



Spring 2022

Border Crossings

A Newsletter of the Brackett Refugee Education Fund



Annual Report 2021

by Kathy Sabino and Melinda Jackson, BREF Trustees

The continuing COVID-19 pandemic as well as the military coup in Myanmar increased challenges faced by students and teachers. Most students were able to continue their studies online, some from within



Burmese language books.

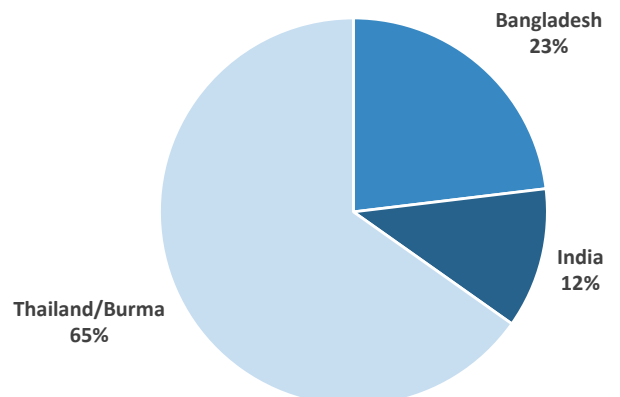
Myanmar. BREF distributed a total of 137 scholarships in 2021. We had 36 university graduates and four graduates in diploma courses. Eighty-seven scholarships were at the university level with 44 students taking courses taught in English, the remainder in Thai. Education and nursing majors continue to be predominant, with an increasing number of students

majoring in business and engineering. There were also 46 grants for vocational and high school study with 13 graduates.

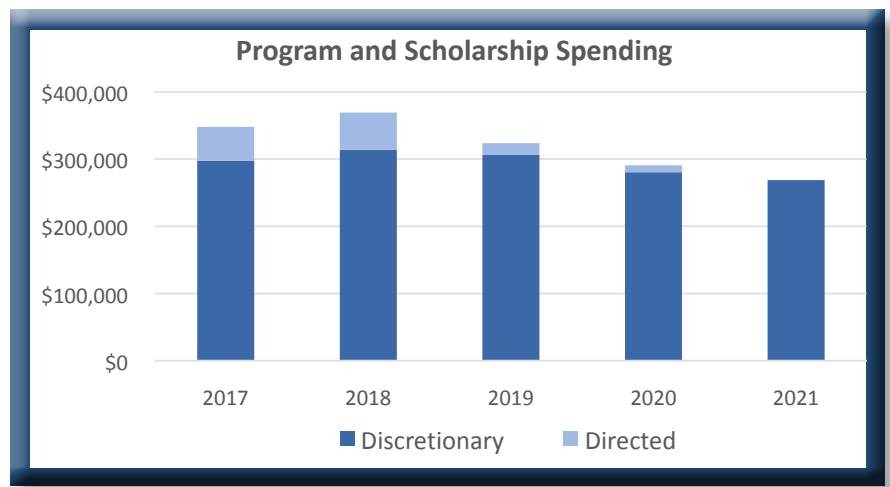


Flowers on opening day.

Geographical Distribution of Programs/Scholarships (2021)

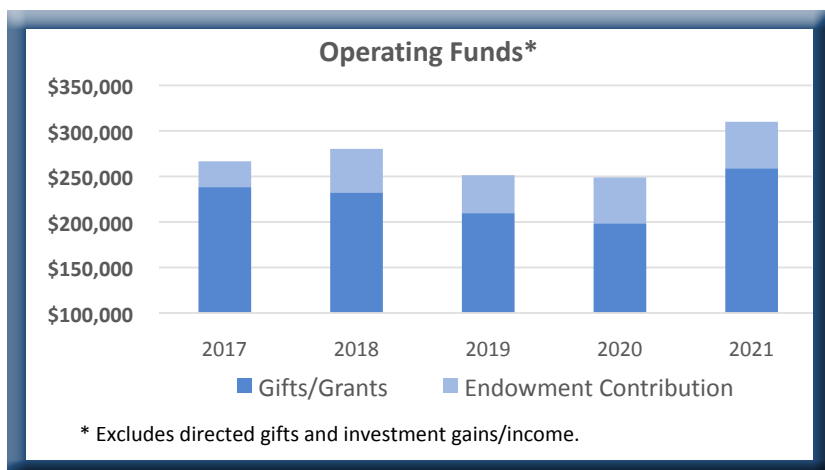


BREF directly supported language and computer programs for high school students in the Mae La refugee camp, at Nai Soi outside of Mae Hong Son, as well as a teacher and community leader training program for those returning to work in Burma. At the Mae La camp we support a program linking English language students virtually with volunteer ESL teachers. BREF also contributed to two post high school programs to prepare students inside Myanmar and from the refugee camps for university education taught in English, in Thailand. We continued some support of the migrant school at the Mae Tao Clinic.



Teacher's training on digital equipment use and USB drive distribution.

In cross border aid, COVID-19 and political unrest have challenged education in IDP (internally displaced people) areas. Local communities have worked hard to keep their schools open. We supported nine elementary and middle schools serving 756 children in IDP areas where there is no support for education



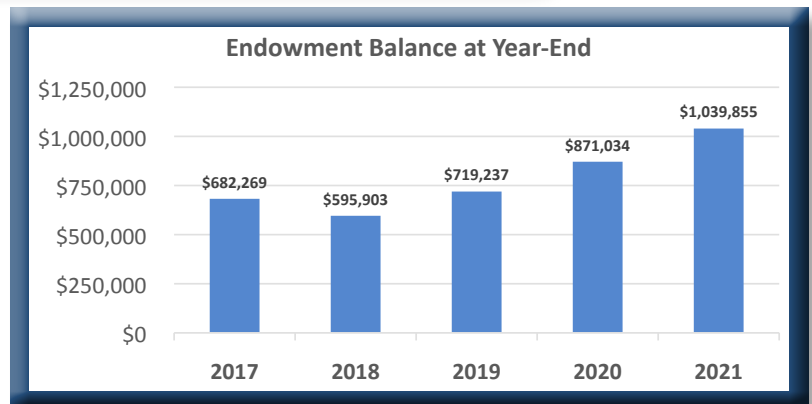
from the government. In the months since the coup, some of these schools temporarily closed or relocated due to government shelling. One of these is a unique animist school where Karen traditions are taught by elders from the community. In Bangkok we supported a program that provides English and Thai instruction and basic computer skills to migrant Burmese workers. COVID-19 and the February 1 military coup in Myanmar caused an influx of new refugees and



educational disruptions. These factors impacted all of the programs that we've supported in various ways but in almost all cases, programs have been preserved and adapted. It is a testament to the dedicated educators that BREF works with that progress continues.

Welcome back, Kutupalong.

BREF supports educational assistance to Rohingya refugees through Children on the Edge (COTE). COTE is the only agency in Bangladesh translating government-approved curriculum for Rohingya refugee children into their own language, as well as offering meaningful lessons through a visual medium. As the COVID pandemic eased, COTE learning centers began to re-open in September of 2021 serving approximately 7,500 children.



School bag distribution.

As the Bangladeshi government has begun a process of relocating Rohingya refugees to a silt island in the Bay of Bengal, Basan Char, COTE has been invited to set up ten learning centers on the island. This is another indication of COTE's commitment to address the needs of the most marginalized children.

BREF distributed a total of 455 scholarships to support education for Chin refugees from Burma for the 2021/22 academic year. Most of the students live in the Indian state of Mizoram. Students' eligibility was based on the ability to show significant financial need, as well as academic ability and drive.

One hundred and ninety-five scholarships were given to children from grades K to 7 whose parents – many of whom earn menial wages – appreciate relief from the costs of textbooks, uniforms and exam fees. One hundred and fifty-five scholarships were directed towards high school students (Grades 8 to 10), and 45 of these students are completing Grade 10 in 2022, becoming high school graduates. There were 77 university preparatory-level (Grades 11 and 12) scholarships distributed. Forty of these students are graduating from Grade 12 in 2022 and will be able to apply to university programs anywhere in India.

BREF financially supported 28 students in their university studies. Students who were awarded these post-secondary scholarships would have been unable to – or would have found it highly difficult to – obtain the funds necessary to study at a university level. Nine of these university students are graduating in the 2021/22 academic year, several with Bachelor of Science Degrees (Geology, Botany, Nursing), Bachelor of Technology Degrees (Civil Engineering, Computer Science), and two students earning a Bachelor of Arts in Commerce, a Bachelor of Pharmacy, and a Bachelor of Medicine (MBBS).

BREF and COTE

Children on the Edge (COTE) is a non-profit organization that works on behalf of some of the most marginalized children around the world. BREF and COTE have been working together for a number of years now because we believe in the great work they do. COTE currently works with over 16,000 children in Bangladesh, India, Uganda, Myanmar and Lebanon and with over 30 years of experience they have been able to transform the lives of thousands of children. We support COTE as they adapt their preschool education program in 12 camps along the Burma/China border due to the military conflict.



Greenroom recording for Moja Kids.

One of the high interest areas right now is in Bangladesh, working with Rohingya refugees from western Myanmar. COTE has done a lot of important work in this area and BREF is interested in looking into opportunities to expand more into this area.

In the world's largest refugee camp, Kutupalong in southern Bangladesh, COTE has sparked the interest of the children by creating Moja Kids, a virtual newsletter where the children work together to create and share their own fun packed videos. The



Children attending an enclave school operated by COTE.

children featured in these videos become “famous” among their classmates when they watch the videos in their class. They say “Look! That is our Urmi but she is just like a television news presenter!” The excitement around Moja Kids is infectious. With the school closures and the children stuck at home for such a long time due to the pandemic, it’s fantastic to see them back in school and inspired about education. You can watch Moja Kids and find out more about COTE by visiting their website at childrenontheedge.org.

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 Russell Brackett (Chair of the Board and Executive Director), Dianne Becker, Brian Brackett, Penelope Brackett, Paulo Flor, Melinda Jackson, Jenny Jones, John Littleton and Kathy Sabino. 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.

