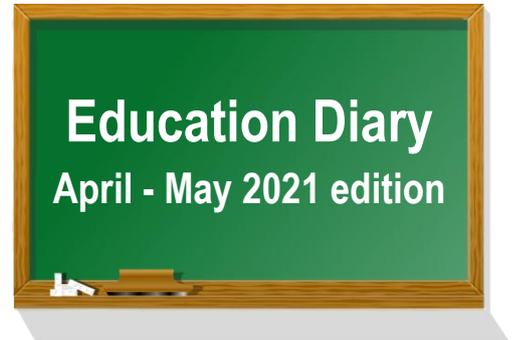
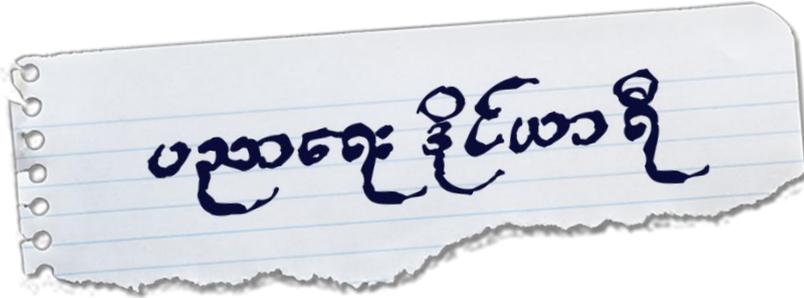




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A New Year's Greeting!

On April 12th, BMWEC saw another year pass by successfully, despite all the challenges and hurdles of 2020. The migrant learning community was hit especially hard during the last year due to the health and political crises, and many schools had to close for the school year of 2020-2021. However, with the New Year coming, we as the workers at BMWEC vow to make sure every migrant student will be back in the classroom. BMWEC as a migrant education organization would like to give a word of encouragement to its affiliated organizations, donors, benefactors, and migrant learning centers to not lose hope and keep up the fight for the good cause of education for migrant children.



The BMWEC Office Staff

GRADUATION CEREMONY AND AWARDING EXCELLENT STUDENTS OF 2019-2020 SCHOOL YEAR



On Saturday April 10th, a graduation ceremony was held in Konk Phao (နွံဒါး) restaurant hall. The students of migrant learning centers under BMWEC's management were given awards for completing their respective grades with flying colours.

The ceremony was delayed for a year due to the pandemic, and even now, only the teachers of their respective schools could come to receive the awards in place of their students.

The ceremony began at 9:30 AM and successfully ended in 12:00 PM after having lunch.



Giving awards to outstanding students is an important development in learning centers (LCs). In the past, LCs could only provide certificates, but times are changing, and now many schools can award both certificates and memorial prizes, to show that they recognize and acknowledge their students' skills and their dedication. By giving special awards to students in LCs, we hope to motivate more parents to send their children to school.



School Principals, BMWEC associates and a MECC representative

PREPARATIONS FOR REOPENING MIGRANT LEARNING CENTERS IN THE 2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR

Back in March, we talked about how BMWEC and other education organizations in Tak region were working to get permission from local authorities to reopen the migrant learning centers (MLCs). The pandemic and the overall political situation are proving to be a huge hindrance in reopening schools.

The new director Ler Shee and Trustee Board member Hsa Eh visited the associated MLCs and provided them with COVID-19 guidelines established by Ministry of Public Health so that the schools can perform self- assessment and decide whether they are fit to reopen the schools or not.

The schools were encouraged to have discussions with their local community leaders and authorities and seek advice and guidance from them. While awaiting the resolution, the teachers also need to be adequately prepared so that they understand and can follow the rules and regulations provided by the government.

If they do get the approval and reopen the schools, they will have to act just like every Thai school in following the local Thai authorities' instructions. Depending on the severity and danger of COVID-19 spikes, the authorities may instruct Thai schools to close or proceed with online-based learning, which MLCs would have to follow also.



However, unlike the Thai official schools, migrant learning centers are not well-resourced. They have deficiencies and needs when it comes to information technology, in terms of both materials and trained professionals, to implement online-based learning effectively. In addition, most of the MLCs do not see the situation changing in the near future. So for now, the official "Plan A" would be to trying to get the schools reopened, while "Plan B" would be continuing on with home-based learning like most MLCs did last year.

Since May 15th, migrant schools have been accepting students for the new school year of 2021-2022. It remains to be seen what the future holds for the migrant education community.



Meeting with Community Leaders

THE OUT OF SCHOOL CHILDREN PROJECT 2021-2022



In 2019-2020, a research in Tak region was conducted in a collaborative effort by the following organizations: TeacherFOCUS Myanmar, Help without Frontiers Thailand Foundation (HwF), Burmese Migrant Workers' Education Committee (BMWEC), Migrant Education Coordination Center (MECC), Youth Connect Foundation Thailand (YCF), Burmese Migrant Teachers' Association (BMTA) and Marist Asia Foundation (MAF). The research report was called *Bridges, a participatory action research on the future of migrant education in Thailand*.

(<https://www.teacherfocusmyanmar.org/advocacy-resources>)



There are approximately 350,000 migrant children living in Thailand, over 200,000 of whom are currently out of school (Ministry of Education and Migrant Working Group, 2018). The research found that only around 20,000 of these children are able to pursue education in migrant areas. To tackle this issue, the Out Of School Children (OOSC) Project was established and starting from the 2020-2021 school year, it sought to assist children who had either dropped out of school or who could continue their formal education. They were provided with school

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uniforms and school enrollment fees, and assisted to enroll in either Thai or migrant schools. It should be noted that migrant children who are able to attend Thai schools will have more opportunities and advantages when it comes to their future, such as getting to attend universities or even having a chance to become Thai citizens.



For this year's OOSC Project, one of our education field officers, Naw Ler Pwel Hser, participated in a field survey trip in Tak region area to collect the migrant student data for 2021-2022 school year. With the findings and subsequent support of OOSC, children have obtained partial funding for school uniforms and transportation. The project has also managed to secure 4 vehicles as a means of transportation for the migrant children.



Naw Ler Pwel Hser recalled her experience taking part in the project as a positive and exciting one. She was proud of the fact that she was able to assist children in need in migrant region. OOSC seeks to further open more doors for the migrant children in the future as well as diligently working toward to reach that objective.

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MAKING PROGRESS ON THE GENDER FRONT

As covered in Education Diary previously, the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Organization (SRHR), in cooperation with BMWEC has been giving Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) Training for children, adolescents and youth for 2 years now, starting in 2019. The goal has been to educate young teenagers and young adults about sexuality so they have adequate knowledge regarding reproductive health, relationships, culture and media, human body development and gender. In May, a CSE training was held in the Mae Tao Clinic Seminar Hall, and its participants were children who are attending either Thai or Myanmar language schools. The training was a great success as the children were very active and eager to learn and participate in the activities.



In the same month, SRHR carried out a Gender Transformative Marker Assessment for BMWEC, the purpose of which was to evaluate gender awareness within workplace based on several criteria and to decide how they can be improved. The SRHR assessment was carried out with non-profit organizations which have both youth and women in them, in order to allow differing opinions to be heard. Each assessed organization will be followed up every 6 months.

The assessment was based on 6 criteria, and they are as follows:

- Gender norms: The project influences discriminatory gender norms and how these affect different groups, in particular gender expectations about capabilities, roles, decision making, and representation as these relate to the thematic focus and wider society.
- Agency: The project works with girls and/or young women to improve their agency including building their knowledge, confidence and critical consciousness, their ability to speak out about issues, to identify risks and protect themselves, and to engage in mobilizing and influencing others for gender equality and inclusion.
- Working with boys and men: The project works with and supports boys, young men and adult men to increase their understanding and involvement in promoting gender equality, changing power dynamics and to explore and develop non-violent, positive and diverse masculinities.
- Condition and position: The project works to improve the equality of the conditions of CAY (Children, Adolescents and Youths) in families and communities (wellbeing, equal care, support, resources, opportunities) and the position (equal value or social status, respect and access to power) of girls and/or young women.
- Diversity: The project addresses the different needs of children, adolescents and youth in all their diversity (gender, age, disability, ethnicity and other exclusion factors relevant to the project scope and context).

- Enabling environment: The project strengthens societal structures, systems as well as civil society to enable gender equality and inclusion (e.g. in legislation/policy, access to and delivery of services, representative decision making processes, investment, capacity and commitment) and promotes joint, aligned efforts for gender equality across the 5 different stakeholder groups of individuals, community, civil society, service providers and policy makers.

The assessment took place from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM in May 13th. The assessment exercises were viewed by the BMWEC office staff and teachers of associated MLCs who participated in it as informative and eye-opening, as subjects such as how gender norms can affect the work environment are something that are not discussed very often in the workplace, let alone in everyday life. Participants considered that doing such exercises and encouraging discussions within the work environment are the first steps to ensuring the opening of dialogues within their own communities outside of the office and bringing forth meaningful changes to society gradually.

COMPUTER TRAINING FOR SCHOOL TEACHERS

Cotton On Foundation is a non-profit organization founded in 2007 that believes in empowering the youth around the world through quality education. It has been one of our benefactors, working closely with us for a few years now.

For the two weeks between May 10th and 21st, Cotton On Foundation arranged basic computer training for the education staffs in HsaThoo Lei and Bwel K'lar Migrant Learning Centers, both of which are affiliated with BMWEC.

The training included a crash course in Microsoft Office applications such as Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Powerpoint and others that are essential for teachers who have to prepare education materials and exercises for students.

Before the training began, the participating staffs had to take a pretest in order to gauge their grasp and skill when it comes to computers. Based on their performance on the pretest, participants were divided into two classes: "A" and "B". This allowed the trainers to educate them appropriately based on their technological skills.

The training ran from May 10th to May 21st starting from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM with an hour of lunch break between 12:00 PM and 1:00 PM. In total, the total training period was 37 hours.



GOODBYE, SAYAR ZIN MIN KYAW



This month will mark the last month our Operation Manager, Zin Min Kyaw, will be working for BMWEC. Zin Min Kyaw began working in April 2012 as an intern for BMWEC. After one year he became an Education Officer and later, in 2014, became an Administration Manager. During that period World Education, an international education organization, transferred a special needs school under its management to BMWEC, so Zin Min Kyaw stepped up to take up the task of Transition Coordinator.

When he joined BMWEC, the organization was undergoing a restructuring process, and there was also a decrease in donors and benefactors as many of them decided to relocate inside Myanmar as the country had begun to open up. Thus, BMWEC really had to work hard during the period between 2013 and 2015 to sustain its partnerships.

Looking back, Zin Min Kyaw said that during his tenure at BMWEC, he was able to witness migrant education organizations joining hands and working together for the betterment of children in migrant area. He took pride in the fact that he was able to be a part of the organization that was able to provide quality education to migrant children, which allowed them to pursue higher education both in Myanmar and Thailand after finishing schools.

As a parting gift, he shared some words of encouragement and wisdom with the fellow coworkers of BMWEC. He said that as long as there is a migrant community, BMWEC must stand and serve an important purpose. He compared the organization to a big flourishing tree that provides shade and shelter for travellers in need. Many will come and go, resting and sheltering, and some may even stay for quite a while. But the time will eventually come when everyone will leave the tree and continue on with their respective journeys. To make sure the travellers, who are migrant children in this case, are able to adequately prepare themselves for their journey moving forward, the responsibility falls to the staff members to ensure the continued flourishing of this tree called the BMWEC.



In recognition of years of hard work and sacrifices he made for the cause of migrant community, we, the BMWEC staff wish Zin Min Kyaw good luck and success in his next step in the journey of life. May we meet again someday if fate and good fortune allow.



Farewell, Sayar!