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Education Provision to Internally Displaced Children in Northern Shan and Kachin States in Burma

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Education Provision to Internally Displaced Children

in northern Shan state and Kachin state, Burma

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SIT Graduate Institute

PIM 76

A capstone paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Arts in

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July 16, 2018

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Acronyms

ADB	Asia Development Bank
CBE	Community-Based Education
DC	District of Columbia
EAO	Ethnic Armed Organization
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
EiE	Education in Emergencies
ETWG	Education Thematic Working Group
GAD	General Administration Department
GCA	Government Controlled Area
GCPEA	Global Coalition to Protect Education Under Attack
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
INEE	Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
INGO	International Non-Government Organization
KBC	Kachin Baptist Convention
KMSS	Karuna Myanmar Social Solidarity
MOE	Ministry of Education
NGCA	Non-Government Controlled Area
NGO	Non-Government Organization

OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
US	the United States

Abstract

Thousands of people have been displaced from their villages and have remained in the internally displaced camps since the fighting resumed in Northern Shan and Kachin states in Myanmar (Burma) in 2011. Displaced families and children experience a number of challenges in the camps, one of which is access to education. This capstone explores the non-governmental organization professionals' perspectives about the challenges they face with regards to providing quality education to displaced children in Burma through these research questions: 1) How do NGO professionals address the challenges they experience in the provision of education to internally displaced children in Burma? 2) How do NGO professionals ensure the provision of a quality education to internally displaced children in Burma? Drawing on a qualitative research methodology employing individual interviews and document analysis, the findings revealed four main challenges organizations experience in education provision to internally displaced children: access to internally displaced persons (IDPs); collecting comprehensive data of IDPs and displaced students; coordination with the national government; and funding for education for displaced children. These challenges are complicated by Myanmar's internal politics, which further makes it difficult for international organizations to provide education to displaced children.

Introduction

There were more than 40 million internally displaced people (IDPs) worldwide at the end of 2016 primarily due to armed conflict and violence (ICRC, 2018). Burma or Myanmar (hereinafter Burma) has contributed to this number of displaced people from its prolonged armed conflict. Armed conflict in Burma has been one of the longest and most protracted ones in the world. It has been almost 70 years now since 1949 when the Burmese military started fighting with the Karen (also known as Kayin) ethnic armed opposition group (Burma Link, 2017).

According to the United Nations Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA/OCHA) 2018 Humanitarian Needs Overview, the number of displaced people in Shan, Kachin, Kayin and Rakhine states is staggering 15,000 in Shan state, 92,000 in Kachin state, 6,000 in Kayin state and 129,000 in Rakhine state respectively (UNICEF, 2018). The number could even be higher since the government has blocked humanitarian assistance to these areas that affect the data accuracy obtained by UN agencies. Of the approximate number of displaced people in these four states, 77 percent are women and children.

In response to the protracted displacement, non-profit international organizations have been providing humanitarian assistance to displaced communities in Shan, Kachin, Kayin and Rakhine states. Save the Children, Lutheran World Federation, Plan International, and International Rescue Committee are some of the international organizations assisting and mitigating the humanitarian crisis caused by the prolonged armed conflict in these regions. Delivering an appropriate form of education to displaced people is on their humanitarian crises agenda. In addition to NGOs, there are non-state actors helping with displaced children's education, such as churches and monasteries. Their provision of education to displaced communities encompasses early childhood care and development (ECCD) and primary education.

Although the organizations are delivering education to displaced communities in Burma, the challenges they experience and their perspectives on the challenges they face in terms of their education provision remain under-researched. For example, UNICEF reports the following challenges it faces in one of the education projects for displaced communities in Burma: a number of displaced communities are not easily accessible due to government restrictions to those regions and procedural bureaucracy; there is a high-security concern for education providers; there is a lack of necessary resources for teachers, appropriate learning facilities, and limited needs assessment, monitoring and evaluation capacity for education provision to displaced communities (UNICEF, 2015). UNICEF and other UN agencies have been experiencing these challenges in their humanitarian crisis response for decades given the history of armed conflicts in Burma.

In this capstone paper, I examined the non-governmental organization professionals' perspectives about the challenges they face with regards to providing quality education to displaced children by posing the following research questions: 1) How do NGO professionals address the challenges they experience in the provision of education to internally displaced children in Burma? 2) How do NGO professionals ensure the provision of a quality education to internally displaced children in Burma? By exploring the non-governmental organization professionals' perspectives about challenges, this capstone paper sheds light on the context specific barriers INGOs, NGOs, and community-based organizations face in education provision at the international, national, and local levels in Burma.

Literature Review

Contextual Background

The armed conflict started in Burma immediately after independence from British colonization in 1948 (Burma Link, 2014). The armed conflict is multi-layered and comprises several stakeholders (Burma Link, 2014). There are more than fifty ethnic armed groups fighting against the military for federalism and greater autonomy, stationed mainly in four states – Shan, Kachin, Kayin, and Rakhine (BNI, 2016). Armed conflict has uprooted communities in Burma, which has resulted in forced displacement across these four states. After decades of fighting, a ceasefire agreement was signed in 1989 between 17 armed groups and the military (Oxford Burma Alliance, n.d.). However, contrary to the ceasefire agreement, the military regime has committed abuses, indiscriminate violence, and extrajudicial killings against ethnic armed groups as well as ethnic minorities in these areas. Therefore, the displacement of people has continued. Unfortunately, the ceasefire agreement was unambiguously broken in 2011 when the military intensified its operations in Kachin state and instigated fierce counterattacks by the armed groups. Kachin and northern Shan states have been the hardest hit in Burma's protracted armed conflict. Fighting and displacement continue until the present moment in these states.

In response to the growing displacement, internally displaced people's (IDP) wellbeing is taken care of by the UN agencies, churches, and local community organizations with constraints imposed by the military. The United Nations General Assembly Security Council (2017) reports that humanitarian access to armed conflict-affected areas has significantly decreased in 2016.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and Refugee(s)

The terms refugee and IDP tend to be conflated in international discourse. The terms are, however, distinct. In simple definitions, IDPs are people who are forced to leave their homes and villages due to conflict and violence and seek shelter that is deemed to be safe for them. The

shelter or the refuge is usually a town or a village adjacent to their homes and therefore, they remain inside of their country of origin. As defined by the UN Guiding Principle on Internal Displacement, IDPs are:

> persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border. (United Nations, 2004, p. 7)

A refugee, however, does not remain in his or her country because he or she no longer feels protected and safe and, therefore, leaves the country. The 1951 Refugee Convention defines "refugee" as follows:

> A refugee is someone who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his or her nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail him or herself of the protection of that country. (As cited in Bengtsson & Naylor, 2016, p. 4)

The distinction between the definitions is that IDPs remain inside their country, and refugees have crossed the internationally recognized border. Both the Guiding Principles and Refugee Convention are the reflections of International Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law. Therefore, IDPs and refugees are entitled to invariable rights as a person and protected under these laws.

The 1951 Refugee Convention legally binds countries where refugees seek refuge to ensure refugees' rights and responsibilities and therefore, humanitarian assistance might reach them sooner than IDPs (Ferris & Winthrop, 2010). Contrary to refugees, as IDPs remain inside

their country of origin, it is difficult to enforce the rights and laws under the umbrella of International Human Rights Law, particularly when the state contributes to the displacement of people (Rhoades, 2010). Furthermore, refugees have received the academic and research attention from scholarly practitioners for over 50 years that covers areas from laws and policies to judicial measures while IDPs are unnoticed in research arenas (Ferris & Winthrop, 2010). For example, there is ample research conducted on Burmese refugees who reside in camps along the border of Thailand and Burma. Although Thailand has not yet ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention protocols, it has been providing humanitarian assistance to displaced people from Burma, where the shelters and camps are accessible by international organizations. Ferris and Winthrop (2010) further suggest that the attention IDPs have received has only been for the past 10 or 20 years, leading to insufficient research about IDPs, their legal protection, and education in emergencies.

Education in Emergencies (EiE)

Nicolai (2003) defines education in emergencies as "a set of linked project activities that enable structured learning to continue in times of acute crisis or long-term instability" (p.11). Education is a substantial need in emergency settings in terms of preparedness for conflicts/disasters and post-war reconstruction. Thus, if education is considered important in an emergency setting, it must be made available during the initial phase of a crisis (Nicolai, 2003). Ensuring access to education during emergencies and crisis brings a number of benefits to the children and the displaced communities, such as basic literacy and numeracy skills. Moreover, education is important for the children and the displaced communities as a whole to be better informed about health-related and social well-being issues such as HIV/AIDS, landmine awareness, and environmental impacts which can all be taught in the classrooms or in the

temporary learning spaces (Nicolai, 2003). Furthermore, education is needed during the crisis

for the post-war/conflict reconstruction. In addition to this, education is imperative not only in

emergency settings but also in post-conflict settings so that a country or a region may not be

dependent on the international community after the emergency period or when the crisis is over.

(Talbot, 2013). Education enables IDPs to learn to live together, to create networks among

themselves for interdependence and further development of their cultural traditions and society

as a whole, and to participate in the reconstruction of their nation state in post-war/conflict

periods. As such, children of different backgrounds, such as race, religion, and identity cannot be

denied access to education and left behind if any conflict-affected country that is envisioning its

future with "balanced development with economic growth" for rebuilding the nation after the

war/conflict (Talbot, 2013, p. 5).

Provision of Education to Internally Displaced Communities in Burma

According to the Principle 23 of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, the

state has the primary responsibility and obligation to provide education to displaced people. The

Principle 23, article (1) and (2) state, "Every human being has the right to education. To give

effect to this right for internally displaced persons, the authorities concerned shall ensure that

such persons, in particular, displaced children, receive education which shall be free and

compulsory at the primary level" (United Nations, 2004, p. 16). However, in the case of Burma,

as the state itself is involved in the displacement of people, it is unclear whether the state

provides education to displaced communities. Fortunately, there is a significant effort by local

and international organizations in helping IDPs in northern Shan and Kachin states.

Local churches and monasteries, most prominently, Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC)

and Karuna Myanmar Social Services (KMSS) play a central role in providing education as a

part of their relief assistance (ETWG, 2014). The children are taught basic literacy skills both in

Burmese and their respective ethnic languages. Other than these actors, the number of

community-based organizations has proliferated after 2000 in ethnic areas and across the country

in Burma (ADB, 2015). Some community-based organizations' work focuses on education in

conflict or disaster-affected communities. Moreover, UNICEF plays a leading role in providing

education to displaced children, youth, and adults. Its provision of education spans from early

childhood care and development to primary education. INEE[1] is another prominent international

organization in the realm of education in emergencies. It plays a key role in the provision of

education in emergencies. As an organization dedicated to education in emergencies, INEE has a

more concrete platform and has developed 19 minimum standards for education preparedness,

response, and recovery. INEE (2010) includes the community participation as the very first and

foundational standard for the provision of education in emergencies. INEE has conducted

training on its minimum standards of education in conflict setting to teachers, trainers, and local

organizations that working in Burma (Hyll-Larsen & Sandal-Aasen, 2018).

Challenges Experienced by Education Providers

      Challenges that education providers experience may vary from country to country, but

the nature of the challenges is more or less the same. During times of emergency and crisis, the

role of the national government and its willingness to coordinate with organizations to deliver

education to the affected population are fundamental to NGOs providing education to IDPs.

Coordination signifies that national governments are coordinating with international NGOs and

collaborating with their respective ministries. In most cases, international NGOs go through the

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[1] Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), a globally networked organization comprised of practitioners and policymakers, working for the right to quality education and a safe learning environment in emergencies.

screening process by the national governments to ensure the principles of the international NGOs and their humanitarian aid are in line with the national policies (Sommers, 2004). Moreover, national governments may experience what Sommers (2004) calls "horizontal" incapability – coordinating gaps across their ministries and "vertical" incapability – coordinating gaps at the regional and provincial levels (p. 42). Consequently, the provision of education and humanitarian aid delivery in general may not be available immediately after the conflict or violence erupts.

Another condition is that, in most emergency situations, it is not clear who is responsible to provide education to IDPs. In theory, the Ministry of Education plays a pivotal role in delivering education to IDPs, but the willingness to do so by national governments significantly differs from context to context (Bengtsson & Naylor, 2016). The Ministry of Education may be involved, but the national governments usually take the dominant role with the assistance of UNICEF to provide education or relief effort to displaced people in times of emergency (Sommers, 2004). Besides, a number of IDPs live in non-government controlled areas and may not be reached by the Ministry of Education (Talbot, 2013).

Furthermore, the role of the United Nations and other UN agencies may be limited in certain countries. Sommers (2004) notes that one of the drawbacks of the United Nations agencies is being obliged to coordinate with the respective governments for their humanitarian relief effort. It may take more time than is needed to deliver humanitarian aid to the displaced people. This long process of coordinating with the governments also delays the provision of education even though it is supposed to be made available from the beginning of the crisis. Moreover, this arrangement further impacts NGOs and international NGOs as they, most often, are dependent on the UN agencies' work and funding (Sommers, 2004). Another perspective Ferris and Winthrop (2010) describe is that the UN member states tend to avoid getting involved in an issue that is considered solely an internal affair of a country, such as intrastate wars, under

the pretext of state sovereignty. This may lead to a condition in which the international community has a limited influence on a country or the national government.

Furthermore, although the focus on education in emergency settings is being welcomed more positively these days, education is still not a funding priority in the humanitarian discourse and agenda (Save the Children, 2008). Funding allocation for education in emergencies is noticeably low compared to other pillars of humanitarian aid such as food and shelter which could lead to competition amongst education providing organizations (Rhoades, 2010). However, Talbot (2013) points out that donors' misinterpretation of a long-term development such as education and a short-term relief effort like food and shelter, can also influence insufficient funding allocation. Moreover, even when education in emergencies is funded, education in emergencies projects tend to favor tangible outcomes, such as school infrastructure, whereby neglecting the quality of education being provided. This might lead to unsustainable development if the root causes of the crisis are not being addressed in the educational materials and teachers are not being trained properly (Nicolai, 2003).

In addition to these barriers and challenges, organizations delivering education to displaced people experience difficulty in accessing accurate data about IDPs. Bengtsson and Naylor (2016) present that credible data on IDPs is a critical element in operational gaps and challenges in the provision of education to displaced children. In fact, according to Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, there are no comprehensive data sets for IDPs around the world. Bengtsson and Naylor (2016) point out that IDPs partly contribute to this challenge. IDPs fear that their individual data will be misused by warring parties, indicating or not whether they are affiliated with the warring armed parties. For instance, there have been incidents in Burma where some ethnic IDPs are attacked by the military and accused of being spies for ethnic armed groups they are fighting against. Therefore, IDPs may not reveal information about themselves

for fear of being detained or captured. Another perspective is that IDPs immerse into the community where they seek shelter and are able to find work in the community to support themselves and can have a much better living standard than in their homes or villages (personal communication, 2017). This could probably lead to a situation in which the IDPs do not identify themselves as IDPs, and it poses a challenge to measure and aggregate the number of IDPs in that particular community.

Challenges experienced by local community education providers in conflict areas must also be taken into account. There is usually a strong desire among the displaced people and the community to have access to education, which is manifested in a variety of community initiatives such as starting self-help Community-Based Education (CBE) (Sinclair, n.d.). One major challenge is that CBE occurs in a small and limited sphere, be it funding, human resources, or educational materials. Therefore, CBE may not be sustainable (Rose & Greely, 2006). Support from outside of the communities is needed to sustain the communities' effort in the provision of education (Nicolai, 2003). Furthermore, CBE initiated by locals in and around the conflict areas has not been sufficiently documented in research, despite the fact that CBE can increase access to education to conflict-affected communities during the crisis (Burde, 2015). Burde (2015) suggests that it is important to explore how CBE communicates with the existing social and political power structures as community participation may lead to a problematic reinforcement of social capital associated with a particular ethnic or religious identity. One further challenge CBE programs face is the reluctance of IDP communities to send their children to these self-initiated learning spaces because IDP children may need to work to help with either domestic household chores or farming work for the family survival (Mooney & French, 2005).

Despite the fact that the existing literature on the provision of education to IDPs is limited, the literature drawn for this research proposal demonstrates a number of challenges

experienced by education providers in emergencies and how the challenges vary at the international, national, and local levels. By investigating the NGO professionals' perspectives about the challenges they experience in education provision in IDP communities, this study will contribute to the EiE field by generating valuable insights about the challenges NGO professionals face in Burma and illuminating effective practices that will further inform NGO professional networks on how to navigate challenges effectively in order to maximize their efforts in education provision to internally displaced children.

Research Design and Methodology

Methodology Choice and Rationale

To better understand the challenges that non-governmental organizations experience in education provision in internally displaced communities, I employed a qualitative research methodology. The qualitative research methodology allowed me to inquire the participants about their "lives and perspectives" of challenges they face while implementing their work towards educating IDPs in war-torn countries (Agee, 2009, p. 432). The qualitative research methodology places the participants' standpoints and outlooks at the core of the inquiry process to make sense of their "interaction, process, and social change" about the study (Strauss, as cited in Agee, 2009, p. 432). With these characteristics of qualitative research methodology in mind, I situated the participants' voices at the center of the study to inform the research question and to understand their experiences and interactions with different stakeholders with regards to the provision of education to internally displaced communities.

Sites, Participants' Description and Sampling

To better understand the experiences of non-governmental organization professionals with education delivery to IDPs in Burma, I focused on program directors, program coordinators,

project directors, researchers, and teachers or trainers who have worked in the field of EiE at the international and national levels. I employed purposeful sampling to select the participants who are best informed for the study (Rossman & Rallis, 2016). They are individuals working in or contributing to the field of EiE and may have experienced challenges in education delivery in Burma. Knowing that I could not collect "data intensively and in depth" from all potential participants within EiE field, I had to be selective (Rossman & Rallis, 2016, p. 121). I invited NGO professionals who work in the EiE field both at the local and international levels to participate in individual interviews. I invited up to 10 individuals, but I was able to interview only five for this study. Many of the potential participants working at the national and international organizations declined to participate in the interviews due to the sensitivity of the topic of the study. Four of the participants were from international NGOs and local NGOs based in Burma. The participants requested I do not mention the organizations they are working for. One participant was from the United Kingdom. The participants based in Burma are working in the EiE field as teachers, field coordinators, and trainers in the provision of education and social services in conflict-affected areas in Kachin and Northern Shan states. The participant from the UK does not have work experience in Burma, but has extensive years of experience working with refugees and IDPs in conflict-affected countries.

I invited the participants from the United States and the United Kingdom through my colleagues and supervisors at my practicum site Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA). For the participants based in Burma, I recruited them through the teachers' network that I was involved with in Burma. I worked with them for teacher development and training in northern Shan and Kachin states. Given I was not physically present in Burma for this study, I communicated with them via email and Facebook messenger. As far as the Facebook messenger was concerned, it was the most viable

communication platform that most people had access to in Burma (the telecommunication companies offer promotional packages where Facebook is free in Burma). Although I kept Facebook messenger as an option in case other means of communication were not feasible, I had to utilize it to reach out to the potential participants from Burma, despite Facebook's recent privacy disclosure scandal.

Methods of Data Collection

I employed two methods of data collection – individual interviews and document analysis – to understand NGO professionals' experiences with education provision to internally displaced children in Burma, and how they worked to deliver quality education to them.

Individual Interview

Interviewing is one of the most powerful and significant methods to understand people's lived experiences and used as a tool to elicit "an individual or a group perspective" through interaction (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 361). As this study sought to learn and understand the NGO professionals' perspectives and challenges they face in the provision of education to internally displaced persons, interviewing was the most suitable method for my data collection. With the participants based in Burma, I interviewed them individually and face-to-face via Facebook messenger. As explained in the earlier section, I kept Facebook messenger as an option to reach the participants when Skype and email did not work, since it was the only way to reach the participants. I interviewed the participant who is based in the United Kingdom via Skype. I deployed semi-structured interviews with a set of guided questions that helped answer the research question set for this study. Semi-structured interviewing allowed the participants "room for variation in response," and it gave more chances to the participants to share their perspectives to the extent that they feel comfortable (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 363). Moreover, it was consistent with the qualitative research methodology that centered the participants' voices in this

study. In addition, semi-structured interviewing enables the researcher to "respond to the

situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic"

(Merriam, 1998, p. 74). Semi-structured interviewing allowed me to explore the themes

discussed in the literature review such as funding and access to IDPs as well as the participants'

emerging outlook regarding the provision of education to IDPs such as the type of displacement

of people and the real needs for IDPs' education. Each interview lasted an hour. Based on the

participants' responses, I was able to adjust the order of interview questions to best fit the

interview process with each participant.

Document Analysis

As Bowen (2009) argued, "Document analysis is a social research method and is an

important research tool in its own right, and is an invaluable part of most schemes of

triangulation, the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon (p. 2)."

By employing document analysis for this study, I was able to corroborate the collected data from

the interviews with individual participants. As far as the document analysis method was

concerned, Bowen (2009) and O'Leary (2014) remind researchers about the importance of

assessing and making inquiries of the subjectivity of documents used for a study as well as the

researchers' interpretation of the documents to maintain the credibility of the research. The

document analysis method requires the researcher to be engaged with the documents throughout

the study.

With regards to the document choices, I used ten public records such as reports, papers,

policy manuals, and other relevant documents published by the United Nations (UN), IRC, Save

the Children, KMSS, and UNICEF on the topic of the provision of education provision to

internally displaced communities in Burma. I also gathered relevant documents from these

organizations' websites mentioned earlier in order to incorporate different perspectives and voices for the study.

Ethics of Research

As this study entailed interviewing people who are based in the United Kingdom and in Burma, ethical considerations for the participants were made a priority. The participants were fully and "truthfully informed about the research," had the "right to privacy (protecting the identity of the subject)," and deserved "protection from harm (physical, emotional, or any other kind)" (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 372). I provided full disclosure about the purpose of this study so that the participants could judge that participating in the interviews posed no risks or minimal risks to them. I explained to the participants that I was conducting this research as a partial requirement for the attainment of a Master's degree I was pursuing and I would not use the research or the findings for any other purposes such as for future job applications or policy advocacy work either in Burma or in the United States. Moreover, I did not share interviews and transcripts with anyone. I kept the recorded audio private and did not use it for any other purposes other than this study. I also assured the participants that their identities – such as their names, ethnicity, specific location in Burma or the United Kingdom, and the organizations they worked for – would be kept confidential. If it became necessary to quote the participant's responses, I would use their pseudonyms to attribute their responses. However, I used vague wordings like "an EiE volunteer teacher teaching IDPs in Burma" to reference NGO professionals. I did not specify the participants' jobs and what states of Burma the participants resided in. By taking these precautions, the participants were not identifiable, which would avert the risks for their employability or reputation. Once the participants were fully informed of ethical aspects of the research being completely voluntary and involving no risks or minimal risks for them, I asked them to provide their consent for their participation in this study. I

translated the consent form into Burmese for the participants in Burma to be able to comprehend everything in their local language. Furthermore, I kept in touch with the participants to follow up on their feedback and accuracy of the interview notes and transcripts. I also invited the participants to provide feedback on the findings when they were ready. Regarding the document analysis, I used documents with caution and made sure not to include confidential documents, emails, reports, or meeting minutes.

Researcher's Positionality

As a person of mixed ethnicities – Shan and Lahu – and who is also residing in northern Shan state in Burma, I grew up witnessing people who have been displaced by the ongoing conflict between the military and ethnic armed groups. I have seen and lived with children who are being sent to my hometown to live with their relatives because it is no longer safe for them to live in their villages. The displaced people belong to ethnic groups such as Shan, Kachin, and Palaung, just to name a few. Given that I belong to the Shan ethnic group and the conflict region is my home, I recognize that my interest in internally displaced communities stems from my personal experience. I am also aware that I have delimited the focus of my study on the challenges in the provision of education to IDPs only in northern Shan and Kachin states, despite the fact that there are similar situations going on in other states of the country. Therefore, I understand that my positionality and subjectivity that Peshkin (1988) describes as being "the basis of researchers' making a distinctive contribution, one that results from the unique configuration of their personal qualities joined to the data they have collected" have shaped the conceptualization, design, analysis, and interpretation of this study (p. 18). Furthermore, I am also deeply aware that my choice to situate the study in northern Shan and Kachin states does not include the states of Karen and Rakhine for personal safety reasons.

In terms of the level of engagement between the researcher and the informants, I was willingly accepted as an insider into the culture of my Burmese participants, and I assumed they did not provide me "polite response" such as "lies, exaggerations, or omissions" (Siddle Walker, 1999, p. 234). Given I have a lived experience in Burma and share most cultures with them, I was able to discern their candid responses. Furthermore, I did not face rejections by the participants although many potential participants refused to participate in the individual interviews, they explained to me their reasons why they were not able to participate in this study. Many participants who did not participate in the interviews connected me with other NGOs and INGOs professionals.

In addition, I was not perceived by the Burmese participants as someone who belongs to an elite community since I am studying at a graduate institution in the United States. All participants welcomed me to listen to them and wanted me to hear them. I assumed that their understanding towards me and their collaboration in this study were because of the teacher's network I had been involved with in northern Shan and Kachin states. The teacher's network seemed to have held me accountable for what I was doing for this study. Moreover, my ethnicity seemed to have convinced the participants that I was a legitimate person to conduct this study because three participants from Burma asked me what my ethnicity was and where I grew up before the interviews or at some points of the interviews. The participant from the United Kingdom also asked me about my ethnicity and if I was from the mainland Burma. The participant also asked me if I have had personal experiences with IDPs in northern Shan and Kachin states.

Throughout the interviews, I noticed that my positionality was not static. When the participants' answers from Burma resonated with my personal experiences, there were moments I wanted to jump in the interviews and confirmed what they were saying was right. When the

participant from the United Kingdom had limited understanding of the socio-politics of Burma, I

wanted to argue that what they were saying would not help IDPs. Having noticed my immediate

feelings and understanding the ethical values I had to maintain as a researcher, I kept myself in

the self-reflective process of "enabling myself to manage" my positionalities reflectively

(Peshkin, 1988, p. 20). Therefore, I listened throughout the interviews and asked for clarification

when I did not understand the perspectives that the participants shared with me. I kept this in my

mind in analyzing data and writing up of the findings.

Data Management

In order to systematically manage and analyze the data, I documented all the data

collection steps. For example, for individual interviews, I kept a master document in which I

recorded all interview data, locations, and participants' pseudonyms, which helped me better

organize the data for the analysis phase. I translated and transcribed every interview after its

completion to make sure I understood everything and to be able to follow up with the

participants in the event I needed to clarify something. For the document analysis process, I

assembled documents according to their categories, for example, the UN reports, organizations'

annual reports, and white papers. To analyze the data generated through individual interviews

and document analysis, I used the data management software Dedoose.

Data Analysis

LeCompte (2000) maintains that since there is not one inherent structure to organize

qualitative research data, she suggests researchers create their own structure to organize the data

into "an explanation or solution" that will help answer the research question (LeCompte, 2000, p.

147). By utilizing Dedoose, I coded the data both inductively and deductively from the

individual interviews and the documents. I began with a deductive process by creating codes that might be capturing issues such as 1) challenges at the international level and 2) challenges at the national and local levels and stages, reflecting the topics discussed in the relevant literature. I set these two issues as parent codes. Under these codes, I developed child codes according to the challenges I discussed in the relevant lit-review, such as access to IDPs, funding, and coordination by the national government, etc. After coding all data deductively, I compared the findings derived from the individual interviews and document analysis. Then, by reviewing the relevant literature, I looked for the emerging patterns in the data, such as funding, access to IDPs, etc. When the patterns emerged, I printed out the excerpts, reviewed, and reread them to consider what themes were emerging across those patterns. After I examined the emergent findings through the lenses of my conceptual framework and the relevant literature, I attended to the data that I did not expect to find in the study and coded it inductively, such as the attitudinal issues in some authorities and the internal politics of Burma.

Limitation and Delimitation of the Study

One of the limitations of this study was the infeasibility of in-person interviews with the participants from Burma. This was complicated by the ten-hour time difference between the US and Burma. I had to interview the participants during their office hours, which means I had to interview them at night according to the time zone in the United States. I had to make sure I felt awake and was attentive enough to conduct the interviews with them at night. Moreover, the internet connectivity in northern Shan and Kachin states was a concern, which might have impacted the quality of receiving calls. I needed to explain it to the participants and allowed more time than necessary to make sure the participants felt comfortable and were able to participate in the interviews. Furthermore, the participant I was interviewing in the United

Kingdom, although an expert in the EiE field, they may or may not have had field experience working in an emergency setting. Given the busy nature of the participants' work in the field in Burma and the United Kingdom, I had a challenging time setting up an interview and to address it. I had to engage with them as early as possible to give them some time to propose times that were most convenient for them for their interviews. In addition, given I did not have full access to credible data on the provision of education to internally displaced communities in Burma, I may be limited in gathering relevant, credible document data.

I have delimited the scope of my study by focusing on the communities that are displaced by armed conflict and challenges NGO professionals face in the provision of education to internally displaced people in only two states in Burma – northern Shan and Kachin states. There is also a serious displacement in Rakhine state in the western part of the country. However, the nature of the conflict and displacement are different. It is intercommunal and sensitive in nature, and the current politics plays a significant role in it. By narrowing down the scope of the study to the two states, I was able to focus on the unique challenges of northern Shan and Kachin states, which made my study feasible. Recruiting the participants from northern Shan and Kachin states for individual interviews was easy for me because I already had some teachers' networks in those regions. I recruited one participant who was based in the United Kingdom through my colleagues' network at my practicum sites, HRW and GCPEA.

Findings

For this capstone inquiry, I explored the challenges organizations experience with regards to the provision of education to internally displaced children in northern Shan and Kachin states in Burma and how they address the challenges in order to ensure quality education to internally displaced children. I will present four main themes of challenges that emerged from the data from individual interviews with NGO professionals and document analysis: access to IDPs,

collecting comprehensive data at IDP camps, the role of the national government, and funding

that largely affects the provision of education to displaced students.

Access to IDPs

Access to IDPs and the provision of education in northern Shan and Kachin states proved

to be neither what Sommers (2004) calls "horizontal" incapability – coordinating across their

ministries nor "vertical" incapability – the coordinating gaps in regional and provincial level that

created challenges for the organizations that are providing education or humanitarian aid (p. 42).

The document analysis and individual interview data revealed that the geographic locations of

the displacement and Burma's internal politics among the government, the military, and the

ethnic armed groups were the most significant barriers preventing access to IDPs and the

provision of education to IDPs. As stated in the UNICEF report, "Ensuring adequate protection

for IDPs is a serious challenge in Kachin and Shan States, where IDP camps are divided between

areas of Tatmadaw[2] and EAO[3] control" (UNICEF, 2017, p. 10). A participant working for an

INGO in Kachin state also described their experiences with regards to access to IDPs along the

same lines "…there are situations like NGCA and GCA (non-government control areas or

KIA/KIO[4] control areas and government control areas). There are a lot of IDP camps in NGCA,

especially along the border of Burma and China" (Personal communication, 2018).

The geographic locations of the displacement unintentionally prompted the humanitarian

organizations to navigate the internal politics of the country if they wanted to ensure protection

of IDPs and provision of humanitarian aid, including education. Navigating the internal politics

of Burma may create more barriers for the humanitarian organizations as they determine who

they engage with to gain access to IDPs in ethnic armed control areas and how they will do it.

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[2] A Burmese term for the military
[3] Ethnic Armed Organization
[4] Kachin Independence Army/Kachin Independence Organization

Engaging with armed groups to have access to IDPs may pose more risk to the humanitarian organizations since they are not supposed to ally with any of the armed groups, the government, or the military. For example, UNICEF's existing relationship with the government or the military could be disrupted and, consequently, it may hinder their currently implemented humanitarian programs in Kachin and Northern Shan states. The UN agency may avoid confrontations with the government or the military, akin to what a number of UN member states do, to avoid getting involved in an internal affair of a country, such as intrastate war under the pretext of state sovereignty (Ferris & Winthrop, 2010).

Furthermore, the data also indicated that humanitarian organizations, especially NGOs and INGOs, even if they would like to go to NGCA, they were prevented from accessing it by the government. One participant recalled their experience and expressed their opinions why they were delayed or they were not permitted to go into NGCA. The participant stated the following:

> If we are sending or carrying humanitarian aid, even school supplies, to NGCA, it is more challenging. It's not that we are not allowed to go there. It just takes a lot of time at check points. Sometimes, we approach the General Administration Department (GAD) and get an approval letter from them. Even with that, it takes a lot of time at check points sometimes. Sometimes, we have to go back. Sometimes, we are delayed. The reason they give is that they do not want the supplies, even school supplies or other materials to get into the hands of armed groups. They are suspicious about that. (Personal communication, 2018)

This experience demonstrates that the politics between the government, the military, and the ethnic armed groups came into play regarding access to the IDPs. Furthermore, it shed light on the power dynamics between the military and the government, too. For example, although the humanitarian organizations received the approval from the GAD, or the government, the final

decision to enter or permit access to NGCA remained largely in the hands of the military stationed in Kachin and northern Shan states. Furthermore, the anecdotal evidence about one prominent international humanitarian organization having had access to IDPs in NGCA confirmed the role of the military in granting access to NGCA, not the government. One participant said, "According to what I have heard, for example, (INGO) does not engage with the government for TA or letters of recommendation or approval. To reduce the time and avoid delay, it directly communicates with the commander to get travel approval to those areas" (Personal communication, 2018). The aforementioned international humanitarian organization had access to NGCA because it directly engaged with the military, specifically the commander stationed in the state, and bypassed the procedures with the government most of the time (Personal communication, 2018). Thus, the internal politics of Burma played a more challenging role than "horizontal" or "vertical" incapability as identified by Sommers (2004).

Furthermore, as far as the role of local and national organizations was concerned in reaching IDPs in NGCA, it was very likely that local and national organizations, such as the Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC) and Karuna Myanmar Social Solidarity (KMSS), had access to NGCA without engaging with the government or the military (Personal communication, 2018). This is further corroborated by the UNICEF report that stated that the UN, INGOs, and other partner organizations had to rely on the work of national humanitarian organizations with regards to the provision of humanitarian assistance to IDPs (UNICEF, 2018).

KBC and KMSS are church based organizations and they tend to appoint staff who are ethnic Kachin. Therefore, being ethnically associated with the IDPs as well as armed groups may facilitate easier access to these areas in Kachin state. KBC and KMSS have some education programs running for IDPs in Kachin and northern Shan states, but the potential participants declined to participate in the individual interviews given the sensitivity of the study. Therefore, I

was not able to confirm what exactly their education for IDPs looked like and if their initiatives

for displaced children's education led to a reinforcement of social capital associated with a

particular ethnic or religious identity based on the social and political power structures existing

in the country (Burde, 2015). Additionally, the data indicated that national humanitarian

organizations had become the main actors in delivering assistance to the displaced people and

they also experienced significant constraints in accessing the IDPs in Kachin and Shan states

since INGOs' access to areas within the government control had also been hindered since 2017

(UNHCR, 2018).

　　　While the locations of the displacement were already challenging for the humanitarian

organizations to access IDPs, the type of displacement in Kachin and Shan was also a challenge

to humanitarian organizations to access and respond to the needs of the IDPs. The displacement

in Kachin and northern Shan was starkly different:

> The displacement in Shan is generally categorized by short displacements with people
>
> sheltering in public and religious buildings; while in Kachin longer-term movement and
>
> settlement in informal camps is more common. For some in northern Shan, recent
>
> displacements are the second, third or fourth displacement leading to increased
>
> vulnerability. In both states, the displacement remains fluid and the numbers in need, and
>
> the type of assistance required, varies greatly. (UNICEF, 2018)

In Northern Shan state, people went back to their villages once they no longer heard the

gunshots. Consequently, this affected the work of humanitarian organizations because when the

humanitarian assistance reached the camps, the people were not there anymore (Personal

communication, 2018). And as one of the participants stated, the IDPs may come back to the

shelters and camps once the fighting breaks out, again. This mobile or temporary displacement

had been a pattern since 2012 in Northern Shan state. In Kachin state, IDPs remain in the same

camps from the very beginning of the fighting in 2011. It has become a protracted long-term emergency. IDPs in Kachin state faced another challenge while being displaced in the camps. In 2017, there were situations when IDPs had to run away from the camps due to intense fighting nearby and settle in another camp (Personal communication, 2018). This fluid type to displacement in both states creates unpredictability for many humanitarian organizations trying to effectively mobilize their assistance to IDPs. This country specific challenge that humanitarian organizations experience with limited access to IDPs is further compounded by the lack of accurate and timely information available about the movement of IDPs to provide effective protection and ensure aid delivery to IDPs.

Collecting comprehensive data at IDP camps

Collecting reliable data on IDPs, as Bengtsson and Naylor (2016) described, is a critical element in operational gaps and challenges in the provision of education to displaced children. According to Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, there are no comprehensive data sets on IDPs around the world. However, in the case of IDPs in Kachin and northern Shan states, data gathering on IDPs relied on the work of national humanitarian organizations like the KBC and KMSS, where KMSS works as a camp management agency. INGOs and the UN collaborate with KMSS and the KBC for IDP data collection and provision of assistance (Personal communication, 2018).

Bengtsson and Naylor (2016) point out that the biggest challenge in data collection on IDPs is precipitated by IDPs fearing that their data will be misused by warring parties and will lead to disclosure of their potential affiliation with armed groups. However, my findings suggested otherwise. Local and national humanitarian organizations collected data on IDPs at the

camps. None of the participants based in Burma spoke about the unwillingness of IDPs in disclosing their information to the local and national organizations for which they were working.

Moreover, as far as the geographic location of the displacement was concerned, collecting data on students at IDP camps in GCA seemed to be less challenging. However, my findings indicated that it was not the government that initiated data collection on displaced students. One participant working for a local organization in northern Shan state said, "The government also asks us how many students are in the camps. We give the number of the students to responsible authorities like the General Administration Department" (GAD) (Personal communication, 2018). Furthermore, in GCA in Kachin state, the Ministry of Education (MOE) instructs the township education department to register the students at public schools in the host communities. As one participant working for an INGO said, "The MOE does not do detailed collection of data at the camps, but the township education department and responsible staff are instructed to register the students and accept them at schools" (Personal communication, 2018).

These findings suggest that even the government had to rely on national humanitarian organizations to collect data on IDPs in the camps in GCA. The government, the MOE, and the GAD seemed to be lacking structures in place to effectively manage and collect data on IDPs, which may consequently affect the provision of assistance to IDPs, including displaced students. Furthermore, not only did the national humanitarian organizations initiated data collection on IDP students, it also helped the IDPs to have necessary documents and meet responsible authorities, such as the GAD and the Immigration. A volunteer teacher helping with internally displaced children's school work shared the following:

> Sometimes, we just meet the authorities at respective township Immigration Departments
> and General Administration Departments (GAD). At Immigration, we meet for the

identity cards and family household documents for the displaced families. Since the

families left their homes and villages immediately, they do not have any documents with

them. So, for that, last year we helped with their necessary documents of the whole camp.

(Personal communication, 2018)

In Burma in general, family household documents, birth certificates, and identity cards are

extremely important for everyone living in the country. These documents, especially identity

cards, must be with people when they are travelling. Furthermore, they are important for having

access to schools and for people's mobility across the country. Therefore, this evidence

demonstrates that the national humanitarian organizations are helping the displaced families to

access proper identification because these documents can determine what social services the

IDPs are entitled to, including displaced students getting registered at schools in host

communities.

Collecting data on displaced students and IDPs seemed to fall in the hands of local and

national humanitarian organizations once there was a displacement in town. The role of local and

national organizations has therefore become more important both for accessing IDPs and

collecting data on IDPs.

The Role of the National Government

As discussed in the reviewed literature earlier in the paper, the Guiding Principles on

Internal Displacement emphasize "sovereignty as responsibility" that binds the national

government to take responsibility for the displaced people (OHCHR, 2018, p. 2). A participant

who has extensive years of experience working for refugees and IDPs said, "The Convention on

the Right of a Child says that the government is responsible for all the children in that country

under 18 years of age. So, under the Convention on the Rights of a Child, the government

supervises or facilitates the provision of education to all children" (Personal communication, 2018). However, in practice, given the power dynamics between the government and the military, no matter how Burma was obligated to follow certain principles set by international treaties and conventions, the internal politics of the country dictates what happens to its people. The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement seemed to be not very influential, but they may become a suitable framework to adopt in the future once the internal politics creates an opportunity for it to work in the country.

Although the government appears not taking the leading role in initiating assistance to displaced students at the camps in GCA, some findings suggest that the government has showed willingness to help displaced people in the past three years. A participant working for IDPs in northern Shan state said, "I have been working for this organization for three years now. Since the beginning of my time here, I have seen the government helping the students with some school supplies. They visit the camps to get to know the number of students" (Personal communication, 2018). Another participant working for an INGO also said, "Displaced children go to government schools in their host communities. In other host communities where temporary learning spaces (TLS) are not needed, by coordinating with the government, we conduct rehabilitation training for the IDPs" (Personal communication, 2018). However, helping the displaced students in these ways may not necessarily suggest that the government was taking full responsibility for the IDPs, especially the displaced students' education. Given the government has allegedly been involved in IDP students' education for the past three years, it may be the general election that had motivated the government to do so to gain more votes from the public.

Furthermore, as Bengtsson and Naylor (2016) described, the Ministry of Education (MOE) theoretically plays a pivotal role in delivering education to IDPs. However, in northern Shan and Kachin states, the MOE's role in helping the displaced students seemed to be limited.

Only one out of four participants based in Burma mentioned the role of the Ministry of Education (MOE) in facilitating displaced students' education and the participant seemed to be appreciating the MOE's help. This may also be the fact that the participant worked for a prominent INGO and the nature of the organizations' work allowed them to engage with the MOE at one point of their work. As the participant described it:

> Nowadays, the displaced students are accepted at state/government schools. They are assessed by placement tests. According to the placement test results, they are placed in appropriate grades. In Kachin state, especially this year, the township education department has effectively helped these students to get to learn at schools. The township education department goes to IDP camps and helps them to go to schools. (Personal communication, 2018)

No matter how small of a role the MOE played, such engagement with the MOE or the government might improve educational access for IDP students. For example, organizing and conducting placement tests for internally displaced students was a sign of government's engagement with the displaced people and the host communities, which for many people growing up and living in Burma is a rare case of institutional assistance from the government.

At the same time, it is important to note that the government's willingness and the capability to help IDPs may have resulted from the fact that the camps were in GCA, meaning that the camps were in locations where no intense fighting, no heavy military presence, and no direct confrontation between the government and the military were evident. As my findings suggest, the power dynamics between the government and the military and the geographic locations of the IDP camps were both the enabling and hindering factors with regards to the education provision to IDPs.

Outside of politics, as the humanitarian organizations managed coordination of projects with the government, they faced a common challenge related to the attitudes of the government authority, which I did not expect to find in this study. A participant working for IDPs in Kachin state said:

> According to my experience, in making the project implementation successful, knowing how to approach the authorities is important. You have to know what their expectations are, for example, reporting to them in advance before implementing the projects. They like to see us respectful and humble in communicating with them. They want to be treated and considered more superior than us. We have to know it. (Personal communication, 2018)

The interpersonal communication and treatment of authority further exacerbated existing challenges for the humanitarian organizations. Respectfulness and humbleness are embedded in the cultures and traditions in societies across Burma, and there is nothing wrong with these values culturally, traditionally, or morally. However, wanting to be treated more superior than others may become an occupational obstacle for humanitarian organizations that could lead to biases and possibly bribery. It could be a paradoxical situation for humanitarian organizations since neutrality has always been the core value for them. They may not want to be seen as organizations siding with the government or the military and eventually lose trust from the ethnic armed groups that may interrupt their limited contact they have established with IDPs in NGCA and GCA.

Funding

Back in 2008, Save the Children (2008) reported that education was not a funding priority at the global level of humanitarian discourse and agenda, despite its importance for

displaced children and displaced communities. The data I collected suggested that organizations

helping with displaced children's education in northern Shan and Kachin states had funding

challenges as well. Four out of five participants who are based in northern Shan and Kachin

states respectively expressed their concerns about funding the displaced children's education, as

it did not really meet their real needs for a certain population of displaced students. Primary

school age students seemed to have received more help and assistance for their education. At the

beginning of every school year, displaced students at the camps were provided with necessary

school supplies, such as uniforms, books, and pencils, just to name a few. Sometimes, they were

given cash vouchers to buy things they would really need for their schools (Personal

communication, 2018). This assistance to displaced students suggests that primary students may

not lack educational resources at the moment. While, primary education is free, and primary

school age displaced students can access education, it may or may not be a quality one (Personal

communication, 2018).

However, the findings revealed that compared to the displaced primary school age

students, the displaced students who were in grades 10 and 11 needed more than just school

supplies. In Burma's context, grade 10 and 11 are the most important grades, and failing these

grades may bring about significant distress to students and parents. They will not be able to

continue with higher education. They will be looked down upon in society. They will not be able

to get any decent paying jobs. They are considered to be part of a lower class and not important.

Therefore, parents of a higher socio-economic background try their best to send their children to

a private training school just for the 10th and 11th grades. They have to pay a lot more than they

can really afford. These private training schools are known as boarding schools in Burma and are

very popular in across the country. Going to a boarding school for these grades is now a trend in

society. Furthermore, many private boarding schools are legally affiliated with the government

schools and that means students can choose either to go to a government school or a private

boarding school. Parents who are financially well-off send their children to boarding schools;

those who are socio-economically disadvantaged send their children to the government schools.

The government schools are notoriously known for their students' poor performance during

grades 10 and 11. Solely relying on the government schools cannot guarantee students' success,

which puts a lot of pressure on parents and students.

The displaced students at the camps in GCA experience more dire circumstances with

their education that socio-economically disadvantaged students in mainstream schools in Burma.

Some displaced families manage to send their children to boarding schools by paying tuition fees

monthly. However, the students bear the risk of being expelled from the school and being

discriminated against if the parents fail to meet the deadlines for paying off the fees. Three out of

four participants' responses revealed this challenge for displaced students in grades 10 and 11.

For example, a participant A stated:

> And for primary level students, they [IDP students] have access to education because it is
>
> free. Once they move to secondary level, they have more needs for their education.
>
> According to the landscape of Burma's education, boarding schools are very popular.
>
> People have the attitude that if they do not go to boarding schools, they will not be able to
>
> pass the matriculation exams. (Personal communication, 2018)

Along the same lines, participant B shared that displaced students' poor foundation in education

has made it more difficult for them to pass the 10th and 11th grades exams, and "there is actually

no hope for them to pass the exams" unless they are sent to boarding schools (Personal

communication, 2018). Finally, participant C contended that some displaced families at the camp

could not pay off their children's tuition fees at the boarding schools as their life was already

difficult by not having enough food to eat. As a result, "the displaced students' names were

mentioned in the list of not having paid the tuition fees and the students felt sad and inferior to go to boarding schools (Personal communication, 2018). This evidence suggests that the displaced students were caught in the crossfire of conflict, the system, and the state' s failure to uphold its responsibility to take care of their education.

The findings also showed that the displaced families confided in the volunteers about the difficulty and sometimes sought help from the staff for loans in the host communities. The NGOs tried to alleviate the financial hardship preventing students from accessing education given their own limited financial capacity. However, the findings suggested the organizations did not have a budget for that kind of educational need of the displaced children. For example, the participant A shared the following: "They tell this problem to us. Actually, it is not easy for us to help them that way. They have their educational needs. They ask for them, but we cannot just help every individual in the camps" (Personal communication, 2018). Similarly, the participant B stated:

> We heard the parents asking for loans in the communities. When we heard that, we told the organization that there was this kind of challenge in the camps. The foundation had no other budgets for education that time, but it had about MMK 800,000 (approximately USD 700). That money was equally split among the families who had 8th, 9th, and 10th grade students. This is the thing that really happened. (Personal communication, 2018)

When asked about the number of households in the camps, the participant said, "There are altogether 56 households. The number of children who are under eighteen is between 180 and 190. If we aggregate infants, I think it will be about 200 (Personal communication, 2018). Given the number of children, MMK 800,000 (USD 700) was not enough to help their children's education while the boarding schools charged MMK 500,000 (approximately USD 350) to just an 8th grade student for a fiscal school year.

Additionally, these NGOs provided in-kind assistance to the displaced students of grades 10 and 11. They hired volunteers and teachers to tutor the displaced students at night in the camps. The students had access to a large hall to study in groups. The volunteers helped them with their schoolwork. These were the students who were able to go to schools in GCA. However, one participant raised their concern that there may not be this kind of support for children's education at all camps in GCA in Kachin and northern Shan states (Personal communication, 2018).

Funding for education is noticeably limited compared to other pillars of humanitarian aid such as food and shelter which could lead to competition amongst education providing organizations (Rhoades, 2010). As Talbot (2013) pointed out, donor's misinterpretation of a long-term development such as education and a short-term relief effort like food and shelter could also result in limited or lower funding for education in emergency settings. However, in the displaced students' case in northern Shan and Kachin states, it might be the reporting to the donors by the staff and volunteers, and/or the organizations themselves. They may not have reported the real educational challenges of displaced children that may have resulted in donors not fully understanding the context and the challenges well.

My findings demonstrated how the limited access to education has put the burden on IDP students themselves: they were at risk of dropping out of schools; they were working to support themselves and their families; and they became migrant workers in neighboring countries. In addition, the findings also indicated that dropping out of schools and becoming migrant workers seemed to be the last option for the displaced students and families. Their parents tried to send them to charity schools and boarding schools run by religious institutions in big cities, though the number of students who joined those charity schools and boarding schools in big cities is quite low. As one participant said, "Some families have many children, so at that time, the families

decide to send one or two of them to schools run by charity organizations in Yangon" (Personal communication, 2018). All four participants based in Burma shared more or less the same perspectives on what displaced students went through as a result of not having enough money to go to boarding schools:

> Some displaced students become to realize that their parents have this kind of problem. We see them dropping out of schools to earn money to support the families. Consequently, it affects their future. There are some who go to China to work. This will make them slaves for China only. They can never be on their own. (Personal communication, 2018)

Without education, displaced students' future could be daunting for the families as well as for the communities and the country as a whole. As Talbot (2013) described, education is imperative not only in emergency settings but also in post-conflict settings so that a country or a region may not be dependent on the international community after the emergency period or when the crisis is over.

All four participants from Burma conveyed their concerns that the funding for education for IDPs was available; however, it was so limited that it did not help the displaced students effectively. They also expressed their worries that providing school supplies just once a year was not enough. The IDPs worried about the rainy season and winter to have access to proper clothing to go to schools comfortably.

As much as the need for more funding for education was one of the major challenges, the coordination amongst the humanitarian organizations in northern Shan and Kachin states was noted to be lacking. One participant sounded a bit irritated sharing their experience:

> I also see there are gaps and overlaps on the organizations' sides in supporting IDPs. I think there should also be a good coordination among NGOs and INGOs, too. NGOs and

INGOs have a challenge too. Some organizations have the same donors to implement

their humanitarian projects. Donors question them over the overlapping assistance to the

IDPs or the camps. I think it's also the reporting by the INGOs and NGOs. Because of

this, I also think the minimum needs are not even met for the IDPs. (Personal

communication, 2018)

This demonstrates the need for a clear communication among the key stakeholders of donors,

NGOs, and INGOs. The communication entails context specific information about the displaced

students and the nature of schooling they need. Lack of direct communication with the IDPs

about what they really need, how much they need, and how often they would need assistance for

the IDP children's education further exacerbates the challenges IDPs are already facing, as

donors might not be well informed about the IDPs' needs with respect to their children's

education.

Conclusion

The challenges humanitarian organizations face in education delivery to IDPs are

manifold and region specific. As far as the provision of education is concerned for IDPs in

northern Shan and Kachin states, access to IDPs is the main challenge and makes it difficult for

national and international humanitarian organizations to ensure education access for IDPs.

Furthermore, the different geographic displacements of IDPs in government controlled areas

(GCA) and non-government controlled areas (NGCA) makes situations more difficult and

challenging for humanitarian organizations to operate in. Comprehensive data sets for IDPs in

GCA and NGCA may not be accessible or attainable by international organizations. Local and

national humanitarian organizations may be able to help in this regard, but they may face

challenges and constraints, too.

All these challenges are compounded and complicated by Burma's internal politics among the government, the military, and the ethnic armed groups. Furthermore, the internal politics has hindered INGOs' efficient response to help IDPs and has put INGOs in a challenging power dynamic among the government, the military, and the armed groups. Although the government may want to help and coordinate the education provision services with national and international organizations, a prominent international humanitarian organization's direct engagement with the military suggests that the government has little power over the permission of access to IDPs in NGCA. Although the government has shown its willingness to help IDPs and their children's education in GCA, the findings suggest that it has to rely on the local and national organizations to gather data on IDP students at the camps.

Finally, even for the IDPs who are in accessible places, education may stand second for humanitarian organizations and donor communities in order to address IDPs' basic needs such as food, shelter, and health care. When the displaced students' education is addressed in some camps, their educational needs may not be met due to limited funding the humanitarian organizations have for education, lack of collaboration among NGOs and INGOs to inform donors of the reality on the ground, and the nature of the education system that affects displaced students in Burma.

The Way Forward

International humanitarian organizations and international donor's communities are key stakeholders that can alleviate numerous challenges that IDPs, more specifically children, are experiencing in northern Shan and Kachin states in Burma. Though the internal politics of Burma may remain challenging for international humanitarian organizations, it should not prevent them from helping IDPs effectively. Therefore, I have identified a number of

recommendations that international humanitarian organizations might consider helping IDPs in northern Shan and Kachin states.

Concerted advocacy to assist IDPs needs to be a continuing process both for international and national humanitarian organizations despite the existing challenges in the provision of education to displaced children in northern Shan and Kachin states. In addition, it is important to note that refugees were once IDPs who were not given "much-needed attention," "protection," and "support" that would make them stay in their own countries of origin which was what they really wished for (OHCHR, 2017, p. 3). The findings from this inquiry show that IDPs in northern Shan and Kachin states do not receive enough support to thrive in their country. They have limited access to education and face difficulties continuing their education. Without a proper education, IDPs may have fewer opportunities to be qualified for decent paying jobs in their home country and may not be able to support themselves and their families. Some displaced students have already dropped out of school and are working in neighboring countries, like China. They have become migrant workers and/or refugees, and their rights to be protected may not be guaranteed. Therefore, concerted advocacy efforts to help IDPs obtain a proper education must be at the forefront of humanitarian organizations' agenda in Burma.

In addition to the concerted advocacy for IDPs in northern Shan and Kachin states, given the role national and local humanitarian organizations play, it is also important to recognize the potential capacities, abilities, and impacts these organizations may bring into the wider humanitarian work of helping IDPs, such as access to credible data and data collection in general. Furthermore, national and local humanitarian organizations can help international humanitarian organizations to conduct context specific qualitative and quantitative research and produce reports on the movement of IDPs or the type of displacement in northern Shan and Kachin states. A participatory approach should also be considered by involving national and

local humanitarian organizations to assist IDPs effectively because they have contextualized knowledge of different regions of the country and, most importantly, the politics of Burma. In considering the participatory approach, training of national and local humanitarian organizations on technical know-how for internal displacement should be integrated. Helping national and local humanitarian organizations to effectively manage their work is key to assisting IDPs both in NGCA and GCA in northern Shan and Kachin states.

Internally displaced persons' participation is a surefire way to provide credible evidence about their real needs and concerns for themselves. Instituting internally displaced persons' participation in the field of humanitarian work must become a norm (OHCHR, 2017). As the United Nations Secretary-General stated:

People are the central agents of their lives and are the first and last responders to any crisis. Any effort to reduce the vulnerability of people and strengthen their resilience must begin at the local level, with national and international efforts building on local expertise, leadership and capacities. Affected people must be consistently engaged and involved in decision-making, ensuring participation by women at all levels. Legitimate representatives of communities should be systematically placed at the leadership level in every context. People must also be able to influence decisions about how their needs are met and rely upon all actors to deliver predictably and transparently. (OHCHR, 2017, p. 11)

With the newly established norm of IDP participation, IDPs' voices in northern Shan and Kachin states will be heard. They may be able to learn to respond to their displacement and develop coping mechanisms or strategies to reach out for help. In addition, centering the internally displaced persons' participation in humanitarian organizations' work can help IDPs positively influence the decision-making process of the humanitarian organizations and donors. Their real

needs can be met and reflected in organizations' reports, such as the need for funding for 10th

and 11th graders at the camps in northern Shan and Kachin states. The participation of IDPs can

be one practical aspect that national and international humanitarian organizations can integrate in

order to help IDPs in northern Shan and Kachin states in Burma's complicated political context.

Although these recommendations informed by my findings are offered to international

humanitarian organizations working with IDPs in Burma, they may be relevant to other conflict-

affected areas where IDPs face similar challenges in accessing education.

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Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Guide for NGO Professionals

Research Questions: 1) How do NGO professionals address the challenges they experience in the provision of education to internally displaced children in Burma? 2) How do NGO professionals ensure the provision of a quality education for internally displaced children in Burma?

1. IDPs vs Refugees (legal status) and Education in Emergencies (EiE)

    a) Can you share your experience working in education provision to IDPs and refugees?

    b) What type of education do IDPs and/or refugees receive in their communities?

    c) Does their status as IDPs and refugees enable or hinder them in receiving education?

        i. If so, how?

        ii. Can you give me an example?

2. Provision of education to IDPs (in Burma): Community-based Education Programs

    a) Can you share your experience working as a teacher/trainer/coordinator in the provision of education to IDPs?

    b) Can you tell me about the education services provided to displaced children by your organization?

        i. What kind of education services are provided? (Can you give me an example?)

        ii. Who is delivering education to IDPs/refugees?

    c) Can you describe a particular situation that you think is enabling or hindering the provision of education to IDPs?

        i. What are your thoughts on that particular situation?

        ii.   How have you been able to address that situation?

  d) What are the challenges that your organization (as a local organization) may have experienced in providing education to IDPs?

        i.   How has your organization address those challenges?

        ii.   What other challenges may your organization (being a local organization) have faced in addressing those challenges?

3. Challenges in the provision of education to IDPs (funding, accessibility, government imposing restrictions, credible data sets of IDPs, etc.)

  a. What are some of the challenges you experience in delivering education to IDPs?

        i. Can you give me an example of those challenges in a specific situation?

  b. How have you been able to address those challenges?

  c. What specific challenges have you experienced in your interaction with the national government?

  d. What recommendations would you like to share with other NGO professionals working with IDP education delivery?

  e. Is there anything else you would like to share about what we have discussed today?

  f. Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

Consent Form to Participate in a Research Study

Non-Clinical, Minimal Risk Study

Education Provision to Internally Displaced Children in Burma

Researcher: Nang K Thwe

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Nang K Thwe. Before you agree to

participate in this study, you should know enough about it to make an informed decision. If you have

any questions, please ask the researcher.

The research study will explore the perspectives of challenges experienced by education providers in

the provision of education to internally displaced children in Burma.

Participation in this study will involve the following:

- ● Individual interviews with the researcher

  - Each participant will participate in a one-on-one, recorded interview with the researcher.

Each element of this study will require (rough estimate):

- ● Individual interviews with investigators: **30 minutes - 1 hour**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Should you have any questions about the study

procedure or wish to decline participation, please indicate so below. Also, please indicate your

preference between the following two items by marking one with an X.

  - I consent to having my voice recorded during individual interviews.   ____

- I do <u>not</u> consent to having my voice recorded during individual interviews.   _____

Research study participants may experience feelings of embarrassment or self-consciousness during individual interviews. Stakeholders may be uncomfortable with the idea of being recorded during interviews.

Stakeholders may not benefit immediately or directly from this study. However, the findings of this study may help contribute to ensuring access to quality education to internally displaced children in Burma.

Information gained from this study will be kept confidential to the researcher. Data will be stored on a password-protected laptop and made accessible only to the researcher. No identifying information will be used in the final published study; the researcher will create pseudonyms for all stakeholders and make only indirect reference to potential identifying information such as age or country of origin.

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher's capstone advisor Dr. Alla Korzh at alla.korzh@sit.edu or 802-258-3395 and Nang K Thwe at +1 302 419 5311. If you have any questions about your rights as a research study participant, you may visit the World Learning website and check its policies on Human Subjects Research.

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without loss

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of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data

collection is completed, your data will be removed from the data set and destroyed.

Sign below if you agree to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to

keep.

Participant's signature _____ **Date**

_____

Researcher's signature _____ **Date**

_____