercely held onto Karen nationalist sentiments and have tried to instill their cultural traditions and beliefs into their young. Nowhere is this more evident than in the camp education system. There is a relationship between being a good student and being a good Karen – a link between identity and high academic achievement (Interview with education NGO, 27/04/12). According to Cheesman (2002), significant themes of the Karen ethnic identity include the oppressed nature of their race and their lack of education (or dispossession of traditional Karen knowledge, thus the

importance of literacy). KRCEE wants to develop a future generation of students who know the customs and languages of their forefathers and this is reflected in the curriculum, particularly history curriculum and the choice of language of instruction for primary and secondary schools.

Beyond that, Karen groups place great value on higher education because of their desire to create 'leaders' for a future Karen State. "Our leaders are our future" is a common motto among the refugees on the Thai-Burma border. Tying education to political and social goals is not necessarily negative. As Waters and Leblanc (2005) point out, common schooling is necessary for the establishment of a modern political community, including a national government, and a key social role for schools in all modern societies is the creation of modern citizens and workers who can imagine themselves as members of a political and economic community (p. 129). The challenge, however, is to achieve a consensus on what the political and social goals of a community are. Driven by the imperatives of protecting a sense of self and community in a distant land, exile communities are often the source of strident uncompromising rhetoric. For the Karen, the experience of exile has reinforced the most 'hardline' elements of socio-political identity, which has manifested itself in an explicitly nationalist-oriented school system (South, 2007, p. 62). The focus on creating leaders is the obvious extension of this. Such a focus, however, has led some NGO personnel to criticize KRCEE's agenda as leading to elitism, where a minority of high achieving individuals are favoured over the majority of refugee students.

The 'over-emphasis' on higher education has had numerous consequences for the basic education system. With resources being diverted away from basic education

towards higher education, the quality of primary and secondary schooling has suffered. One interviewee stated that, essentially, "primary education has become almost like a babysitting service" (Interview with education NGO, 27/04/12). As Purnell (2008) mentioned in his study, teachers at the basic level are paid less than those at the post-ten level. In fact, teacher stipends for basic education are one of the lowest salaries paid in the camps. Previously, salaries were around 700-800 Thai baht (US$22-25) a month; however, with recent cuts to funding across all camp departments, teacher stipends have been reduced to 400 Thai baht (US$12.50) per month. The result is high teacher absenteeism as well as a high teacher turnover rate, not just due to resettlement, but from teachers quitting to find higher paid jobs (including jobs in the post-ten sector). These teachers are continually replaced by new teachers, who often come right out of post-ten programs and, therefore, have no experience and often low qualifications. This has been seen to weaken the overall standard of the human resources available to support education (Purnell, 2008, p. 19). In a 2010 survey conducted by the education NGO, ZOA Refugee Care Thailand, it was found that only 60.5% of the 308 teachers interviewed felt confident teaching their subject and more than a quarter (28.4%) reported not having enough knowledge of their subject to answer some of their students' questions (Oh et al, 2010, p. 62). During my own field research, it was also reported that there is often a breakdown in the relationship between teachers and students, especially at the secondary level, because of high teacher turnover and the fact that new teachers are so close in age to their students (Interview with education NGO, 27/04/12).

During the course of interviews, it was also reported that basic education curriculum is outdated and, therefore, not necessarily relevant to refugees' current

situation (Interview with education NGO, 11/02/12). Furthermore, 'teacher-centered' modes of education based on rote memorization, which were used in Burma some thirty years ago, remain the dominant teaching method in camp classrooms today. And yet, efforts to modernize the curriculum and train teachers in new methodologies have not been seriously taken up by the Karen education committee. Related to this is KRCEE's continued use of Skaw-Karen as the language of instruction for basic education. While the makeup of the camp population was once predominantly Karen, today the seven camps under KRCEE's management reflect better the ethnic diversity found within Burma. The use of Skaw-Karen presents serious problems not just for students from other ethnic groups who may have limited knowledge and understanding of this language, but it also presents a challenge for refugees who return (or will return) to Burma. According to one interviewee, "KRCEE has shot themselves in the foot because they have the philosophy that they are preparing to return to Karen State where they will be in charge of their own education. That isn't going to happen. They've educated their children in Karen [language] and so they're going to find it really, really difficult to integrate into the Burmese education system" (Interview with education NGO, 11/02/12). This interviewee also pointed out that most expertise on education policy and planning in refugee situations advocates mainstreaming education into the host country's education system straight away, yet, this has not happened. While the decision to use one language or one curriculum over another is not a result of KRCEE's focus on higher education, it does reflect KRCEE's priorities. While attention is paid to the quality and relevancy of higher education programs, there seems to be a lack of comparable attention paid to the quality and relevancy of the basic education system.

Another issue plaguing basic education is the high drop-out rate among high school students. Participation in the primary cycle seems to be close to 100%. However, this participation falls dramatically at the secondary levels, with only 11 to 20% of students enrolling in secondary schools (Oh et el, 2010, p. 2). ZOA's 2010 education survey found that one of the reasons for high drop-out is that access to secondary schooling for Burmese speakers is inadequate. A limited number of primary schools use Burmese as the language of instruction but there are no secondary schools where Burmese is the language of instruction. However, the study also points out that, for all children, a solid foundation of learning needs to be built from the start of children's primary schooling so that they are able to continue into secondary school with confidence (Oh et al, 2010, p. 124).

The diversion of resources away from primary and secondary levels ultimately weakens the chance of achieving the long-term objective of further developing refugee access to higher education. Several post-ten school administrators, as well as education NGO personnel, spoke of the low qualifications of students entering the post-ten programs and the effect this has on the post-ten programs themselves. One interviewee remarked that the students who come from inside Burma to access the post-ten programs on the border are actually better educated than those that graduated from the camp education system (Interview with education NGO, 14/02/12), which seems to be a reversal from earlier years. Another interviewee explained that student qualifications are getting lower and lower, which presents several problems for post-ten schools. Teachers are having to revise their curriculum to accommodate for a lack of subject knowledge that should have been attained in secondary school. Another issue is donor funding. If

students graduate from post-ten programs with lower qualifications than the year before, post-ten institutions run the risk of having their funding pulled, despite the fact that students are entering the programs with lower qualifications (Interview with school administrator, 23/02/12).

CHAPTER 4

Conclusion

4.1. Conclusion

If issues in the basic education system are not addressed, higher levels of education will also suffer. Just as the quote at the beginning of the previous section expressed, if too much emphasis is placed on higher education, then this puts more strain on the primary and secondary divisions, which may ultimately lead to the breakdown of the entire education system. Higher education is looked to as a way to address the future needs of refugee communities. Like any nation-state, highly educated, confident, critical thinkers are valued for their abilities to lead and effect change. But planning for refugees' futures should not begin at the post-secondary level. If education is believed to be a fundamental human right, even in times of conflict and instability, then the aim should be *quality* education for all. The ultimate goal is to have a balanced and inclusive education system that provides high quality education to meet the learning needs of refugees at all levels. It is only through a holistic approach to education that looks at "the immediate in terms of the longer term" (Pigozzi, 1999, p. 19) that education can effectively help refugee communities to become self-reliant during the encampment period, as well as prepare refugees to return home. We now to turn to a summary of the findings of this thesis and a set of recommendations to address the challenges of higher education in the refugees camps of Thailand and elsewhere.

4.2. Summary of Findings

This thesis sought to explore the issues surrounding higher education in protracted refugee situations. Relying on a theoretical framework and the case study of the refugee camps on the Thai-Burma border, I explored the benefits, as well as the key challenges to providing higher education to refugees in a camp setting. The first section addressed the relief versus development dichotomy found in protracted refugee situations and how this dichotomy affects the refugee education system. Refugee situations are generally characterized as emergency situations in need of humanitarian assistance. From this perspective, a 'care and maintenance' model often emerges, which, for the education sector, means the provisioning of basic education so overwhelmingly purported by the Education for All movement. With an increase in the number of protracted refugee situations and the growing recognition that many of these refugee situations should no longer be deemed as 'emergencies', the need for a long-term development oriented perspective has largely been acknowledged. However, in translating a developmental approach into practice a number of challenges arise. In the context of the refugee camps in Thailand, it is evident that the Thai government has shifted to a more developmental model for education by offering refugees the opportunity to access higher levels of education in the form of post-ten programs and vocational training. Unfortunately, this interest in refugee education is largely dependent on the personal commitment of MoE staff and, therefore, has the potential to change if current staff members are replaced. Furthermore, because the RTG continues to adhere to a policy based on the temporary nature of the refugee situation, refugees' ability to put their newly acquired knowledge and skills into practice is severely hampered. Strict rules on movement limit the

opportunities refugees have for employment, which affects their ability to gain resources and contribute to the economy of their host countries during displacement.

The second issue that this thesis addressed was the potential for higher education to empower refugees to become 'agents of development'. By their very nature, refugee camps contain highly structured and power-laden relationships. With very limited access to resources and restrictions placed on movement and employment, refugees become dependent on outside aid for almost all aspects of life. This dependency often leads to the incorrect view of refugees as 'victims' and 'burdens' on their host country. Higher education can be a means through which refugees break free of this negative discourse by becoming empowered and, ultimately, self-reliant. The post-ten programs found on the Thai-Burma border provide refugees with numerous benefits leading to this end, including greater knowledge and specialized skills, the ability to think critically and analytically, and the confidence needed to become leaders in their communities. This, in turn, has a positive impact on the development of refugee communities inside the camps and the future development of Burma.

While higher education is an important aspect of any refugee education system, there are numerous consequences for too strong a focus on higher education. The final section of this thesis sought to present some of those consequences in order to fully understand the need for a balanced education system. While in most refugee situations, the neglect of higher education is a predominant problem, in the case of the refugee situation on the Thai-Burma border the high value placed on higher education has resulted in the neglect of the basic education system. The community-based focus on higher education, largely supported by international donors, has meant that resources

have been diverted away from basic education into higher education in the form of post-ten programs. This neglect is seen in the low salaries paid to basic education teachers, a curriculum that is outdated and increasingly irrelevant, and the high drop-out rates at the secondary level. The result is a low quality education that is unable to provide for the learning needs of the majority of refugee students. Such a system not only reduces future generations' chances of accessing higher education opportunities, but also threatens to dismantle the entire education system.

4.3. Recommendations

In light of the findings of this thesis, the abolition of the post-ten programs, as well as further opportunities for higher education for refugees, should not be advocated. The post-ten programs have proven to be a valuable and essential part of the current education system and higher education in general holds too many benefits to be dismissed. Instead, what is needed is a more balanced focus, one that recognizes the interdependence of all education levels. The following are recommendations for both policy and practice, as well as suggestions for further research.

Education in protracted refugee situations must be flexible enough to accommodate for both short-term and long-term goals. In the immediate term, education should be seen as a means to promote 'self-reliance' among refugees. In situations where local integration is not an option, refugee self-reliance has advantages for all those involved. It would improve the standard of living for refugees, allowing them to make their own decisions and contribute to the development of their own communities, as well as their host communities. It would also enable UNHCR, international NGOs, and their

77

donors to withdraw from costly 'care and maintenance' programs that only aid in dependency. In the context of Thailand, self-reliance has become a particularly important issue due to recent funding cuts for NGOs operating on the border as funding begins to move inside Burma. Higher education programs, such as the post-ten programs in Thailand, should be supported for the important role they play in providing refugees with the knowledge and skills they themselves might need to manage and operate the numerous programs and institutions in the camps.

Higher education programs should also be linked to employment opportunities in order for refugee youth to put their skills into practice, as well as generate the resources to become self-reliant. Many post-ten programs have introduced an internship component, which has been beneficial for both graduates and community organizations, and should be expanded where possible. A loosening of restrictions on refugee movement to allow refugees to legally gain employment outside the camps would also address the issue of limited opportunities for graduates. Such a policy will not necessarily be welcomed by many refugee-hosting countries, which worry about refugees taking jobs from locals and not wanting to return home. This has been the case in Thailand; however, it need not be the case in all refugee situations. Past experience has shown that where governments have not imposed restrictions on movement and employment in the wider economy, refugees have proven to be an economic asset. Nor has it kept refugees from returning home once they are able to do so.

Finally, a focus on higher education needs to be balanced with a focus on basic education. Not only do higher education programs rely on a strong basic education system, but so do the diverse learning needs of those students whose futures do not

78

include attending a higher education institution. Raising teacher salaries at the basic level should be taken into consideration to address the issue of teachers leaving to find higher paid employment in other sectors, including employment at the post-secondary level. Furthermore, support for new teachers through in-service training and collaboration with more experienced teachers should be included as part of the teacher training process. The relevancy of the curriculum at the basic level must also be seriously addressed, particularly in the case of Thailand, where both the lack of accreditation and the continued use of Skaw-Karen as the language of instruction have potentially damaging effects on the return of refugees to Burma. A greater focus on life skills that can be used upon repatriation and the implementation of Burmese language instruction is recommended. Finally, further research into the reasons for the high drop-out rate at the secondary level is needed in order to fully understand what can be done to alleviate this problem.

While this thesis has sought to contribute to existing research on higher education in protracted refugee situations, it is not comprehensive. Instead, it aims to provide some insight into a highly complex issue and hopes to open up opportunities for further study and analysis. One area that would benefit from greater study is how refugee students from higher education programs use their newly acquired skills and knowledge in the camp communities. Such a study would be useful for determining where higher education programs' strengths lie, as well as how they could be improved. In the context of the Thai-Burma border, other opportunities for higher education, aside from the post-ten programs, deserve greater analysis and discussion. The Institute for Higher Education, which was only touched upon in this thesis, is a particularly interesting

endeavor for the importance it plays in offering a new model for university-like education in a camp setting. Furthermore, the recent emergence of distance education/ online programs on the border, done in collaboration with foreign universities, presents a basis for further study into how such programs might respond to refugees' desire for higher education, not just in Thailand, but the world over.

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Appendix 1: Camp Population Figures

| | TBBC | | | | MOI/UNHCR |
| | Verified Caseload[9] | | | Feeding Figure[10] | Population[8] |
Province/Camp	Male	Female	Total	Total	Total
Chiang Mai					
Wieng Heng (Ethnic Shan)	297	287	584	584	
Mae Hong Son					
Ban Mai Nai Soi[11]	6,637	7,196	13,833	13,528	10,680
Ban Mae Surin	1,821	1,847	3,668	3,493	1,906
Mae La Oon	7,257	7,413	14,670	14,156	9,925
Mae Ra Ma Luang	8,229	8,205	16,434	15,904	9,886
Subtotal:	23,944	24,661	48,605	47,081	32,397
Tak					
Mae La	24,441	24,420	48,861	45,987	27,027
Umpiem Mae	8,656	9,131	17,787	16,811	10,762
Nu Po	7,896	7,870	15,766	14,943	8,708
Subtotal:	40,993	41,421	82,414	77,741	46,497
Kanchanaburi					
Ban Don Yang	1,987	1,846	3,833	3,637	2,724
Ratchaburi					
Tham Hin	3,794	3,548	7,342	6,576	4,258
Total:	71,015	71,763	142,778	135,619	85,876

Ethnicity[12]	
78.8%	Karen
9.5%	Karenni
3.9%	Burman
1.0%	Mon
0.5%	Shan
0.4%	Rakhine
0.4%	Chin
0.3%	Kachin
5.2%	Other

Source: TBBC, June 2012

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[8] The verified caseload includes all persons verified as living in the camps and eligible for rations, registered or not (including students). It excludes all previously verified residents now permanently out of camp.

[9] Rations are provided only to those personally attending distributions. The feeding figure is the actual number of beneficiaries recorded as having collected food rations this month.

[10] MOI/UNHCR figures are registered refugees. Most new arrivals since 2005 are not registered. UNHCR records an additional 248 people who have been submitted to the Provincial Admission Boards (PABs).

[11] Includes Kayan.

[12] From TBBC Population Database of verified caseload.

Appendix 2: Interview Questions

Description of the program(s):
What is the purpose/ mandate of the post-10 programs?
How many post-10 programs are there in the camps?
How long do the programs run?
How many students usually enroll in each program cycle?
What are the entrance requirements for students?
What subjects are taught?
Who creates the curriculum?
What training do the teachers receive?
Who finances the programs?

What role do KRCEE/ NGOs/ school administrators play in the post-10 programs?
What role does the Thai government play with regards to the refugee education system?
Why is higher education important for the refugee population?
What are the benefits of the post-10 programs?
What opportunities are there for students post-graduation?
What are the challenges to providing higher education for refugees?
What do you see as the future for higher education in the camps?
How does the emphasis on higher education affect basic education?
What are the problems facing basic education in the camps?
What is currently being done to address the problems with basic education?

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