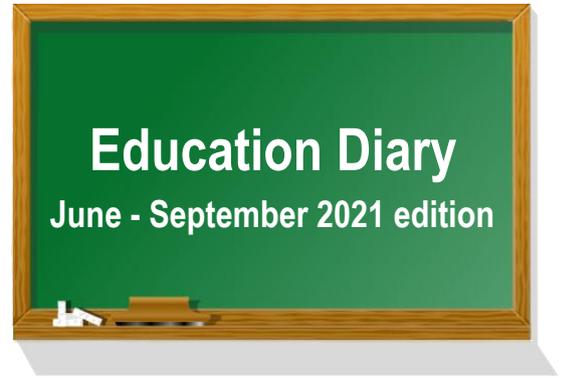
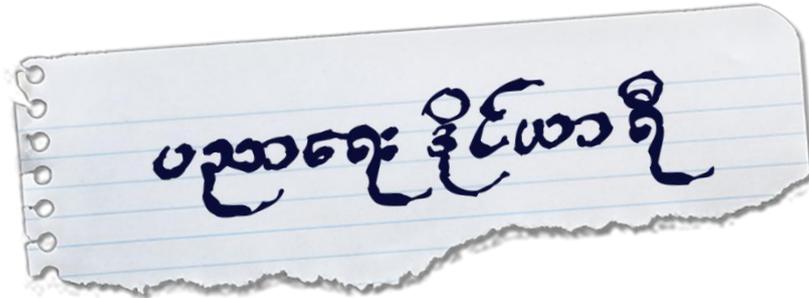




# Burmese Migrant Workers' Education Committee

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## Contents

I.	<a href="#">Staying Strong!</a> .....	2
II.	<a href="#">ANNUAL INFORMATION GATHERING OF TEACHERS IN MIGRANT LEARNING CENTERS (MLCs)</a> .....	3
III.	<a href="#">COVID-19 VACCINATION IN MAESOT</a> .....	5
IV.	<a href="#">DRY RATION DISTRIBUTION TO MLCs</a> .....	6
V.	<a href="#">SCHOOLS IN NEED OF AID: SUKHO THAI</a> .....	7
VI.	<a href="#">SCHOOLS IN NEED OF AID: NEW ROAD</a> .....	10



## Staying Strong!

Four months have passed since the last edition of Education Diary was released. In the meantime, BMWEC and the migrant education community have faced a lot of challenges. COVID-19 cases surged. There were floods due to a storm typical of a monsoon season. Schools have been struggling due to lack of funding and having to resume home-based learning activities once again. Nevertheless, we have made it through various trials and tribulations in the past, and this hurdle will be no different. We will stay strong and stand proud alongside associated organizations, donors and benefactors as the beacon for the migrant community.



*The BMWEC Team staying strong and expressing its determination!*

## ANNUAL INFORMATION GATHERING FROM TEACHERS IN MIGRANT LEARNING CENTERS (MLCs)



While waiting for approval for schools to be reopened, BMWEC carried out its annual gathering of information from teachers currently working in Migrant Learning Centers under BMWEC. With the onset of COVID-19 in Tak province, our education officers collecting the data had to plan carefully how to assemble teachers safely at their respective schools.

Although it took some time to complete, the overall process went quite smoothly, and almost all teachers' data were collected before the scheduled time for reopening of schools. Gathering information regarding each teacher from each MLC is important as BMWEC has to make teacher member cards for each of them using the collected data. The information required includes general information such as name, gender, date of birth, address, contact and nationality, along with more detailed information such as education level, work experience and additional training. As BMWEC works together with MECC (the government's Migrant Education Coordinating Committee), BMWEC teacher cards will give the teachers recognition and protection from local police as they move around the city as migrant workers.



Unfortunately however, the COVID-19 situation in Tak Province had worsened by the time BMWEC finished collecting teachers' information. There was an alarming increase in COVID-19 cases, and there were lockdowns everywhere in Tak Province, limiting the mobility of the migrant community substantially. While Thai schools are able to operate using an online-based learning system, BMWEC and MLCs have had to look for alternatives as schools cannot be operational as once planned, and most migrant students do not have access to online-based learning.

## MLCs NEED RATIONS AND ASSISTANCE FROM DONORS IN THIS TRYING TIME

With the resurgence of COVID-19 in Mae Sot area, all the plans for reopening the schools were thrown into disarray. The question arose regarding whether they should carry out home-based learning yet again during this school year. As previously stated in older editions of *Education Diary*, home-based learning is not an easy task to carry out for MLCs in Tak Province. The teachers have faced challenges with transportation and mobility, organizing learning groups, planning teaching materials and facing disinterested students.



As a result, BMWEC sought new solutions while still going ahead with the default plan of home-based learning. One of the solutions, online-based learning to circumvent the necessity of teachers traveling around during the pandemic, has been very difficult due to lack of hardware and technology necessary to realize a programme of such proportions in MLCs. As a result, BMWEC has been asking for material support from donors to provide schools with laptops so they can carry out at least some online-based learning activities as soon as possible.



Meanwhile, some MLCs have been carrying out home-based learning activities in a handful of places where a controlled environment is possible. Naturally, that means only a small number of migrant students can study in Mae Sot area. The teachers are also in a tight spot right now. With the inactivity and lack of funding, a lot of teachers are not receiving any salary and have to rely on rations and emergency funds from generous colleagues or donations from benefactors. BMWEC officers have acknowledged this issue and are working diligently to address it as soon as they can.

## COVID-19 VACCINATION IN MAESOT

As stated above, COVID-19 cases were high in the Mae Sot region especially from July to early September. The government of Thailand has been working to get its citizens vaccinated. Given limited vaccine availability and the priority given to other regions of the country, a small border region like Mae Sot, Tak District has less likelihood of obtaining vaccination for its population.

However, fortune smiled upon the Mae Sot community in September as the Help Without Frontiers (HWF), Migrant Education Coordination Committee (MECC) and other partner organizations managed to secure the opportunity for at least some migrant people in Mae Sot to be vaccinated. Since coordination and collaboration are major tasks of MECC, it facilitated the coordination process between the government authorities and migrant communities as necessary.



Through this coordination, strong collaboration and the generosity of Mae Sot General Hospital, 800 migrant people were able to get vaccinated on September 24, 2021, and more vaccines are on the way.



On behalf of migrant community, the BMWEC wants to thank Mae Sot General Hospital and community volunteers who have been involved in the vaccination process for our migrant people.



*(Pictures provided by MECC)*

## DRY RATION DISTRIBUTION TO MLCs

Even though the vaccination efforts are ongoing, there is still a long way to go, and with most schools being closed (not including those that are doing home-based learning) and the means of income being scarce, many MLC teachers have been struggling to make ends meet.



Living in a foreign land as an undocumented migrant is already hard enough. Migrant working people have numerous odds stacked against them from seeking residency to finding stable occupations that can support their families. Now with the COVID-19 pandemic plus the military coup and subsequent continuing civil conflict in Myanmar added into the equation, their hardships have multiplied. Many people have either been laid off from their jobs or find themselves unable to find new jobs. At the same time they are unable to go back to their home country since the situation there is much worse. Migrant workers here are truly stuck between a rock and a hard place.

BMWEC has not been sitting by and letting the teachers brave the hurdles alone. It has dedicated time and effort to securing rations and supplies for the teachers of BMWEC member MLCs. With help and cooperation from partner organizations (MECC, TeacherFocus, Help Without Frontiers, Play Onside), BMWEC has distributed some dry food rations, sanitizers and COVID-19 prevention medical equipment to at least a few schools and their teachers.



No.	MLCs	Mother Organization	Subdistrict	Area	Lock Down		Quarantine	
					Teachers	Staffs	Teachers	Staffs
11	HLEE BEE (လေပေ)	BMWEC	Moo.1 Municiple	Maesot	3	0	0	0
37	STAR FLOWER (စတားဖလာဝေါ့)	BMWEC	Hua Fai	Maesot	0	0	1	0
41	Muditar (မုတိတာ) (Talarauklah)	BMWEC	Ths Sai Luat	Maesot	6	0	1	0
45	Morning Glory 2 (Morning Glory)	BMWEC	Mae Pa	Maesot	0	0	2	0
Maesot Area					9	0	4	0
51	PRAHITA (ပြာစီတာ)	BMWEC	Moo.9, Huay Noke Lae	Phop Phra	2	1	1	0
53	THOO MWE HTEE GER NI (စုမမုတီ ကေဂုမုတီ)	BMWEC	Naung Bua	Phop Phra	3	0	0	0
57	Parahita Htoo (ပြာစီတာ) (Parahita )	BMWEC	48 KM	Phop Phra	5	0	0	0
Phop Phra					10	1	1	0
66	The Light ASEAN Myanmar (ထေးလိုအာရှမီယန်) (HSA THOO LE1)	BMWEC	Unphang	Unphang	4	0	0	0

As shown with the table above, so far, BMWEC was able to provide for 29 teachers and staffs across 8 MLCs.



We hope to provide more to the teachers and MLCs in the near future.

## SCHOOLS IN NEED OF AID: SUKHO THAI

Sukho Thai Learning Center is located in a mountain range 35 kilometers from Mae Sot city in the Phop Phra District. The region is full of Thai plantations, rose fields and seasonal crop fields, with thousands of migrant workers from Myanmar living and working there. The school was initiated under the leadership by the teacher Min Min Thein with 60 students and 2 teachers in February 2012. One reason it was established was to prevent the growing number of child workers in the region due to the lack of access to proper educational institutions for migrant children. The school began as an act of kindness and consideration with the goal of teaching these migrant workers' children their mother language of Burmese along with basic English and Mathematics.



In its early days, Sukho Thai faced some hurdles with local authorities. It was very isolated due to its remoteness and had very little infrastructure. The school was basically a bamboo shack back then. However, over time, due to the developments in the surrounding region, it became less isolated, and the school complex was improved considerably. Things were looking bright for the school.



Unfortunately, however, this positive development did not last. After 10 years of operation, the land owner sadly chose not to extend the rent contract and asked the school to relocate. Thankfully, the teachers have managed to rent a new plot of land near the old school location. The old school was demolished over 3 days starting on 6<sup>th</sup> October this year. It was a collective effort of teachers, students, parents and workers, the landowner employer and hired workers.



*Taking down the school between 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> October*

The new school has not yet been built, and the school organizers are currently seeking assistance from potential benefactors to cover the costs. In addition to the financial challenge, the headmaster is worried that since the migrant schools in Mae Sot region has been closed for almost 2 years now due to the pandemic, children might be out of touch with the school learning environment. Older children are also working outside since the schools cannot be opened yet, and it is very likely that some might not be motivated to return to school once schools are able to reopen. Thus, the main priority for headmaster Min Min Thein right now is getting the school built as soon as possible, preferably in time to reopen for the next school year of 2022-2023. However, at an estimated cost of 100,000 Baht for construction along with the land rent cost of 20,000 Baht annually, the situation looks bleak for Sukho Thai School.



*It was not easy for the headmaster to take down the school he built...*

Despite facing many ups and downs due to reliance on donations from benefactors, the teachers of Sukho Thai are resolute in their mission and are prepared to sacrifice what is needed to in order to ensure the continuation of education for the children in the region. The headmaster is imploring anyone who is willing to aid them to step forward. Anyone who would like to contribute to this effort should contact the BMWEC or the headmistress Nwe Ni Win using the +66627937020 phone number provided by the teacher. The school is located in FPJR+QV4, Chong Khaep, Phop Phra District, Tak 63160.

## SCHOOLS IN NEED OF AID: NEW ROAD



Mae Ramat, north of Mae Sot, is home to more than 10,000 migrant workers from Myanmar. Many of them have brought their families and therefore children along with them. The children usually end up working together with their parents as child workers. There have been numerous attempts by various non-profit organizations to establish a school in the region to mitigate this situation. However, none of them have lasted very long.



When this problem first arose, U Kyaw Kyaw who was living in the region was concerned about the future of these children and wondered what he could do to improve the situation. He was close to returning to his home country of Myanmar when a couple living next to him asked for help to teach their children some basic education. U Kyaw Kyaw decided to help teach the children. News of his activities spread by word of mouth across the region, and within a few months the total number of students rose to 80. Therefore, U Kyaw Kyaw decided to establish New Road Learning Centre officially on 2008.



B.M.W.E.C

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In 2015, Help Without Frontiers (HWF) organization began supporting the school fully. But starting from 2017, it cut its support by 10%, then in 2018, by 20%, afterwards in 2019, by 30%. One reason was the increasing expense of the school as it grew bigger with each passing year. In 2020 HWF finally ended all support completely. The loss of support caused a lot of problems for children who were preparing to take part in the Matriculation Exams that year.



*Students celebrating Martyr's Day*

Another reason for the school's funding problems arose from the fact that many NGOs that had been supporting MLCs began moving into Myanmar when the democratic reforms began. Thus the budget of the school became tighter as the support it received lessened – even though the number of students increased significantly. New Road LC currently has a total of 386 students with 11 teachers – who have been working without any salary for 2 years.



*Youth activities*

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and the military coup in Myanmar in 2021 had a serious ripple effect on at New Road Learning Center as well as on the entire migrant education community. Older youth who began studying at New Road in 2009 are now all stranded and uncertain about their future since they cannot partake in the Matriculation Exams as the borders are closed due to the pandemic, and schools inside Myanmar are not operational due to subsequent civil conflict after the coup. To help them make use of their free time and focus on the future, the headmaster has encouraged students to get General Education Development (GED) training for this school year.



Disagreements between the landowner family and the teachers regarding the school have also created a crisis. As in the case of Sukho Thai Learning Centre, the landowner chose not to renew the land rent contract which would be due in 31.12.2021. Even though the school has received funds from International Organization for Migration (IOM)/FRY for 2022-2023 school year to carry out vocational training at the school, the headmaster is worried about how to continue operating the school in the coming years. The school will need to find new funding and a new location if it is going to carry on. With great uncertainty and a weary heart, he is seeking donor assistance. Those who would like to support the school can contact the BMWEC or the headmaster U Kyaw Kyaw using the phone number; +66836793837, and the email address; [newroad571982@gmail.com](mailto:newroad571982@gmail.com).



Students at Sukho Thai Learning Centre have worked hard and achieved success.

