



December 2019

Border Crossings

A Newsletter of the Brackett Refugee Education Fund



Eh Thwa, Founder of the Community Schools Program

Eh Thwa was educated in Burma. She was a teacher in the Sho Klo Refugee Camp and met the Bracketts in the mid-1990s. She was soon working at Dr. Cynthia's Clinic and was interested in delivering education aid along with the back pack medical workers organized by the Clinic. The Bracketts encouraged her in this.

In 2001, Eh Thwa wrote a proposal to fund Loe Khee School in Burma, where there were two teachers working without pay and 35 students from kindergarten to grade 2. BREF paid for the teacher stipends and school supplies. In 2002, two more schools were added and each year the number of schools increased as funding increased, from BREF as well as other donors.

We share excerpts from her report.

The Community Schools Program (CSP) is a community-based organization that is run by the local people of the community, providing education to children within some of the poorest and most disadvantaged areas of Burma/Myanmar.



2019 Annual Appeal Campaign Update

As of November 21, 2019, we have received \$132,514, excluding directed gifts. We need about \$95,000 more to match last year's giving. If you haven't given yet this year, we invite you to contribute to BREF's education projects. Thank you.

Eh Thwa's Report Continues...



The Community Schools Program has become a beacon of hope for the education of children in villages that have been affected by war and conflict over many years. Previously, the schools were run by parents from the villages that the schools served. However, the schools lacked basic necessities and teachers worked without pay as there was no funding from the government.

Eh Thwa facilitates annual meetings for school representatives, researching ways of improving the program, including increasing access to water and sanitation, constructing suitable school buildings, promoting personal and social development within the family and helping prepare children to take on community responsibilities in the future. They provide school materials and personal hygiene supplies.



In the 2019-2020 school year, the CSP supported 34 schools; these include 26 primary schools, six middle schools and two high schools, a total of 3,585 students and 212 teachers. BREF supports six of the 34 schools.

Teacher Saw Nelson

Teacher Saw Nelson is from Saw Bwe Dern village and after he finished middle school, he came back to his own village to be a teacher. He has been a teacher for 39 years and also served as Principal. Today at 69, he teaches English and Math in 5th to 7th standard.

He likes to sing the songs and he teaches the students on the weekend as well. He has four adult children with families. He lives with his daughter and family as his wife passed away. He speaks Karen, Burmese and English. He is very healthy and likes to be with the children.



Student Saw Pah Sip

Saw Pah Sip is from Ta Part Khee village and his parents work as farmers in the plantation field. He has five siblings and he is the eldest child in the family. There is no school in his village. Since he was young, he would walk 45 minutes to go to a nearby village to attend school. When he arrived back from the school he had to cook and pound the rice because his parents came home after dark.



He moved to Saw Bwe Dern Middle School. It would take him one and half hours from his own village to Saw Bwe Dern School. On the way to school he passes through a forest, climbs a mountain and crosses the river. In the rainy season, he has to wait for the water level to go down to be able to go to school or return home.

He is trying very hard even though he has to work hard at home after school. Last year, his parents wanted him to leave school and help in the plantation field. Saw Pah Sip passed the 7th standard from Saw Bwe Dern Middle School and moved to Day Bu Noh High School.

“I have to explain to my parents in good manner and I told them about the right I should have. The children have the right to go to school and study. I would like to become a health worker and one day be able to help my community. I hope that God will arrange for me in the better way.” says Saw Pah Sip.

Student Naw Shane Htoo

Naw Shane Htoo is from Lay Kwel Lor village. She has three brothers and four sisters. Her parents work on a farm. When she was 13 years old, her parents stopped her from studying. She begged them to send her to school but they did not.

Later she left home to another village and stayed with other people so she could attend school. She helps the family with whom she stays in the house as much as she can – cleaning, washing, cooking and looking after their children as they send her to school. She visits her parents when she has school holidays, but she says she feels the tension as they do not support her or encourage her.

Her favorite subject is English. She likes to play volleyball. In the evening, she reads 6:30 till 9 pm. Then she goes to bed, as she wakes up at 4 am to cook and do the housework before the breakfast, and then go to school.

“Thank you very much, Brackett Foundation who support Saw Bwe Dern middle school so that I can get free school and other supplies for attending the school,” says Naw Shane Htoo.



The Brackett Refugee Education Fund, established in April 1997, is a small not-for-profit foundation organized to help educate refugees. Currently the Fund is concentrating its efforts on refugees from Burma in India, Thailand and Bangladesh. Our trustees are Sally Brackett (Chair of the Board), Russell Brackett (Executive Director), Dianne Becker, Elizabeth Brackett, Penelope Brackett, Paulo Flor, Melinda Jackson, John Littleton and Mark Sommer. The Fund has 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, EIN 16-1523586. It seeks support from friends, family and foundations. In order to make most efficient use of the money it receives, the Fund has adopted the following policies:

- All administrative and communication costs will be supported by the trustees;
- Living and travel expenses of trustees and volunteers, while on business for the Fund, will be donated by themselves;
- The Fund will not sell or give away the names and addresses of any of its contributors;
- Although the Fund is happy to receive contributions at any time, only one fundraising campaign will be made each year;
- The Fund has no paid employees, so administrative and fundraising expenses are very low, typically less than 4% of total expenditures; and
- Because the trustees donate far more than required for administrative purposes, every dollar you donate will go towards helping people receive an education.

