Pathways to a Better Future:
A Review of Education for Migrant Children in Thailand

A Situational Analysis of Two Communities: Bangkok and Mae Sot

WORLD EDUCATION

Save the Children®

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

BMA	Bangkok Metropolitan Administration
BMR	Bangkok Metropolitan Region
BMTA	Burmese Migrant Teachers' Association
BMWEC	Burmese Migrant Workers' Education Committee
CBO	Community Based Organization
CRC	Convention on The Rights of The Child
DEAR Burma	Development of Education and Awareness for Refugees from Burma
DLC	Denyela Learning Center
EFA	Education for All
ESA	Education Service Area
ESAO	Education Service Area Office
FRY	Foundation for Rural Youth
ILO	International Labour Organization
ILO-IPEC	International Labour Organization/International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LC	Learning Center
LPN	Labour Right Promotion Network
MECC	Migrant Education Coordination Center
MEII	Migrant Education Integration Initiative
MLC	Migrant Learning Center
MoE	Ministry of Education
MOI	Ministry of Interior
MOL	Ministry of Labour
MTBMLE	Mother-Tongue Based Multi-Lingual Education
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NFPE	Non-Formal Primary Education
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
OBEC	Office of the Basic Education Commission
ONIE	Office of Non-Formal and Informal Education
RBA	Rights-Based Approach
RTG	Royal Thai Government
SCI	Save the Children International
SNF	Suwannimit Foundation
SWS	School within School
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WE	World Education
VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past decade, Thailand has received millions of migrant workers from the neighboring countries of Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos, along with hundreds of thousands of their children. Migrants from Myanmar have made up the largest group of migrants, as they flee political and armed conflict or extreme poverty. The Thai government, international NGOs and aid agencies, and local community based organizations have invested significant resources and efforts to provide education services for migrant children, a basic right of child development enshrined in the Convention of the Rights of the Child and under Thai law.

However, the provision of education to the children of migrant workers from Myanmar living in Thailand varies significantly across the country. As a result of government subsidization and the Education for All (EFA) Policy, a growing number of children are enrolling in Royal Thai Government (RTG) schools. Despite this, there remain various barriers to migrant children enrolling and staying in school, such as difficulties with Thai language, and the inconsistent implementation of the EFA policy. A smaller proportion of migrant children attend school in learning centers (LCs) run by communities and civil society organizations, but this education is largely unrecognized, limiting the future endeavors of students. Furthermore, the lack of a governing body and standardization in these centers, coupled with financial instability, make this educational pathway precarious for students.

As a result of these and other factors, there is a need to assess the current educational opportunities available to migrant children in Thailand in order to identify best practices, determine the weaknesses of the system, assess the challenges being experienced by students and their parents, and understand the needs and vision of migrant communities. This will allow for evidence-based recommendations for the strengthening of education for migrant children in Thailand.

In order to reach these objectives, this research includes a review of data and existing literature as well as primary research in two migrant communities in Thailand: Bangkok and Mae Sot. A combined qualitative and quantitative approach was employed and involved the use of observation, as well as interviews, questionnaires, and focus group discussions with stakeholders, parents, students, teachers, and directors at RTG schools and LCs. Finally, a reading assessment was carried out with migrant children in LCs and RTG schools to assess how well students can read and understand a simple text, an essential skill to learn and stay in school.

The research finds that there is a crisis of education in migrant communities, with the majority of migrant children likely to be out of school. The report outlines a number of key findings (barriers) to education access for migrant children, including:

• A lack of accurate data on the number of migrant children which limits the extent to which service providers can accurately assess and meet the demand for education

• A limited understanding of opportunities and policies such as EFA amongst migrant communities and schools

• Language barriers

• Family economics and the cost of education

• Security concerns for undocumented students

The reading assessment also highlights some important challenges related to children's learning and the quality of education; some students in RTG schools are struggling to read in Thai, particularly those who do not receive adequate preparation or support. Finally, the research finds that although education service providers are collaborating to increase access to accredited programs only a minority of students are currently accessing these opportunities.

This report will analyze these issues in detail, and offers evidence-based recommendations with the aim of strengthening education for current and future generations of migrant children living in Thailand.

Surveys were conducted with students in order to better understand their schooling experiences (credit: WE).

CHAPTER I
Introduction

1.1 Background

Thailand has long been a regional hub for workers from neighboring countries, mainly from Cambodia, Myanmar and Laos, seeking employment opportunities. As of 2011, the total number of foreigners in the country was 3.4 million, with roughly 3 million of these employed, (IOM, 2011: xii). Thailand also hosts fluctuating numbers of individuals from Myanmar who have settled in temporary shelters along the Thai-Myanmar border as refugees, as well as within Thai communities as documented and undocumented migrant laborers. In 2013, data compiled from the Ministry of Interior (MOI) by the Mahidol Migration Center reported the total number of Myanmar migrants in the country to be 2,546,410, roughly 75% of all migrants in Thailand (Mahidol Migration Center, 2014: 5). In contrast, in 2014, the Migrant Working Group (MWG), citing data collected from the MOI, put the total number of migrants in Thailand at only 2,407,043, with roughly 1,544,244, or 64% from Myanmar. MOI estimates focus on registered migrants and don't include estimates of undocumented migrants, resulting in a significantly lower figure than that estimated by Mahidol Migration Center only a year before.

Decades of military dictatorship in neighboring Myanmar forced large numbers of people, primarily from eastern Kayin State, bordering Thailand, into the country as a result of political persecution, economic hardship, armed conflict and forced displacement. While the international community has applauded changes in Myanmar, sparked in 2010 by the first general election in twenty years, they have yet to result in large-scale return for the majority of Myanmar citizens living in Thailand. In recent years, however, the most commonly reported reason for migrating to Thailand was economic as opposed to security (IOM, 2013: 12).

As an increasing proportion of migrant workers are living and working in Thailand for extended periods of time, particularly those in border regions, they bring their families or send for their children when they are more established in Thailand (Huguet and Punpuing, 2005:31; Chanatavanich, 2007: 82). Research conducted by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in 2013 revealed that 41.3% and 31.9% of migrants from Myanmar had been in the country for zero to four and five to nine years respectively. While the vast majority (79.9%) did want to return to Myanmar one day, nearly half had no timeframe or plans to do so in the near future. This has resulted in an increase in the number of migrant children born in Thailand- probably at least 40% of the total population (VSO, 2013: 16; IOM, 2011: xv).

Children of migrants born in Thailand are not considered migrants themselves. Whether they are brought by their families or born in Thailand, all of these children represent a segment of the population that is often overlooked by migrant research and quantitative data on them is limited (Jampakay, 2011: 96; VSO, 2013: 9). In this report, the terms 'children of migrants' and 'migrant children' will be used interchangeably. The exact population of migrant children is difficult to identify due to the lack of registration for dependents of migrants who are not registered members of the labor force (IOM, 2011: xv). Without this data, migrant children in Thailand are largely 'invisible' and no official figure is capturing the true breadth of this population (VSO, 2013: 15). The population of migrant children in Thailand, as well as in Bangkok and Mae Sot, will be further explored in Chapter 5.

1.2 Provision of Education for Migrant Children in Thailand

Over the past three decades, as migrant populations grew in Thailand, so did the need to provide education for the increasing number of children accompanying their parents and those born in the country. In response, communities began setting up locally run schools, commonly referred to as migrant learning centers (MLCs) or learning centers (LCs), as they are not considered accredited schools by the RTG. Typically established spontaneously by experienced educators from Myanmar, there are 106 LCs across the country as of 2014 with approximately 18,000 students (FRY, 2014).

For many years there was no coordination among LCs, each representing the interests of the school management and surrounding community. There still exists no overarching governing body or vision of LCs and they vary significantly in structure and curriculum.

All LCs typically receive funding from the non-governmental and, in some cases, private sector. They are not recognized by the Myanmar or Thai governments and rely on outside funding. This, coupled with decreasing support for displaced communities in Thailand in recent years, has made LCs increasingly unstable.

Enrollment of migrant children in RTG schools has increased significantly since the 1999 adoption of the EFA policy and a 2005 cabinet resolution, which stipulates that non-Thais- regardless of their legal status- have the right to 15 years of free basic education. While only 5% of migrant children attend LCs across the country,

approximately 34% attend RTG schools (OBEC, 2013). Among the 133,346 migrant students reportedly attending RTG schools, the vast majority of which are enrolled at the elementary level, 56,328 are from Myanmar.

1.3 Purpose of Research

Despite growing enrollment figures, there remain significant barriers to enrollment and retention of migrant children in RTG schools. These stem from a lack of awareness, security concerns, financial constraints, language barriers, as well as perceived and real discrimination. These factors, along with the challenges experienced by educators to respond to this growing and unique need, make RTG schools an educational pathway that still poses difficulties to migrant children and their families.

Within LCs, quality varies significantly, further compounded by limited and unreliable resources. While many LCs provide education tailored to the needs of particular communities, they are, as a whole, unrecognized. Large numbers of students go through their entire basic education in LCs without receiving any formal form of accreditation, limiting their future mobility and employability.

This study was undertaken to better understand the complex situation for migrant children and as a direct response to the continued demand for accessible, quality education. World Education and Save the Children International, in partnership with Burmese Migrant Teacher's Association, Foundation for Rural Youth, Help Without Frontiers, Migrant Education Coordination Center, and Suwannimit Foundation embarked on a focused study of migrant education within two heavily populated migrant areas: Bangkok and Mae Sot. The aim of this research was to answer the question:

What is required for the migrant education sector to provide sustainable access and opportunity to quality and accredited education for all school-age migrant children?

While broad in scope, this question includes five key areas of focus: access, opportunity, accreditation, sustainability and quality. These areas were chosen based on identified challenges within the sector and frame the review of existing literature, as well as the original research conducted in Bangkok and Mae Sot.

In order to explore the aspect of quality in greater quantitative detail, an assessment of reading skills was conducted with children learning in the Burmese language in LCs, as well as students learning in the Thai language in LCs and RTG schools. The results from this assessment were analyzed alongside qualitative findings and used to assess how students are learning in different languages, as well as how factors at home or in the community may be impacting the quality of education.

Finally, the study sought to identify models of best practice within the sector to pilot or scale-up the vision and interests of parents, students and communities, and to determine challenges and shortfalls within the sector in order to make recommendations for improvement in the future.

The conclusions from this research do not necessarily apply to all migrant communities, their experiences, or needs in Thailand. Rather, this report will draw conclusions about the migrant communities in Bangkok and Mae Sot, and offer recommendations for the migrant education sectors within these communities, recognizing the differences between the two as appropriate.

1.4 Child Protection: A Key Cross-Cutting Issue

While the main focus of this report is education, child protection is closely linked to the issues discussed. It is crucial that there is an understanding of the pervasiveness of child trafficking and endangerment, and the role that education plays in promoting child protection and providing response mechanisms. The Thailand Ministry of Education (MoE) has a national policy for mandatory reporting of abuse, and curriculum in RTG schools includes a component on child protection (UNICEF 012). At the same time, Thailand has continued to struggle with child protection issues, especially with regard to undocumented migrant children who fall outside of any support systems. These children are targets for trafficking and exploitation, particularly in the construction, domestic service, fishing and sex industries (US Department of State, 2013; ILO-IPEC, 2010).

For children enrolled in schools, there are mechanisms such as child protection committees, teacher and director support, and parent teacher associations (PTAs), but for those out of school, there are few, if any, resources available. While is no consistent data on the numbers of migrant children, this study found that there is an estimated 60% of migrant children are not receiving any form of schooling. Outside of the school system, children are victim to the appeals of traffickers and subjected to some of the most dangerous work, such as construction and sex industries. One key informant currently doing research in this area reported that the vast majority of migrants living in Mae Sot have crossed the border without documentation. In 2013, IOM found that 63.1% of migrants in Tak province lacked any form of documentation (IOM, 2013). A lack of data means that there is no clear picture of the numbers and rates of child trafficking and exploitation within migrant communities. However, research and reports from the

field present a near universal awareness of the prevalence and manner of exploitation and trafficking. Numerous reports have cited Mae Sot as a source of child trafficking (IRIN, 2012). NGOs have anecdotal reports demonstrating the ways in which traffickers operate in the area, including strategies used to convince families to traffic their children and to accrue debt in order to pay for this. Police have identified that child prostitution is the main reason for the trafficking of children, with 20 girls in Mae Sot having been rescued in nine separate operations conducted by the police in 2014 alone (Child Protection Network, 2014). Furthermore, being out of school can increase the risk of sexual abuse. The majority of sexual abuse occurs in the household. If children are left home during the day when caregivers are at work, the risks increase for sexual abuse (Child Protection Network, 2014). It is thus clear that the crisis of migrant education access outlined in this report is not only an issue of the right to education, but is also closely linked with the urgent protection issues faced by migrant children in Thailand.

Children in school are at lower risk of exploitation, abuse, and other threats, such as human trafficking (credit: WE).

Meetings were held regularly with partners to discuss methodology and logistics of the research (credit: WE).

[1]. One of the contributors to this report, Patrick Kearns, in field research for the Youth Connect Foundation interviewed 135 migrant youth. All reported awareness of trafficking. One youth in particular stated that his parents had paid for his brother to be taken to Bangkok for work, and 3 years later they still had not heard from him once or knew how to contact him. In another instance, a young woman who was trafficked fled Bangkok and was brought back to Mae Sot. The traffickers, onbehalf of the employer, found the family of the girl and threatened the family unless they were able to pay off the "debt" for the initial transport to Bangkok.

CHAPTER 2
Methodology

2.1 Methodological Approach

The research study employed a deductive, mixed-methods approach of qualitative and quantitative methods, coupled with a review of existing literature and primary documents. Though a great deal of documentation has been produced by organizations working within the migrant education sector, the situation is constantly evolving and primary research was necessary to assess the current situation.

2.2 Research Context

Research took place in the greater metropolitan area of Bangkok, known as the Bangkok Metropolitan Region (BMR). Throughout this report, the terms Bangkok and BMR will be used interchangeably to refer to the research site. Research also took place in Tak Province in northwest Thailand on the border with Myanmar. Research in Tak Province focused on Mae Sot, with smaller samples also being gathered from Mae Ramad and Phop Phra districts. Unless otherwise indicated, Mae Sot will refer to all three districts.

BMR and Mae Sot were selected as research sites based on the interests of World Education, Save the Children International and their local partners, who work in these areas. The research is being conducted in order to develop evidence based recommendations and action plans that can be implemented and advocated for by these actors.

2.3 Research Sample

Representatives from CBOs, NGOs and foundations, UN bodies, and the RTG were selected for stakeholder key informant interviews. In total, 28 of these interviews were conducted in Bangkok, Mae Sot, and Chiang Mai. Data collection took place with LCs and RTG schools in each location, targeting directors, teachers, migrant students and their parents. LCs were selected based on geographical location, level of education, source and stability of funding, type of educational program being implemented, and the student and community characteristics- including ethnicity and mother-tongue language. RTG schools were selected based on geographical location, partnerships or relationships with migrant communities and institutions, and migrant student enrollment policies and figures. Students were selected based on their level, with a gender-balanced sample of students from the elementary (grade three), lower secondary (grade eight) and upper secondary (grade ten) levels sampled when available. Students were also selected based on their participation in accredited programs within LCs in cases where they existed. A full breakdown of the sampling is available in Appendix A and in the reading assessment chapter.

2.4 Data Collection

A range of data collection methods were employed to reflect the diversity of participants. Qualitative, semi-structured interviews were conducted with stakeholders, directors and teachers at both RTG schools and LCs. Three separate tools were created for students with consideration for their age and level of experience, generally taking the form of structured questionnaires. Parents were asked to complete a survey and participate in a focus group discussion with other parents. Finally, site observations of the physical surroundings and social interactions took place at each educational institution. For the reading assessment, the Save the Children International Reading Monitoring Tool was used, which involves a short background questionnaire and a short reading test, as explained in more detail in chapter eight.

2.5 Limitations

In both research sites, one of the most significant limitations of the research was the small sample gathered in RTG schools, and in the case of Bangkok, a small sample size overall. The major contributing factors included a dependence on contracted interpreters, challenges experienced contacting and confirming visits with institutions, and scheduling conflicts. There were issues of uniformity in the translation of interview guides, questionnaires, as well as during interviews- particularly with regard to education terminology. This sometimes resulted in misunderstandings, inconsistent answers, or unanswered questions.

While the use of a large team of field staff in Mae Sot allowed for efficient data collection, it also contributed to inconsistencies in data collection techniques. Furthermore, despite efforts to create tools designed appropriately for students in the study, it was immediately evident that tools based on current education level would need to be modified for the significant number of over-age students. Tools were instead used based on age rather than level. In general, the response to the study was positive and institutions and individuals were eager to participate with the exception of one parent focus group that did not take place.

CHAPTER 3
Two Migrant Communities in Thailand: Bangkok and Mae Sot

According to figures reported by the Mahidol Migration Center in 2014, Bangkok and Mae Sot are among the top three provinces with the largest number of migrants from Myanmar. This chapter will explore the two research sites of this study, focusing on the migrant communities living in each. Through an analysis of secondary resources, existing data, and findings from this study, the migration patterns, lived experiences, motivations and future goals of migrants living in these areas will be analyzed.

Key Findings

• The majority of migration to Thailand is economic and long-term: Most migrant workers and their families move to find employment opportunities. Migrant workers tend to stay for long periods of time and should not be assumed to be temporary workers. Movement patterns of migrants were quite varied; most migrants had not moved in the past five years, whilst others were highly mobile.

• Migrants and their children face difficulties in accessing social services, like education, as a result of limited Thai language abilities: A comprehensive plan to integrate migrant children into the Thai education system is needed.

• Statistical data on the population of migrant children is limited: Coordinated efforts for data collection and dissemination by relevant agencies are required.

• Students in LCs are limited in their mobility: A large proportion of migrant children attending LCs do not hold legal documentation, limiting their ability to access education and travel freely. Documentation and support for transportation should be provided to minimize these barriers.

• Migrant children attending a RTG school were more likely to be born in Thailand or arrived in Thailand at a younger age than their counterparts in learning centers.

• Migrants in Mae Sot and Tak province are more likely to experience economic hardship: Due to their lack of documentation, employment sector and the geographical context, migrants in Mae Sot and Tak province are more likely to earn less money.

• Recognition of learning and language are most valued in migrant students' education: Parents indicated the most important factor for their children's education was having a recognized diploma or certificate. Thai and international language skills were also deemed important by parents.

3.1 The Bangkok Migrant Community: An Introduction

The province of Bangkok and the surrounding areas have increasingly urbanized in the past two to three decades and are now known as the Bangkok Metropolitan Region (BMR). The BMR includes Bangkok and the surrounding five provinces of Nakhon Pathom, Pathum Thani, Nonthaburi, Samut Prakan and Samut Sakhon, with an official population of 14,565,520, (National Statistics Office, 2010).

The BMR has experienced a large influx of people from rural Thai areas and neighboring countries, such as Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar, to work in various agricultural, industrial and service industries.

For 2014, the MOI reports that the migrant population in the BMR is estimated to be 528, 657, with 525, 245 being documented and only 3412 being undocumented, and 302,026 registered migrants originating from Myanmar. These figures align with the vast majority of migrants who reported to hold full or temporary documentation in Bangkok, greater than any other sampled province by IOM in 2013. However, other estimates calculate a much higher number of undocumented migrants (e.g. Mahidol Migration Center, 2013).

Figure I: Type of Employment for Parents in Bangkok

- Factory Worker — 88%
- Childcare — 6%
- Shop/Sales — 6%
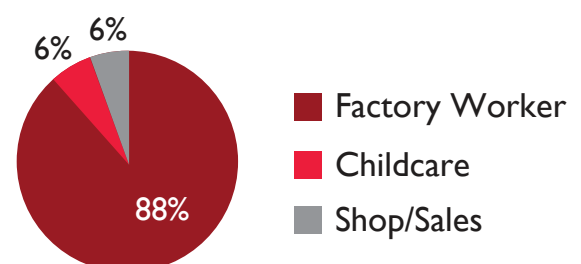
Table1: Migrant Population in the Bangkok Metropolitan Region (all countries), by province

Province	All Migrants			Registered Migrants from Myanmar		
	Documented	Undocumented	Total	Male	Female	Total
Bangkok	142,017	1,821	143,838	16,864	16,578	33,443
Nakhon Pathom	34,278	267	34,545	15,769	14,353	30,122
Nonthaburi	55,143	41	55,184	20,895	13,790	34,685
Pathum Thani	110,665	365	111,030	39,272	17,496	56,768
Samut Prakan	9,967	423	10,390	1,759	1,099	2,858
Samut Sakorn	173,175	495	173,670	75,656	68,494	144,150
5 Provinces Total	383,228	1,591	384,819	153,351	115,232	268,583
BMR Total	525,245	3,412	528,657	170,215	131,810	302,026

(Source: MOI, 2014)

Since the children of migrant workers are largely undocumented it is difficult to estimate the number of migrant children living in Bangkok province and the BMR. Unless they are utilizing health services or attending schools the numbers of migrant children in Bangkok goes largely unreported. Even so, if it is assumed that migrant children represent at least 5-10% of the total population (a very conservative estimate), we can say that there are tens of thousands of migrant children in the BMR, possibly many more.

For the parents surveyed in Bangkok, over 88% were employed in factories while a minority worked in shops or childcare. Monthly wages averaged the equivalent of $195 USD per month and the migrant workers lived in cramped housing conditions, some mixed with Thai communities (VSO 2013: 18). The majority of students surveyed in Bangkok reported that their family's economic situation was good or okay, at 20% and 48.6 % respectively, however VSO concluded that migrants in Bangkok had more difficulty in creating supportive systems in the urban environment and less access to a smaller number of NGOs and CBOs for assistance than other migrant communities in Thailand.

3.1.1 Migration to Bangkok

From the survey of students in LCs and RTG schools in Bangkok, 39 reported they were born in Myanmar and 12 reported they were born in Thailand- consistent with other similar surveys such as VSO's (2013:21). For those students who were born in Myanmar, the average age of arrival in Thailand was ten years old. Most of these students (97.4 %) stated that they followed their parents or families to Thailand for economic reasons.The average age of arrival in Thailand for students in LCs in Bangkok was 11 years,

while students studying in RTG schools arrived at an average age of eight years old. Additionally, of the 12 students surveyed who reported that they were born in Thailand, all but one was attending a RTG school.

For the migrant parents that we surveyed, the highest proportion identified that they had lived at their current residence for five to ten years. A smaller proportion of parents stated they had moved one, two, or more than five times in the past five years. For the majority of these moves, the reason was economic or related to changes in employment. When parents were asked how long they expected to stay in Thailand, most of the parents surveyed stated that they planned to stay in Thailand for less than three years. However, there was a great deal of diversity in responses from parents, with over 40% staying at least three to five years.

Most of the parents surveyed in Bangkok from four Thai public schools and three learning centers reported having temporary passports. The majority of migrant students in learning centers, 61.5%, reported that they didn't have any form of documentation, although a few mentioned that they had student identification cards.

Figure 2: Length of Stay in Thailand of Parents in Bangkok

- 0 - 2 years: 37%
- 3 - 5 years: 21%
- 5 - 10 years: 42%
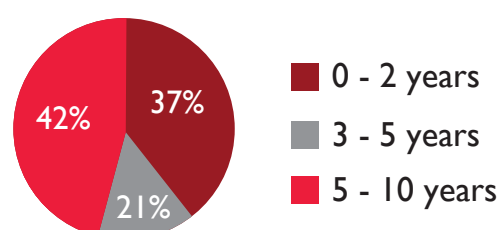
Figure 3: Number of Times Moved in Last Five Years for Parents in Bangkok

- No moves — 53%
- 1 Move — 17%
- 2 Moves — 18%
- More than 5 moves — 12%
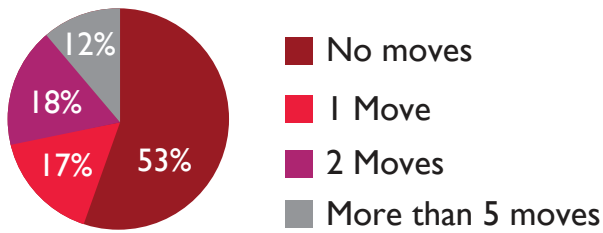
Figure 4: Expected Stay in Thailand for Parents in Bangkok

- No response — 6%
- 0 - 2 years — 59%
- 3 - 5 years — 6%
- 11 - 15 years — 6%
- 16 - 20 years — 6%
- 20 + years — 17%
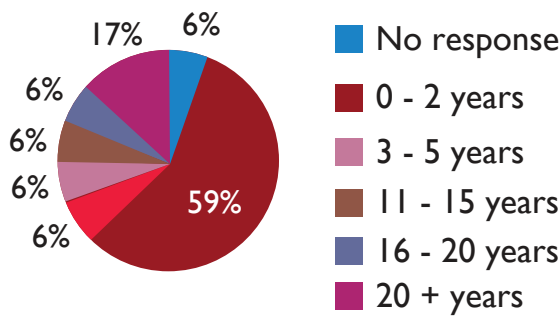
3.1.2 Interests and Motivations of Parents

Most of the parents surveyed desired that their children obtained university degrees (70.5 %). The remainder desired their children to finish secondary school (17.6 %) and some desired at least completing lower secondary school (11.7 %). Parents identified obtaining a recognized diploma or certificate as being the most important reason for their children's education. Thai language and international language ranked second and third in importance. From the focus group discussion with parents whose children were studying in LCs or RTG schools in Bangkok, the parents also mentioned that the level of education that their children achieved also depended on what the child wanted and was capable of pursuing. When asked why they selected their children's current educational institution, the migrant parents that were surveyed gave a variety of responses. The most frequent response was the location of the educational institution.

3.2 The Mae Sot Migrant Community: An Introduction

Western Tak province, and Mae Sot in particular, is a major hub for migrants from Myanmar, the majority of which come for economic reasons and predominantly work in agriculture, construction and the service industries (IOM, 2013:17). In June of 2014, the Mahidol Migration Center reported that Tak province is host to 235,820 migrants from Myanmar, the third highest in the country (MMC, 2014: 5). The area has long been home to displaced populations from Myanmar since they began fleeing the country in large numbers in 1984 as a result of conflict and political persecution.

Overwhelmingly, the most common employment sector among sampled families was agriculture, farming and animal husbandry. Childcare was the next most common employment sector, likely representative of the fact that the majority of parents in the study were female. IOM reported that 91. 5% of migrants in Tak province reported receiving less than the minimum wage of 300 baht per day, with 47.7% earning less than half of the minimum wage (IOM, 2013: 14, 17, 18). Nearly half of the surveyed students (47%) felt that their family's economic situation was okay, while very similar numbers of students reported that their family's economic situation was either good or bad.

Figure 5: Type of Employment for Parents in Mae Sot

- Agriculture/animal husbandry — 37%
- Childcare — 13%
- Restaurant work/cooking — 9%
- Cleaning — 7%
- General work/daily labor — 7%
- Factory — 4%
- Sales/shopkeeping — 4%
- Teaching — 4%
- NGO/CBO — 2%
- Other — 2%
- Not employed — 11%
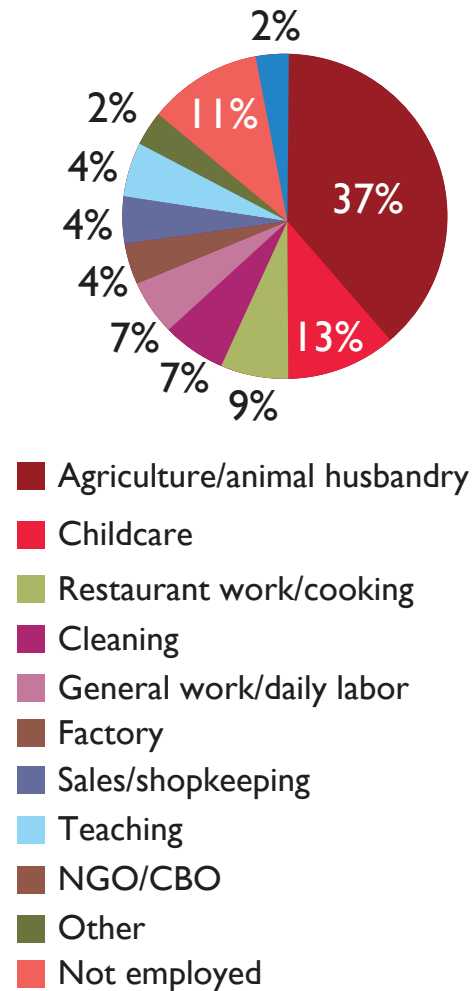
Without reliable national data on the total number of migrants in Thailand it is difficult to estimate the exact number of migrant children in Tak. However, like other border provinces such as Chiang Mai, the vast majority of parents bring their children with them when migrating to Thailand, indicating that the figure may be above the estimated 11% in national proportions (IOM, 2013:10; IOM, 2011:96).

3.2.1 Migration to Mae Sot

The majority of students sampled in Mae Sot (72%) reported having migrated to Thailand with their families, as opposed to being born in the Thailand. For those who were born in Myanmar, the most common age of arrival in Thailand was seven years old for elementary and lower secondary students. Students in upper secondary reported an average age of arrival significantly higher, at twelve years old. Of the 56 lower and upper secondary students sampled, just under half reported that they had come to Thailand for their parents' employment, while another 21% reported following their parents when they moved, but did not clarify why their parents had moved. A large number of students also reported coming to Thailand for educational opportunities.

Figure 6: Children's Reasons for Coming to Thailand (Mae Sot)

- Economics/parent's work
- Family moved for unknown reasons
- Education
- Bad situation in Myanmar
- Family/personal reasons
- Other
- No Answer
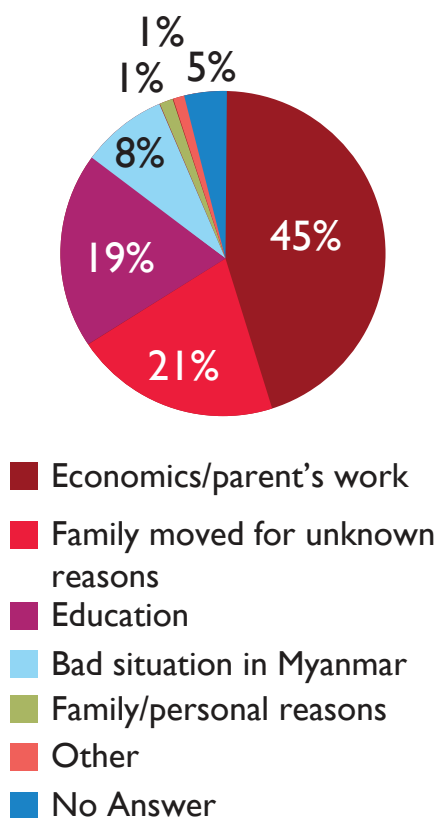
Migrant parents in Mae Sot originate from both rural and urban areas in Myanmar in equal proportions. Of the 48 parents surveyed in RTG schools and LCs in Mae Sot, the greatest proportion stated that they had been in the country for 6-10 years, which is in line with the majority of parents who reported being in Thailand less than ten years reported by IOM (2013:15). It is clear that migrants in Mae Sot have been in Thailand longer than those sampled in Bangkok. Unlike the vast majority of parents who held documentation in Bangkok, just under half of parents sampled in Mae Sot reported holding some form

of legal documentation. The majority of those in Thai schools held legal documentation, while only a small minority in LCs did.

Despite the multi-ethnic nature of Mae Sot, over half (55%) of parents reported that they could speak Burmese fluently, much like the proportion in Bangkok. In contrast to the 23% of parents who could speak Thai in Bangkok, only 9% of parents indicated that they were able to communicate in the Thai language, which may reflect that the Mae Sot migrant community is isolated from the local Thai community to a greater degree.

Figure 7: Length of Stay in Thailand for Parents in Mae Sot

- 0 - 2 years
- 3 - 5 years
- 6 - 10 years
- 0 - 10 years
- 11 - 15 years
- 16 - 20 years
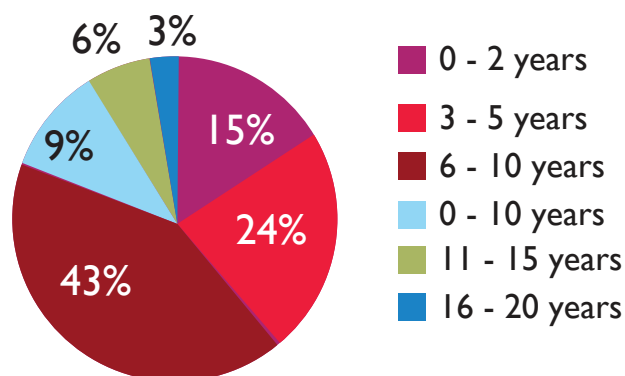
The majority of migrant families (71%) reported not having moved at all in the past five years, indicating a relatively high level of stability in Mae Sot, contrary to the common perception of migrant communities as almost universally highly mobile. Having said that, there are still 20% of migrants who appear to move fairly regularly. The largest proportion of migrant parents sampled in Mae Sot, 32%, reported that they expect to continue living in Thailand for twenty years or more, as opposed to the majority (59%) of parents in Bangkok who anticipated staying two years or less.

Figure 8: Length of Stay in Current Location for Parents in Mae Sot

- 0-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- 20+ years
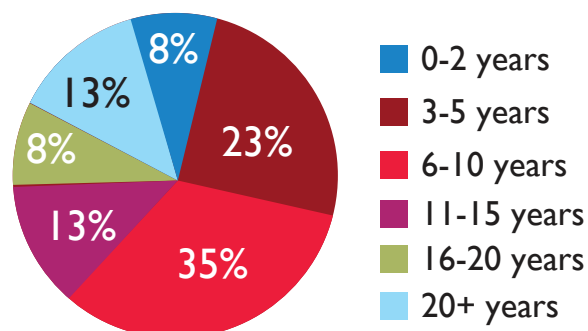
Figure 9: Number of Times Moved in Last Five Years for Parents in Mae Sot

2%
6%
13%
8%
71%

- Did not move
- 1 time
- 2 times
- 3 times
- 4 times
- 5 times
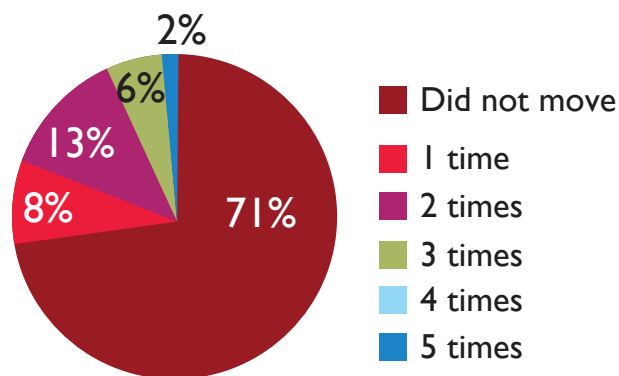
Figure 10: Expected Stay in Thailand for Parents in Mae Sot

2%
4%
9%
13%
21%
32%
9%
8%
2%

- 0-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- 20+ years
- Until situation is better in Myanmar
- Until children graduate
- Not sure
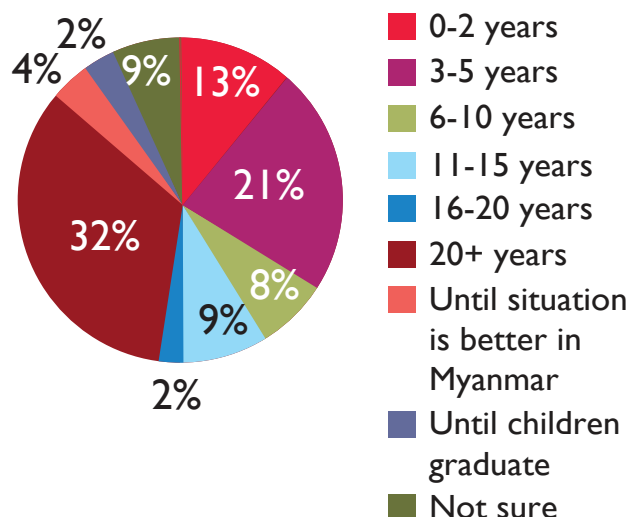
3.2.2 Needs, Interests and Motivations of Parents

Overwhelmingly, migrant parents in Mae Sot value education and have high aspirations for their children. Similar to findings in Bangkok, 83% of surveyed parents in Mae Sot reported that they wanted their children to complete a post-secondary education.

Recognition of learning was cited as the most important thing in their children's education by 35% of parents. Of all forms of accreditation, Thai and international recognition were the most favored. Thai, Burmese and ethnic language abilities were also identified by parents as being of importance, with Thai language skills being the most important among parents (27%), as they were among parents in Bangkok.

While recognition of learning was reported to be the most important element of education, only 14% of parents' chose educational institutions for this reason. Overwhelmingly, parents select their child's educational institution based on location, as was the case in Bangkok, as well as affordability. This suggests that despite valuing accreditation and language, parents choices are normally constrained by economic and logistical realities.

Figure 11: Parent´s Reasons for Selecting their Child´s Current Educational Institution

Was encouraged and assisted to come here	2%
Recognition of learning in Myanmar	4%
Good communication with teachers	4%
Quality teaching	4%
Good reputation in the community	6%
Unaware of other options	10%
Recognition of learning in Thailand	10%
Language of instruction	15%
Curriculum	19%
Affordability	35%
Proximity to home or work	50%
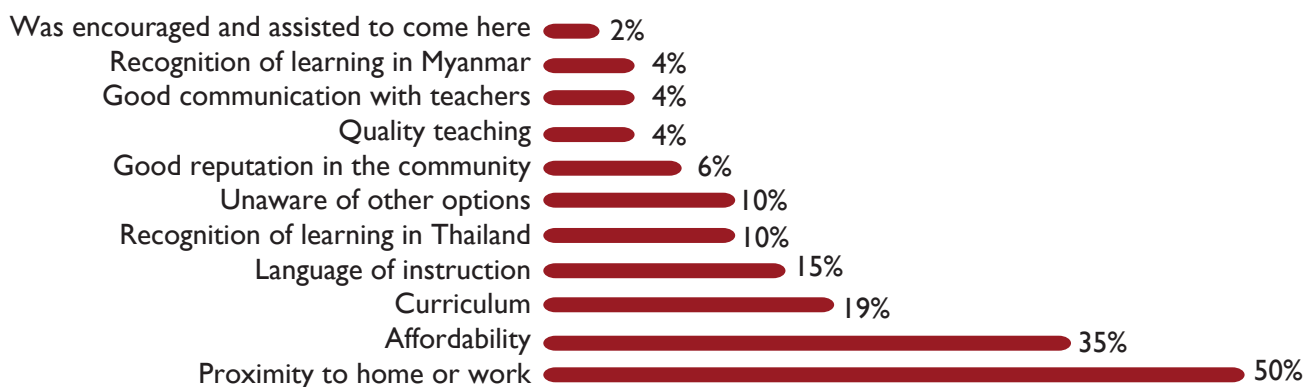
Figure 12: Most Important Factors in Children´s Education as Reported by Parents
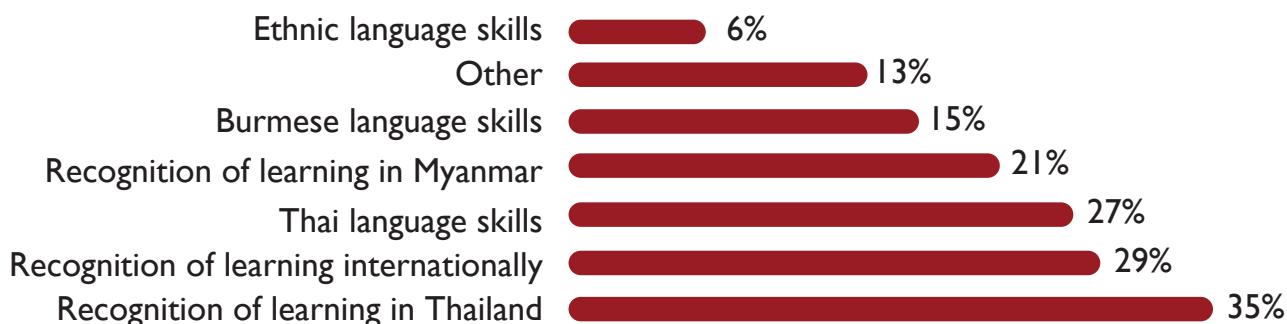
Ethnic language skills	6%
Other	13%
Burmese language skills	15%
Recognition of learning in Myanmar	21%
Thai language skills	27%
Recognition of learning internationally	29%
Recognition of learning in Thailand	35%

Analysis of Key Issues in the Provision of Education for the Children of Myanmar Migrants in Thailand: Access and Opportunity

Two of the key factors related to the provision of education for migrant children in Thailand are access and opportunity, concepts that are intrinsically linked. Access refers to the educational pathways that exist and are available for migrant students. Opportunity refers more to how likely it is that a child will be able to enroll and attend a program or institution. Access can be limited or denied based on the barriers that may stand in the way of an opportunity. This section will explore these concepts and how they relate to RTG schools, LCs, as well as transition and bridging programs in Bangkok and Mae Sot. Particular discussion points will include survival and drop-out rates, as well as awareness of educational opportunities among migrant students and their parents.

Key Findings

• The majority of migrant children in Thailand are not enrolled in school: According to estimates, over 60% of migrant children, estimated at over 200,000, are not registered in school. In Bangkok, there are almost certainly tens of thousands of migrant children out of school, particularly at the secondary level.

• The vast majority of students in LCs and RTG schools drop out before the end of elementary school: More data is needed to better understand the trends, but data estimates indicate that a very low percentage of migrant children, likely under 10%, are progressing beyond elementary school.

• Economics is a significant barrier for parents and their children: This is one of the key causes of children being out of school-subsidized education in RTG schools should continue which will allow for uninterrupted access to recognized education.

• The Education for All policy is inconsistently implemented across RTG schools: Some schools continue to require different documentation to enroll migrant students despite the law stating otherwise.

• Migrant communities are often unaware of their educational options and rights: Many parents were not aware of their children's legal right to an education in RTG schools or of the different NFE options available.

• The introduction of vocational training and NFE programs within mainstream education should be further investigated and piloted.

• Older students in BMA schools experience greater challenges than younger counterparts and are more likely to drop out by grade three or four, or when they are 13 or 14 years old: There is a need to facilitate and actively promote the integration of migrant children into non- formal education programs, especially for at risk and overage populations who find it difficult to integrate into mainstream primary education due to their age.

4.1 Introduction: Access to Education for Migrant Children in Thailand

In July 2014, the MWG, citing 2010 National Statistics data, reported that there were a total of 300,000 migrant children living in Thailand. Between June and October of 2014, a One Stop Service (OSS) for registration of migrant workers and their dependents took place in Thailand. During this time an additional 90,015 migrant children were registered, bringing the estimated total number of migrant children in Thailand to 390,015 (MOI, 2014), slightly above IOM's 2011 estimate of 376,845, or 11% of the total migrant population (2011: xv).

According to the Foundation for Rural Youth (FRY), in 2014 there were 106 LCs across the country. However, it is important to note that this list represents those LCs recognized by the government and Ministry of Education (MoE). As a result, the actual number of LCs is likely higher, as is the number of students attending learning centers. FRY estimates there are 18,312 students in LCs, representing only 5% of all migrant children.

Figure 13: Migrant Children in Thailand by Registration Period

- 93,866 24%
- 3,353 1%
- 60,743 16%
- 90,015 23%
- 142,083 36%

■ Birth Registration (2013)
■ Registered (2013)
■ Registered (July 2014)
■ One Stop Service Registration (October)
■ Undocumented
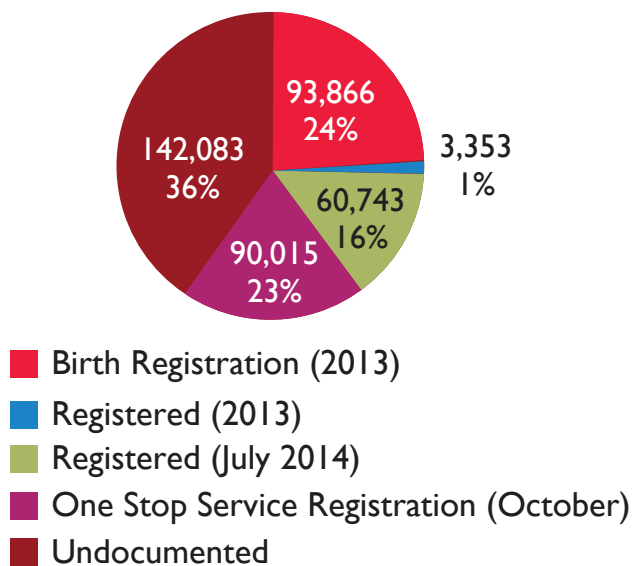
(National Statistics, 2010; MOI, 2014)

Despite the RTG's policy of EFA, only a small proportion of children of migrant workers are enrolled in RTG schools (IOM, 2011: xv; Vungsiriphisal, 2011: 4). Recent figures, calculated by the Office of Basic Education Commission (OBEC) in 2014, put the number of migrant children of all source countries in RTG schools at 133,346, or 34% of all migrant children, 43% of which are from Myanmar. This number represents the total number of children in MoE schools, excluding those enrolled in NFE programs or attending municipally managed schools, such as those under the Bangkok Municipal Area (BMA). Based on these estimates, one can infer that the remaining children, 238,402, or 61%, are attending non-MoE schools or unregistered LCs, or that they are out of school.

Thai-nationals thus still make up the overwhelming majority of students in RTG schools across the country at 98-98.5% of the total student body (OBEC, 2012, 2013, 2014). (Source: National Statistics Office, 2010; MOI, 2014; FRY, 2014; OBEC, 2014).

Table 2: Number of Learning Centers (LCs) and Students in LCs in Thailand

Province	Number of LCs	Number of Students in LCs
Thailand	106	18, 312
Bangkok	1	38
Chiang Mai	3	320
Chiang Rai	1	98 (updated 2012)
Kanchanaburi	4	780
Phangnga	12	520
Phetchaburi	1	35
Ranong	13	2,462
SamutSakorn	6	600
Tak*	65	13,459

(Source: FRY, 2014; *MECC, 2014)

Migrant children learn in a RTG school in Bangkok (credit: SCI).

Figure 14: Migrant Children Enrollment Rates in Thailand, 2013 - 2014
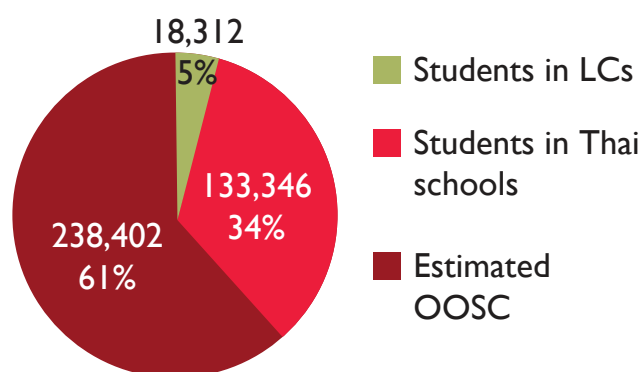
- 18,312 5%
- 133,346 34%
- 238,402 61%

■ Students in LCs
■ Students in Thai schools
■ Estimated OOSC

(Source: National Statistics, 2010; MOI, 2014; FRY, 2014; OBEC, 2013)

Year	Total Children in RTG School	Thai Students	Non-Thai Students	Myanmar Students	Percent of Students that are Non-Thai	Percent of Non-Thai Students from Myanmar
2012	7,355,041	7,255,108	99,933	49,677	1%	50%
2013	7,243,713	7,130,646	113,067	54,327	2%	48%
2014	7,114,804	6,981,458	133,346	56,328	2%	43%

(Source: OBEC 2012-2014)

Among all migrant children enrolled in RTG schools, 67%, or 43,124, of these are enrolled at the elementary level between grades one and six. A significant proportion of migrant children, 19,201 or 30%, are also attending kindergarten. In contrast, only 2,046, or 3%, and 82, fewer than 1%, are enrolled in the lower and secondary levels respectively (OBEC, 2013).

This gap in enrollment between the elementary and secondary levels may be the result of the recent increase in the number of migrant children attending RTG schools. For instance, between 2004 and 2012, Chiang Mai saw an increase from 2,859 in the whole province to a total of 11,270 in just two ESAO regions. During the same time period in Tak province, enrollment increased from 1,661 to 10,000 in just four of the nine districts (Nawarat, 2012: 2). If one assumes that the spike in enrollment began within the last six years, it could be that the majority of students have not yet graduated to secondary level.

However, since enrollment is largely believed to have begun increasing nearly ten years ago, it is very likely that this gap also reflects low survival and/or promotion rates among migrant students in RTG schools and indicates that there are a large proportion of students dropping out or repeating before or during secondary school.

Figure 15: Migrant Children Enrollment Rates in RTG Schools by Province Top Ten Provinces and Bangkok

Province	Enrollment
Chiang Mai	12,152
Tak	9,571
Chiang Rai	6,964
Kanchanaburi	4,445
Trat	1,989
Ratchaburi	1,915
Chon Buri	1,693
Mae Hong Son	1,611
Rayong	1,572
Ranong	1,530
Bangkok	28
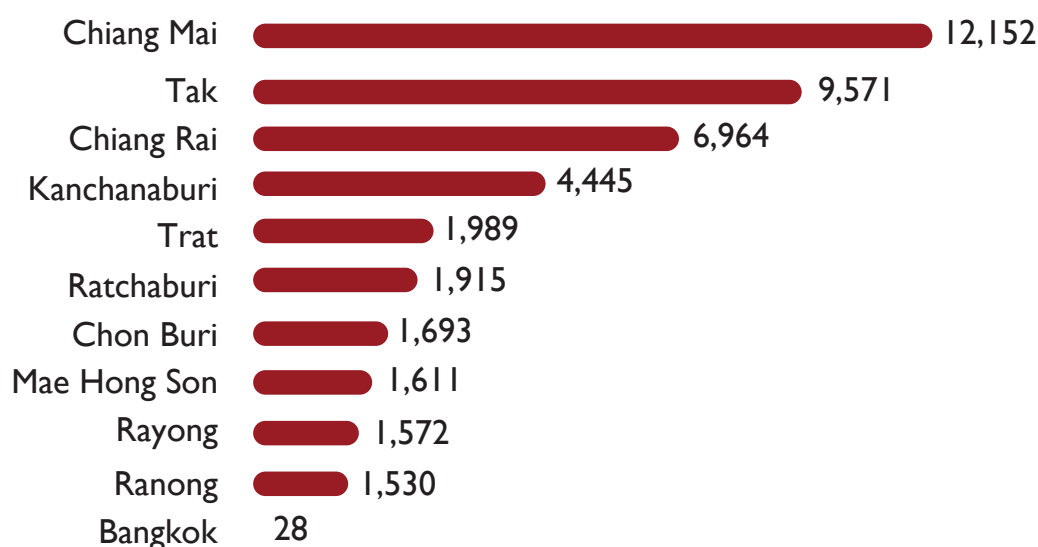
(Source: OBEC, 2013)

Figure 16: Migrant Children Enrollment Rates in RTG Schools by Level
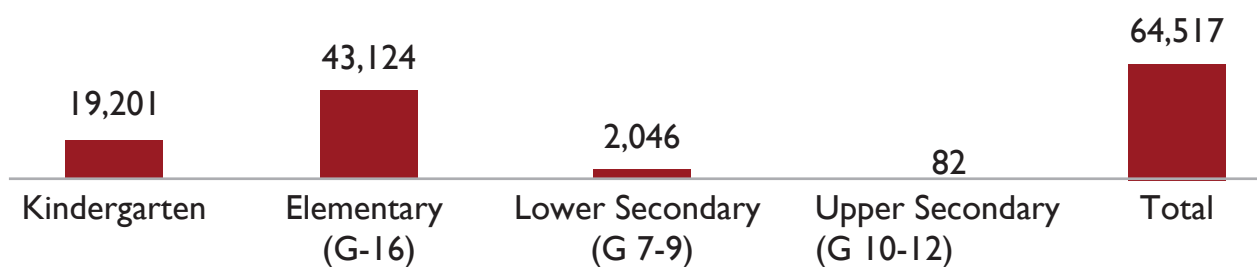
(Source: OBEC, 2013)

Note: Enrollment figures do not include the approximately 3,000 migrant students enrolled under the Office of Non-Formal and Informal Education (ONIE), and 1,000 under the BMA (Intathep, 2014).

It should be noted that the OBEC data on students by level are significantly lower than the more realistic provincial estimates of migrant enrollment figures also provided by OBEC in 2013, which reported the total enrollment rate to be 133,346. It is unclear why this discrepancy exists but it suggests that the data system is not entirely accurate. However, while these figures may not be reflective of actual enrollment rates, they provide a representation of enrollment at each level. Furthermore, according to 2013 OBEC data, while 100% of provinces had migrant children enrolled at the kindergarten and primary level, only 8% of provinces had migrant children enrolled at the upper secondary level. This suggests that while a growing number of migrant children may be entering the Thai education system, a large proportion are not making it to the secondary levels of their education.

4.2.1 Introduction to Access in Bangkok

The IOM (2011: 96) estimates that children represented approximately 11% of all migrants living in Thailand. Based on this calculation, it might be inferred that there are tens of thousands of migrant children in Bangkok and BMR. (MOI, 2014). In Bangkok province in 2013, the 28 students studying in RTG schools were studying at the kindergarten and primary levels, with none reported to be studying at the secondary level. For the BMR, OBEC recorded higher numbers, with 3,308 migrant children studying in RTG schools, with 1,036 students in kindergarten, 2,208 students in primary school and 64 students in lower secondary school. While this data provides an indication of the numbers of migrant children in RTG schools, they appear to underreport the number of migrant students in the Thai education system, based on reports such as VSO's (2013: 18) which found that for the migrant children who had access to education, Bangkok had a higher proportion enrolled in RTG schools compared to other locations in Thailand. Whether this is a result of statistical issues, such as different reporting agencies, i.e. MoE and BMA, is unclear.

4.2.2 Access to Learning Centers in Bangkok

The key service providers included in this case study of migrant education in Bangkok included 3 LCs, which will be referred to as BLC1, BLC2 and BLC3. These LCs differ greatly in terms of location, subjects or classes offered, language of instruction, and costs, but all seek to increase access to education for migrant populations in Bangkok. BLC1 and BLC3 are in Bangkok province while BLC2 is located in Pathum Thani province.

Both BLC1 and BLC2 accept children between the ages of five and 15 years old, although some exceptions are made if the younger child has an older sibling at the center. BLC1's programs are targeted at preparing and transitioning its students to RTG schools or NFE whereas BLC2 does not provide this option.

BLC3 targets working-aged students who are 16 years and older, providing them with opportunities to acquire additional language and computer skills for employment. They also offer a preparation course for students who plan to take the high school equivalency exam administered by the Myanmar Embassy in Bangkok, as well as functioning as a multi-ethnic social environment and support system for young migrant workers.

Both of these LCs also offer transportation services and lunch, for a nominal fee, to ensure that children attend consistently and to reduce the burden on parents' work schedules. This often impacts the learning center, such as early drop-off and late pick-ups of children since parents have to work.

Given that only one LC for migrant children was identified in Bangkok province, there are limited options for basic education for these children. Parents identified that being able to register their children easily without legal documents and birth certificates was the primary reason for enrolling their children in LCs. Many of the children and parents surveyed in this study cited the acquisition of Thai language skills as a primary factor for selecting BLC1.

Table 4: Number of Students and Teachers in LCs in BMR						
	Number of Students			**Number of Teachers**		
Learning Center	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**
BLC1	52	33	75	4	2	6
BLC2	43	21	64	4	0	4

Note: BLC3 is not included since their programs are not targeting the provision of basic education.

4.2.3 Access to RTG Schools in Bangkok

Schools under the jurisdiction of the BMA adhere to BMA policies and procedures. BMA schools also follow the national curriculum and policies set by the MoE. The enrollment of Thai and migrant children in the BMA schools included in our study are summarized in Table 6. The enrollment of Thai and migrant children in the BMA schools included in our study are summarized in the table below.

Table 5: Enrollment Rates in RTG School by Grade and Level in Bangkok, 2012	
Grade/Level of Education	**Number of Students**
Kindergarten (K1, K2, K3)	160, 177
Elementary (Grade 1-6)	435, 387
Lower Secondary (Grade 7-9)	226, 639
Upper Secondary (Grade 10-12)	268, 470
Total Secondary (Grade 7-12)	496, 109

(Source: MoE, Educational Statistics in Brief, 2012)

Table 6: Number of Students in BMA Schools in Bangkhuntian District			
	Number of Students		
	Thai	**Non-Thai**	**Total**
BMA1	1,132	77	1,209
BMA2	938	30	968
BMA3	494	11	505
BMA4	1,125	15	1,140

4.2.4 RTG School Preparation and Bridging Programs in Bangkok

In Bangkok province, BLC1 operates as a LC for school-aged migrant children to transition them into the Thai formal education system. Students are accepted regardless of legal status or documentation. Based on the child's age and Thai language abilities, children are placed in one of two levels: kindergarten or primary. Students study Thai, Burmese, English, math and life skills. One day a week is designed to be more flexible and provides the children with activities that give them an opportunity to play.

BLC1 collaborates with surrounding RTG schools, some for many years, and generally has a higher enrollment of migrant students. The teachers at these schools are more confident with more experience teaching migrant children. On average, a child will stay for approximately one year but no longer than two years to develop basic skills in speaking, reading and writing Thai. The next educational institution that the child will attend depends heavily on each child's readiness and the decision of the family as to whether to enroll in a RTG school. For children who are close in age to their peers, many opt to transition to RTG schools after finishing the preparation program at BLC1. For children who are older in age than their peers, they may opt to study in BLC1's NFE program on the weekend. This option enables older students to work as well as study. Other students may enter the workforce and not participate in any education programs.

4.2.5 Barriers to Accessing Education in Bangkok

Directors, teachers and parents surveyed in the BMR identified multiple issues hindering education access for migrant children.

Barriers in LCs

For parents who had children enrolled in an LC in Bangkok, expenses were reported to be the greatest challenge. Some LCs will provide benefits inclusive of the nominal fee such as lunch, as well as access to health care and limited social services. An LC can also assuage parents' fear of their children facing discrimination by teachers and other children in RTG schools.

For students themselves, the main challenges to obtaining an education varied depending on the age of the students. Many of the younger children may have not attended school previously and need to develop social skills to acclimate to school routines. The lower secondary aged students currently studying in LCs identified language of instruction as the major challenge, while the majority of upper secondary aged students identified transportation and security issues as the main challenge in attending school.

Figure 17: Demand Side Barries in Bangkok as Perceived by Lower Secondary Students in LCs
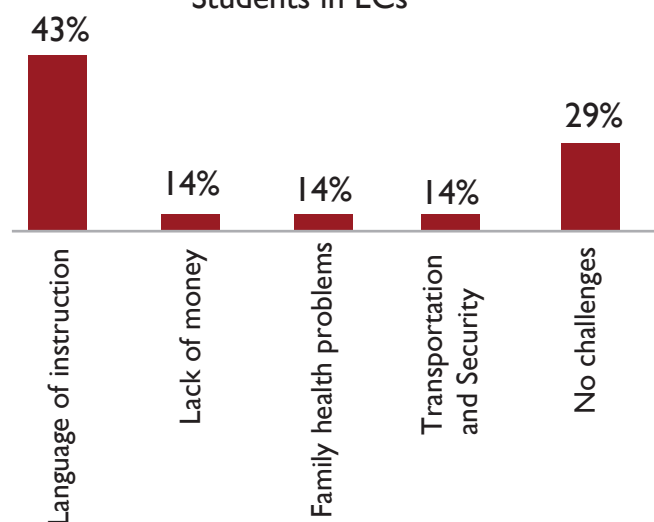
Figure 18: Demand Side Barries in Bangkok as Perceived by Upper Secondary Students in LCs
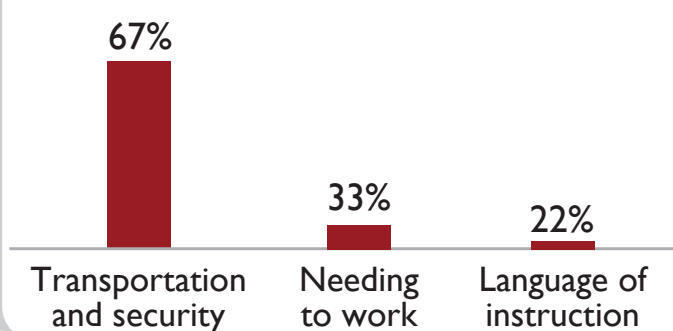
Barriers in RTG Schools

In the case of RTG schools, the majority of migrant families cannot fill out paperwork in Thai and handle multiple appointments regarding the enrollment process without assistance from CBOs, NGOs or employers. This is particularly acute for cases where students and families lack any documentation or school records (VSO, 2010). Directors and teachers both mentioned that this creates additional work for teachers at RTG schools. Hearing stories about these hurdles, and conflicts between Thai and migrant students, discourages parents who have children currently attending LCs.

Another point of view expressed by many directors and teachers in RTG schools is that the parents were indecisive about whether they wanted their children to study in Thailand or Myanmar. Parents may not want their children to attend RTG schools in the long-term and fear that it will be difficult for their children to return and study in Myanmar.

For lower secondary aged students in RTG schools, 64.3 % did not identify any difficulty related to enrolling. The remaining students stated that difficulty in obtaining documentation for enrollment (21.4%), conficts and fighting with other students (21.4 %) and security while travelling to and from school (7.1%) are main challenges. Upper secondary aged students in RTG schools who were currently in grade one identified the main challenge in attending school as discrimination by teachers and other students. For their counterparts in grade five, these challenges were not mentioned, indicating the extent to which placement policies can influence learning environments.

Ultimately, the main difficulty with studying in RTG schools, as identified by students, parents, teachers and directors, is the language barrier. Most migrant children do not have sufficient Thai language skills, the primary language of instruction, particularly in reading and writing, as is shown in the reading assessment in chapter 8.

4.2.6 Student Drop Out in Bangkok

Of the upper secondary aged students surveyed, 60% reported that they had dropped out previously. Many left school for work (50%), while switching to other LCs, security issues, health problems, language of instruction and dislike of the curriculum were also cited. Teachers at LCs stated that teenage students face pressure from parents to dropout in order to work and support the family.

On the other hand, directors and teachers at RTG schools described the single most challenging situation is for overage students who learn alongside much younger Thai students. In these cases children cannot perform in higher grades that require Thai language proficiency, particularly reading and writing skills. Parents and teachers related that these students face issues of social discrimination for being older than their peers. These students often drop out at higher rates than their at-grade level peers, primarily at grade two or three. The most common age for migrant students to drop out of school was found to be 13-14 years old when they can falsify their age and start working to support their families.

4.2.7 Awareness of Educational Pathways in Bangkok

Parents with children attending RTG schools and secondary aged students in BMA schools were not aware of educational options other than RTG schools and a few LCs or temples that offered Thai NFE or Thai language

classes. During focus group discussions, a lack of information about educational opportunities was mentioned as a major barrier to providing education for their children.

4.3.1 Introduction to Access in Mae Sot

Data problems persist in estimating the number of Myanmar migrant children living in Mae Sot due to extreme variations in national data. Mahidol Migration Center (2014: 5) estimates there are 235,820 Myanmar migrants in Tak province. Based on IOM's estimates that 11% of migrants are children, approximately 26,000 of these are children, though it could be as high as 40,000 (2011: xv). The Committee for the Protection and Promotion of Child Rights (CPPCR) estimates that there are between 28- 30,00 migrant children in the province, a figure that could be more representative of the actual population (Karen News, 2014).

Based on an estimated 30,000 Myanmar migrant children in Tak province one can deduce that most children are enrolled in some type of educational institution (Mahidol Migration Center, 2014: 5). According to 2013 OBEC records, 9,571, or 32%, migrant children from Myanmar are attending RTG schools in the province, while the majority of migrant children in the province attend LCs within their communities. Approximately 45% of all migrant children (13,458 students) are enrolled in LCs but the number is likely higher as this does not include the entire province.

Figures 19: Number of LCs in Four Districts of Tak ESA 2

(Source: MECC, 2014)

Thus, based on the available figures, an estimated 6,970, or 23% of migrant children are out of school or are attending an institution not registered with the local MoE. This stands in contrast to estimates this year by CPPCR that 14,000 children, roughly half of all migrant children according to their estimates, are out of school in the province (Karen News, 2014). While it is difficult to reconcile the significant gap between these two figures, it is worth noting that while the enrollment figures for LCs are updated as of August, 2014, RTG school data is from 2013 and may not be reflective of enrollment rates throughout the school year, which fluctuates due to dropout.

Based on the available data, it is evident that there is very little consistency in access to educational services and that barriers differ depending on the local context. The next sections will explore access and opportunity in more depth, with consideration to different institutions as well as factors within the wider community.

4.3.2 Access to Learning Centers in Mae Sot

Just under half of all students in Tak Education Service Area (ESA) 2 were attending one of the 66 LCs as of August, 2014. The vast majority, or 76%, of these LCs are congregated in Mae Sot (MECC, 2014). The number of LCs operating in this area has fluctuated significantly in the past seven years, resulting in shifting educational opportunities for children (Dickinson, 2011; MECC, 2013, 2014).

Figures 20: Number of LCs in Four Districts of Tak ESA 2, 2007 - 2014

(Source: MECC, 2013, 2014; Dickinson, 2011)

Decreased funding from donors was the primary reason for a decline in LCs, an ongoing issue, despite slight increases in LC enrollment figures (MECC, 2014). Interviews with various education stakeholders in the Mae Sot area indicated that the number of LCs would continue to decline over the coming year(s).

Among the 15 sampled, 75% were in grade six or below, 14% of students learning at the lower secondary level, and the remaining 11% studying in upper secondary grades. These figures indicate a low survival rate with large numbers of secondary students out of school. These findings are similar to those of CPPCR (2009: 54), who concluded that 82% of students at LCs were learning at the elementary level.

While some students in kindergarten may be in a bridging program that will transition them to an RTG school by first or second grade, these programs are not prevalent enough to account for the more than 50% decrease in enrollment by grade one, and 50% by grade four. Unfortunately, there is no clear indication of key drop out points, but they do fall in line with the 82% of LC school directors who reported that the majority of students leave school at the elementary level.

Figure 21: Enrollments Rates in LCs Four Districts of Tak ESA 2, 2007 - 2014

7,750	14,916	13,282	12,805	13,459
2007	2011	2013	Jun-14	Aug-14

(Source: MECC, 2013, 2014; Dickinson, 2011)

Figure 22: Proportion of Students in Each Grade in LCs Sampled in Mae Sot

13%	21%	10%	9%	7%	7%	4%	4%	5%	4%	5%	6%	4%	1%
N	KG	G1	G2	G3	G4	G5	G6	G7	G8	G9	G10	G11	G12

As figure 22 shows, a slight rise in enrollment can be seen in the secondary levels, with the most notable spike occurring in grade ten. This could reflect students who migrate to Mae Sot after completing elementary school in Myanmar, as secondary level education is still unavailable in many rural parts of the country.

One of the greatest barriers experienced by children who wish to enroll in RTG schools is the language (credit: WE).

4.3.3 Access to RTG Schools in Mae Sot

Figure 23: Migrant Children Enrollment Rates in RTG Schools in Five Districts of Tak ESA 2

3,167	491	1,913	2, 466	1,371	9,408
Mae Sot	Mae Ra Mad	Phop Phra	Tha Song Yang	Um Phang	Tak total
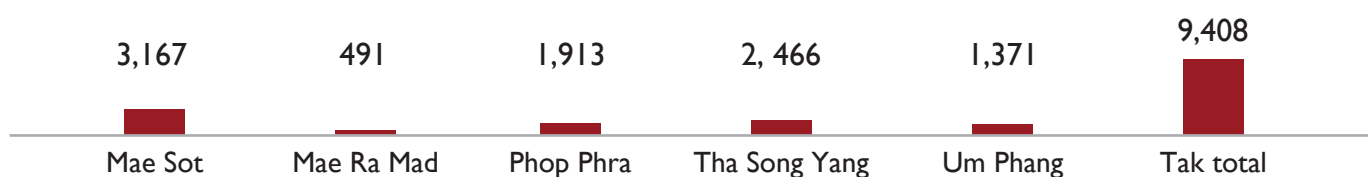
(Source: Tak MoE, 2013)

Among the 9,571 migrant children attending RTG schools in Tak province, 15% of all migrant children attending RTG schools in Thailand, the majority of these are attending schools within four districts; Mae Sot, Mae Ramad, Phop Phra, and Tha Song Yang.

Enrollment in these four districts represents 98% of all migrant children enrolled in RTG schools in the province (OBEC 2013; Tak MoE, 2013). As with LC enrollment rates, Mae Sot district has the highest enrollment rates. (Tak MoE, 2013).

Interviews with school directors and education stakeholders in Mae Sot revealed that private and municipal level schools often have slightly different enrollment policies with regard to migrant students than those operating under the MoE. Even within this sample, differences in enrollment policies can be seen across RTG schools.

Table 7: Number of Thai and Non-Thai Students in RTG and Private Schools Sampled in Mae Sot

	Number of Students			Percent of Students That are Non-Thai
	Total	Thai	Non-Thai	
School 1	229	229	0	0%
School 2	361	57	304	84%
School 3	306	256	50	16%
School 4	134	26	108	81%
School 5	187	33	152	81%
School 6	1,194	62	1,132	95%
School 7	612	612	316	52%
School 8	300	1	299	99%

Table 8: Enrollment Criteria for Migrant Children in Sampled RTG and Private Schools in Mae Sot

Criteria for Enrollment	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8
Birth Registration or Certificate		X	X	X		X	X	
Recommendation Letter from Village or Community Leader		X	X	X			X	
Residence in Local Community					X			
Ages 4-15						X		
At least half citizenship	X							
Full fluency in Thai language	X							
No Requirements								X

Directors explained that a major concern when enrolling migrant children is student drop out, because they fear problems explaining the discrepancy between reported and actual numbers to the MoE. For this reason, they request letters from community leaders in order to ensure that students have a stable home in the community. Government representatives echoed this concern, but the reality is that the majority of migrants in the Mae Sot area appear to be more stationary, indicating that this may not be as big an issue as it is perceived to be.

While the opportunity for students to enroll at RTG schools is technically accessible, the actual number of students choosing to attend, or being accepted at, schools has decreased between 2009 and 2013 (Tak MoE, 2009, 2011, 2013). There is obviously some diversity in enrollment as at least one school did bar enrollment for migrants except in cases where students have at least one Thai parent or speak Thai fluently. This may not represent a significant change in enrollment rates, but it does stand in contrast to national enrollment growth, and thus raises concerns about whether or not students in Tak province are increasingly facing barriers to enroll in RTG schools.

Similar to national figures, the majority of migrant students in RTG schools in Tak province, 65%, are enrolled at the elementary level. Approximately 31% of students are learning in kindergarten, with the rest learning in the lower and upper secondary levels, similar to LC enrollment in the province, as well as enrollment figures in Bangkok.

Figure 24: Migrant Children Enrollment Rates in RTG Schools in Tak ESA, 2009 - 2013

9,850

9,580

9,480

2009　　　　2011　　　　2013
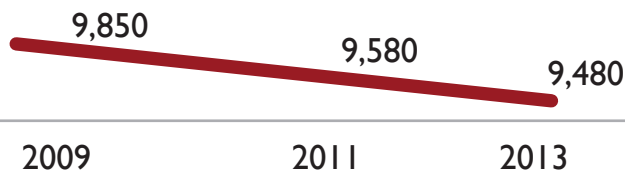
4.3.4 RTG School Preparation and Bridging Programs in Mae Sot

A large proportion of enrollment and transition into RTG schools takes place via informal agreements between LC and RTG school directors, as well as through other networks in the wider community. However, increasingly, education stakeholders at the CBO and NGO level, as well as government representatives in Mae Sot, have developed formalized pathways for families to enroll their children into RTG schools.

Figure 25: Migrant Children Enrollment Rates in RTG Schools by Level in Tak Province

6.210

2.937

379

45

KG　　　Elementary　　Lower Secondary　　Upper Secondary
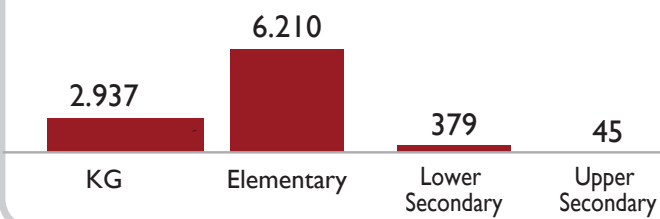
(Source: OBEC, 2013)

School within School

One such opportunity available in Tak, is the School within School program, which was initiated in 2009 under the Migrant Education Coordination Center (MECC) in cooperation with the local MoE office. In theory the SWS program allows children at the pre-primary and early primary level to learn the Thai curriculum from Thai teachers while staying in their LC. In some cases, students will learn the full national Thai curriculum, while in others they may only learn core components of the curriculum. The amount of years that students spend learning in their LC varies, but at the end of this time students will transfer to the partner RTG school and continue their education alongside Thai peers. Since the establishment of the program in 2009, the number of partnerships has fluctuated with eight LCs and five RTG schools currently participating (MECC, 2014).

Both schools and LCs have cited obstacles implementing the program, the majority of which stem from language barriers and the difficulty of teaching students a second language. Of all six partnerships assessed in a 2014 report by MECC, 100% of partnerships experienced problems related to language barriers between students and teachers

In other cases, there were challenges with the curriculum in general, which did not take into account the experiences and prior learning of migrant children. Poor communication between LCs and RTG schools was another source of difficulty, as was the management and distribution of funding, which is provided by the government for all students enrolled in the program.

Within this study, four LCs currently participating in the SWS program were included, along with two RTG schools. Due to the diverse nature of SWS agreements, each of these schools was implementing the model in a slightly different manner and had diverse enrollment rates. Some LCs sampled had about half of their student body participating in this program. From this sample alone, coupled with the findings of MECC and the history of the program, it is clear that despite the challenges associated with the SWS program, it is providing a pathway into the Thai education system for migrant children.

Early Childhood Development and RTG School Readiness

One LC is piloting an early childhood program aimed at preparing students in Thai language at the pre-primary level. Teachers that specialize in Thai language and school readiness support have been hired to work within LCs to support students and provide migrant families with bilingual support. The program targets children aged two to four, and enables them to learn in their LC nursery programs or Thai ECD centers. Once students reach the age of four they can transition directly into kindergarten in a RTG school with the social and language skills necessary to succeed, or continue for one further year of language preparation.

This program hopes to reduce education barriers for the significant number of pre-primary children in Mae Sot, with the intent to transition the project to the participating administrative sub-district office by 2016. While still only in phase one, this project presents hope for the next generation of migrant children aiming to receive a recognized education while in Thailand (Migrant Education, 2014).

4.3.5 Barriers to Accessing Education in Mae Sot

Demand Side Barriers

Economic difficulties are reported as the greatest challenge facing migrant children and their families. These include the cost of education, such as school fees, uniforms and books, as well as general economic limitations within the family. Many children are required to stay home and care for siblings while parents work, or to enter the workforce either permanently or for a period of time. Transportation and security were also identified as significant barriers, particularly amongst educators.

Figure 26: Demand Side Barriers in Mae Sot as Perceived by Parents, Students and Educators
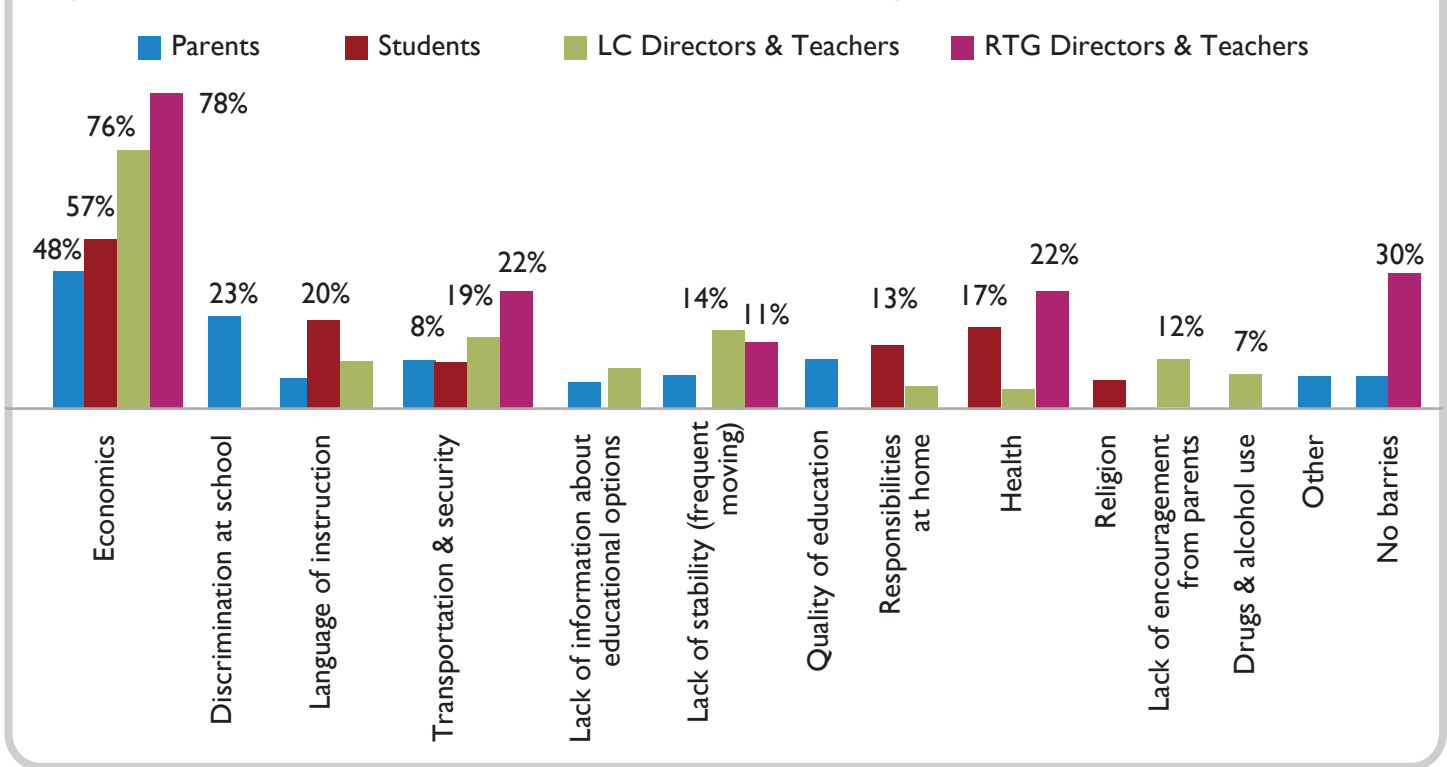
Parents and students mentioned other barriers, including difficulties with the language of instruction and discrimination. While educators deemed frequent moving and relocation to be large barriers, migrant families themselves did not cite this as a barrier. LC directors also pointed to lack of encouragement from parents, who they report sometimes pressure students to quit school to begin working.

Supply Side Barriers

Overwhelmingly, directors at LCs reported that the major barrier they experience is a lack of space for additional students. An equal proportion of LCs, 38%, reported that they have insufficient teachers and are lacking resources in general. Similarly, RTG school directors acknowledged limited teachers as the greatest

barrier to enrolling additional migrant students. Given the lack of accurate data on migrant children described in previous sections, it is very difficult for LCs, schools, or governing bodies to plan for the expansion of schooling and meet the existing demand for education.

All schools could cite examples of other school administrations within the wider community that harbored negative sentiment toward migrant children. This was reported to stem from fears of poor academic performance among migrant chidlren, that could reflect poorly on overall school testing scores. There were some communities that reported very positive community and school relationships between Thai nationals and migrants, especially in tight knit communities.

Educators in this study suggested that a greater degree of

Figure 27: Supply Side Barriers to Education in Mae Sot:
Factors at LCs and RTG Schools that Limit Access and Opportunity
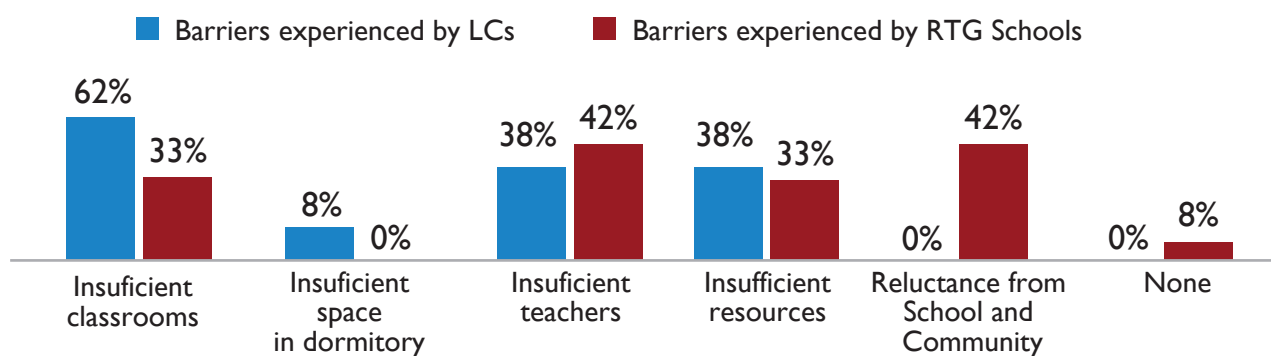
awareness and understanding of migrant lives was needed within Thai society. It was also recommended that shining a positive light on migrant students and promoting their successes, particularly academic, would go a long way to promoting positive attitudes about migrants and their children, particularly within the Thai education system.

4.3.6 Student Drop Out in Mae Sot

The difficulty of overcoming these obstacles contributes to the high dropout rate. The findings from this study revealed that 86% of LCs and 100% of RTG schools experience regular student drop out. An average of 46% of students dropped out of LCs last year, with proportions ranging from 0% to 50% of students dropping out from a single institution throughout the year.

Both LCs and RTG schools reported very low survival rates of students. All of the of RTG schools sampled reported that drop-outs most often take place at the kindergarten or elementary level, while 82% of LCs reported the same. Typically those that remain in school beyond elementary levels have done so through a serious commitment to their education, and in many cases, the pursuit of an accredited education. Within this study, 30% of students had previously dropped out, while 86% reported knowing someone who had dropped out of school.

A large number of the students dropping out at the elementary level are over the typical age for their grade and level, particularly in the case of RTG schools. In some cases, students may leave school permanently once reaching a certain age in order to pursue employment or help families at home.

Figure 28: Proportion of Students That Drop Out Annually in Mae Sot by Sampled Schools
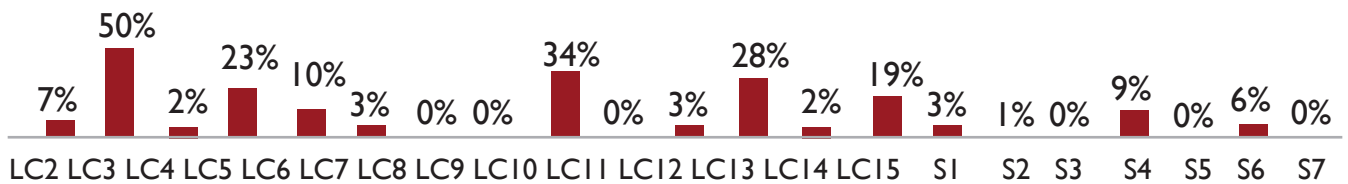
Note: There is no data for LC1and TS8 does not enroll migrant children so no data was collected

Figure 29: Reasons for Student Drop Out According to Students and Educators
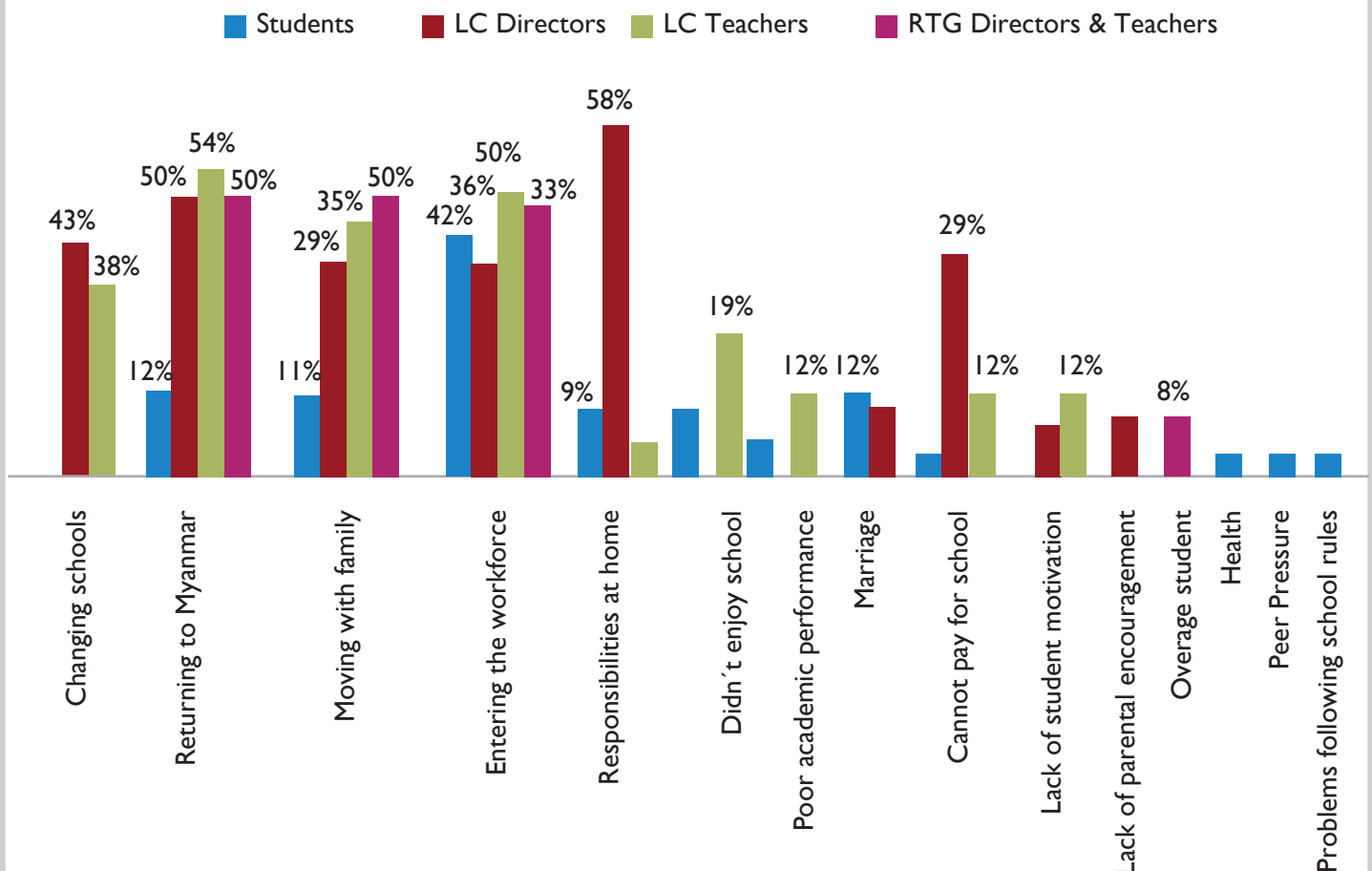
Across all educational instutions there were reports of temporary drop outs, with LCs reporting slightly greater instances of temporary drop outs when students leave for a season to participate in agricultural work and then return to school. These short-term drop outs may also be due to economic problems in the family, or illness in the family.

Both institutions reported moving and changing schools as the number one reason for student drop out. However, it is worth noting that neither parents nor students deemed this to be a barrier to education, with the vast majority living a stable and immobile life in Mae Sot. Typically not all institutions accurately track student drop out, and difficulties communicating with parents, particularly where language barriers exist, result in directors not always knowing the true reason for student drop out.

4.3.7 Awareness of Educational Pathways in Mae Sot

An average of 29% of upper secondary students said that they had a limited awareness and understanding of educational opportunities available to them. Overall, these students reported having the greatest level of understanding of vocational training programs and the Myanmar exam preparatory programs.

A somewhat smaller proportion, 21%, had no familiarity with these programs, and only 13% felt that they fully understood their education options.

Roughly one quarter reported having no awareness of post-secondary and NFE programs in the area, while 56% migrant students' legal right to education within the Thai system.

This could be reflective of broader gaps in understanding within the migrant community, though may also be the result of the age of these respondents, who were likely beyond the age of entry into RTG schools when this became a significant trend.

Among the students included in this study, 52% reported that they get information about educational opportunities from their teachers, with an additional 10% citing the directors of their LC as the source of this information. Parents of students at the elementary and lower secondary level, seemed to have high levels of awareness and understanding of the educational opportunities available to their children. Over half of the parents included in this sample felt they had a strong familiarity with all programs available to their children. However, this sample only includes parents of children already enrolled in school and is not necessarily reflective of the wider community. Few parents were unaware of their child's options for an accredited education in LCs, but half did not know their children had a legal right to enroll in RTG schools.

While this is a significant and notable gap, confirmed by Thai state school directors, it is worth noting that the majority of parents sampled had their children enrolled in LCs.

It is logical, then, that more parents would be aware of the educational opportunities available within LCs, however, these parents, particularly those who have children in lower grades, should be aware of the opportunity to send their children to RTG schools.

Figure 30: Upper Secondary Students' Awareness of Educational Oppotunities
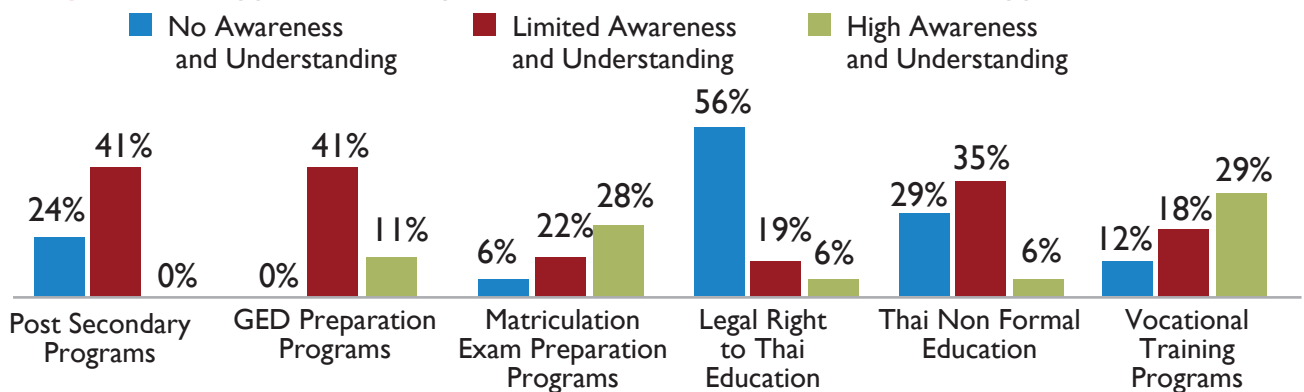
Figure 31: Parent's Awareness of Accredited Educacional Opportunities in Mae Sot
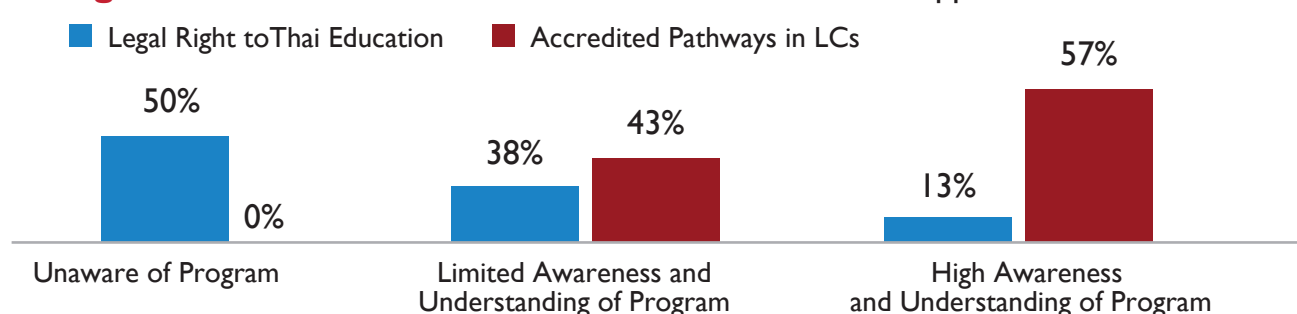
Recommendations on Access and Opportunity

• **Support the implementation of EFA policy:** The MoE must support the integration of migrant children into the Thai education system by actively promoting EFA. A comprehensive plan must be developed for raising awareness and capacity at RTG schools so that placement policies for migrant children are fully understood and being implemented consistently. One place to start would be to prioritize this issue in the yearly guidelines and order letters that all RTG receive from OBEC.

• **There is an urgent need for accurate data on migrant children:** A systematic effort should be made to obtain accurate and current estimates of the total number of migrant children, including surveying and mapping of out of school children, in order to allow the MoE to respond with increased support and resource allocation. Schools could be supported with appropriate resources so they can take responsibility for this initiative by implementing mapping and information sharing activities as part of their community outreach. Other sectors, such as the Ministry of Health, could also be engaged as they have an extensive network of community health volunteers who already gather population data.

• **Raise awareness among migrant communities about educational opportunities and enrollment processes:** Significant proportions of students, parents, out of school chidlren, as well as institutions themselves, are unaware of educational opportunities that exist for migrant children and how to access them. Information should be developed and delivered with consideration to work schedules, as well as language and cultural differences.

• **Scale-up support and research on flexible NFE models for over-age students:** Successful models of education that allow working students the ability to continue their education uninterrupted should be developed and replicated. It is also important that viable pathways are offered for over-age students, who drop-out of primary school at much higher rates.

• **Create transition plans for children in LCs that may close:** LC directors and management must develop plans for students in the case of closure. This could include avoidance measures like school businesses and cost saving, as well as student transfer plans and amalgamating LCs in close proximity to one another.

• **Increased access to accredited programs:** Enrollment figures indicate that accreditation options at the secondary level may lead to greater survival rates among students in LCs. Efforts to raise awareness of the programs, as well as increasing the total number of programs, need to be made.

• **Design and introduce stay in school programs:** Drop-out trends need to be more closely monitored, and stay-in-school initiatives need to be implemented in LCs and RTG schools in order to avoid drop-out before secondary level. These could include vocational training programs alongside formal learning, as suggested by RTG school directors.

• **Scale-up and invest in language preparation and support programs:** Transition and bridging programs need to be increased, particularly for those currently at the pre-primary and primary level. Programs should place an emphasis on language preparation.

LCs in Thailand are equipped with varying levels of human, financial and physical resources (credit: WE)

CHAPTER 5

Analysis of Key Issues in the Provision of Education for the Children of Myanmar Migrants in Thailand: Accreditation

For the majority of migrant children in Thailand, recognized education is largely unattainable. This chapter will explore how children are managing to access accredited forms of learning, and the barriers they face on this path. Education within RTG schools, new programs within LCs that offer non-formal education and those that support transition to RTG schools, as well as higher learning preparation will all be explored with an emphasis on gaps, best practices and opportunities for scale-up.

<div>

Key Findings on Accreditation

• RTG schools are the primary avenue for migrant children in Thailand to receive an accredited education.

• There are growing opportunities for accredited learning in LCs, but these are still small in scale.

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5.1 An Introduction to Accreditation in Thailand

For most migrant students in Thailand, RTG schools offer the most accessible form of accredited learning, but the number of students in RTG schools still only represents 34% of all migrant students in the country. (OBEC, 2013; National Statistics Office, 2010; MOI, 2014). The vast majority of the approximate 18,312 students that are enrolled in LCs are not receiving any recognition for their learning (National Statistics Office, 2010; MOI, 2014; FRY, 2014).

While the RTG's willingness to register LCs as private schools presents an opportunity for LC accreditation, enabling students to receive recognition of their learning, the criteria for registration has presented many challenges. Currently, in order to register, LCs will need to implement the full Thai basic education curricula and Thai as the language of instruction. In the eight years since this opportunity was introduced, only two LCs have

successfully registered - one in Sangklaburi and one in Tak province. With multiple barriers still prohibiting the enrollment of all migrants in RTG schools, it is important not only that LCs continue to be available for migrant children, but that accredited learning opportunities being made available continue to be supported and scaled-up.

5.2.1 Accreditation in RTG Schools in Bangkok

In Bangkok, the primary option for accredited education is the formal Thai education system, with an estimated 900 migrant children in the BMA school system. Many key informants from the non-profit sector and UN agencies expressed a preference to transition children to the Thai education system since it is an accredited pathway. Programs at LCs that sought to prepare or transition students into RTG schools were preferred to programs that kept students in a non-accredited LC.

As an LC focused primarily on the development of Thai language and school readiness for migrant children, BLC1 seeks to transition its students into institutions within the Thai education system. Since BLC1 started accepting school-aged children in 2009, 250 students under the age of 15 years old, have participated in their preparation program (as summarized in Table 13).

Table 9: Enrollment of School-Aged Children in BLC1, by Academic Year

Academic Year	Male	Female	Student Enrollment
2008	18	17	35
2009	14	14	28
2011	13	13	26
2012	18	10	28
2013	30	28	58
2014	45	30	75
Total students enrolled	138	112	250

5.2.2 Accreditation in Learning Centers in Bangkok

In addition to the formal education system, the Thai NFE system represents a flexible educational pathway that can increase educational opportunities for migrant children.

For the three LCs included in our study, none were accredited educational institutions. One of the learning centers, BLC1, also offered Thai NFE courses on weekends for Thai and non-Thai individuals over 15 years old. Students younger than 15 years old can request to be enrolled in the Thai NFE curriculum for adults. These students continue to attend the weekday school program with separate NFE coursework.

5.3.1 Accreditation in RTG Schools in Mae Sot

In contrast to the children attending LCs, those attending RTG schools will receive accreditation from the RTG. In this way, accreditation within the Thai education system remains a significant and relatively accessible pathway for migrant children. With an increasing awareness of the legal right to education in the past ten years, the number of parents seeking out these opportunities is also rising.

Tak province, and Mae Sot in particular is home to a large number of migrant education service providers that are developing and implementing a variety of programs to help facilitate the transition of migrant children into RTG schools. With the continued support of these initiatives, the Thai education system will continue to be a viable and popular choice among migrant parents, particularly those considering longer stays within Thailand.

5.3.2 Accreditation in Learning Centers in Mae Sot

Registration as Private Schools under the RTG

Overwhelmingly, LCs in Mae Sot are not recognized as schools and only one has successfully completed the registration process to offer an accredited path for students. In Mae Sot, the greatest challenge identified by service providers and government stakeholders has been the qualifications of teachers, as well as a lack of Thai staff to assist with the development of education plans. The local MoE office has suggested a review of the criteria to make the process more accessible for LCs across the country. Education stakeholders, working closely with the RTG and MoE, have already identified opportunities for LCs in Mae Sot to complete this process successfully, specifically those that have an affiliation with a Thai NGO or foundation.

LCs in Mae Sot largely exist on their own and have not always sought to engage with the RTG LC registration process. A contributing factor could be that many staff at LCs are fearful of losing their jobs. Concerns about employment and economic security were mentioned by nearly all service providers as a significant barrier with regard to accreditation of learning in the form of registration, as well as with regard to sustainability.

Thai Non-Formal Education for Special Target Groups Program (NFE)

The greatest opportunity for Thai accreditation within LCs is through the NFE for Special Target Groups program. Piloted in 2013, the program has been expanded to include 12 LCs and 189 students (World Education, 2014). This program allows all students with a standard proficiency in Thai to receive the equivalent of a Thai elementary education within their LCs. However, Thai language preparation is essential in order to participate and succeed in the program. Typically, students study between four and five years in the program in order to complete all necessary components, so there have yet to be any graduates (World Education, 2014).

The costs of the program are not covered by the RTG to date, placing the burden on non-governmental service providers or LCs to hire and pay a qualified teacher to deliver the course. The program has received significant praise, as it enables students who otherwise cannot access RTG Schools the ability to obtain a recognized elementary level education (ONIE, 2014).

Being a relatively new pathway to accreditation for migrant students, this program has yet to make a broader impact, but has the potential to reach a larger number of students and is currently being scaled-up in other parts of Thailand with large migrant communities.

Myanmar Non-Formal Primary Education (NFPE)

Many parents envision a future in which they and their children are living in Myanmar; a future where their children have access to universities and employment. Through close cooperation with education authorities in Myawaddy, Myanmar, the Myanmar NFPE program is being offered by two migrant education service providers at the NGO level. The program is designed for children aged 10-14 in established LCs, as well as newly created NFPE specific centers. Learning takes place over two years that culminate in a recognized primary level certificate from the Myanmar MoE.

The Myanmar NFPE program is operating at an even smaller scale than the Thai NFE for Special Target Groups program, with only six centers offering the course. Within LCs, a total of 79 students are participating, while 42 have enrolled in the newly established NFPE centers offering evening classes to students.

The integrated programs in LCs take place alongside regular classes, while those in the newly developed centers have been strategically situated in rural areas where many children work during the day and can only attend evening classes. Similar to the Thai NFE for Special Target Groups program, the Myanmar NFPE program is new and has yet to produce any graduates. However, it presents an opportunity for children with varying interests and needs the opportunity to obtain a recognized education within their communities.

Preparatory Programs for Access to Accredited Learning

Classes preparing students for the Myanmar matriculation exam, a requirement of all students wishing to pursue post-secondary education in the country, are being offered to 160 students in LCs. Although this program is valued by migrant parents and supports students in their attempt to access higher education, unfortunately it has not been overwhelmingly successful in terms of academic results and a large proportion of students have failed the exam. This is largely due to the fact that LC education, though using the Myanmar government curriculum, is very different from the education provided in government schools. Additionally, students are increasingly being prepared by individual LCs where there is very little consistency in curriculum.

5.3.3 Recommendations for Accreditation

• Increase access to Thai education for migrant children: Enforcement of EFA alongside continued support and scale up of preparation and transition programs will increase access to accredited learning in RTG schools.

• Coordinated efforts to support returning Myanmar students: Service providers and LCs should coordinate their efforts to assist in preparing students to sit the matriculation exam and access accredited higher learning opportunities in Myanmar to ensure greater success.

• Scale-up non-formal accredited programs in LCs: Accredited programs should be flexible, ensuring that they are accessible to all students, depending on their needs. LCs should cooperate with one another to finance these programs or coordinate the transfer of students to access these programs. All LCs should aim to provide some form of accredited program to ensure that students have something to show from their studies, and this could be required be donors funding LCs.

• Further research and piloting of the Thai NFE program for Special Target Groups: Thai NFE curriculum offers an educational pathway for migrant children than needs to be explored and expanded if it matches the needs of students and their families. This program should be scaled-up and mainstreamed as part of the basic education offer of OBEC schools, rather than a separate program offered by ONIE. Alternatively, there needs to be a clear referral system and process for schools to refer over-age students to ONIE programs. As NFE is scaled-up it will require extensive funding for teacher salaries, teacher training, and materials.

A student is asked to name the letters in the Burmese alphabet (credit: WE).

CHAPTER 6

Analysis of Key Issues in the Provision of Education for the Children of Myanmar Migrants in Thailand: Sustainability

Education services for migrant children in Thailand face many threats to its sustainability, resulting in limited long-term options for students. This chapter will assess the financial, political and technical sustainability of education provided to migrant children, both in LCs and RTG schools. A discussion of financial sustainability will pay particular attention to the impact of donor dependence among LCs, as well as the subsidization of education in RTG schools for migrant children. Political sustainability gaps and opportunities will focus on security, social factors and recognition by governments. Technical sustainability of both institutions will be assessed, with emphasis on the unique needs of migrant children and their educators.

Key Findings on Accreditation

• There is a need for accurate figures on the number of migrant children in Thailand: Reliable and detailed data is essential to effectively calculate budget and resource demands in providing quality education for migrant children.

• Long-term sustainability of LCs is low unless the government begins to support them: LCs provide critical services such as bridging programs to ensure that migrant children can enroll in RTG schools, awareness-raising with schools and communities, collecting data on migrant children, and follow-up and support programs to keep migrant children in school.

6.1.1 Sustainability in Learning Centers in Thailand

Without assurances provided by government funding, LCs operate entirely independently. They rely on funding from private foundations, sometimes through intermediary or umbrella organizations, or from small public donations from the community of parents of students. Despite this, funding has become increasingly challenging for the vast majority of LCs around the country. Stakeholders attribute this to the political changes in Myanmar since the 2010 elections, with donors far more likely to direct their funding inside Myanmar, decreasing funds available for services for migrants in Thailand.

The key to political sustainability of education for migrants remains the legal status of teachers and students. According to RTG representatives interviewed in this study, LCs and the vast majority of their staff and students are undocumented. Many LCs have been listed with the government and are granted some degree of security as a result; however, there are no legal guarantees for their future. With the establishment of a new military government in Thailand in 2014, the future of LCs has become even more precarious, with very few stakeholders able to predict whether current policies and trends will remain the same.

6.1.2 Sustainability in RTG Schools in Thailand

RTG schools experience relatively high financial sustainability, with reliable government funding facilitating long-term strategic plans for hiring and enrollment, and for the creation of safe, engaging and resource-heavy learning environments. However, RTG school directors and teachers reported their institutions receiving insufficient funds, particularly with regard to hiring additional teachers and bolstering resource capacity.
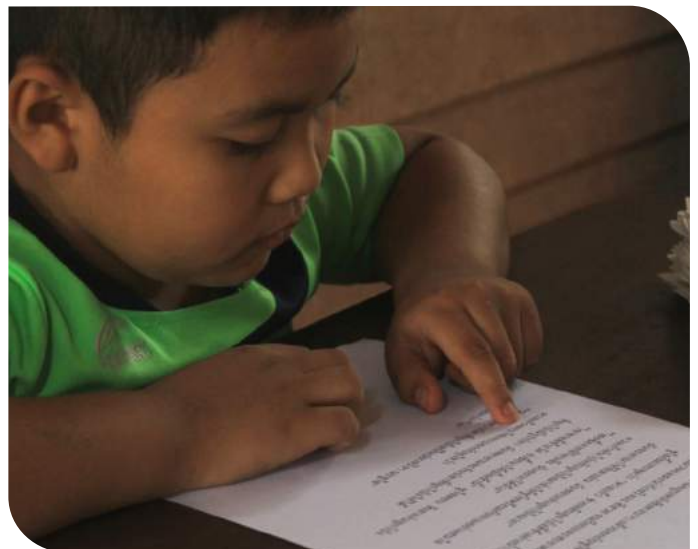
Schools need resources to purchase reading materials, which are vital to the development of strong reading skills (credit: WE).

As outlined earlier, without accurate data on numbers of students in their catchment area, schools and government are unable to project enrolment and thus plan and budget for expansion of education provision.

Furthermore, feedback points to tension within Thai society regarding free education for migrants who do not pay taxes, with the exception of VAT. This was reported by RTG school directors, expressing their own sentiments as well as those of parents, and was echoed by government representatives who have heard this feedback from Thai national citizens. This points to broader labour issues, and the complexities of charging migrants full taxes, a significant proportion of which are either undocumented or being paid below the minimum wage.

The primary political sustainability concern regarding RTG schools serving migrant children is the implementation of the EFA policy at national and local levels. While the policy has been in effect for many years, various barriers, reluctance and inconsistencies in its implementation remain. The lack of clear, functioning guidelines on how EFA policy is implemented in schools is a serious threat to RTG schools as a viable education pathway for migrant children in Thailand.

Education within RTG schools remains technically sustainable as a result of the well established RTG and MoE standards. However, with increasing numbers of migrant children enrolling in schools, the technical skills and capacities required to meet the needs of migrant students will only grow. These gaps may include language skills, sufficient and appropriate resources, and knowledge of migrant experiences, among other things.

6.2.1 Sustainability in Learning Centers in Bangkok

Financial Sustainability

All three LCs included in this study were established under or work in collaboration with a foundation or non-profit organization. BLC1 and BLC3 have additional funding from donors, whereas BLC2 is primarily self-funded.

All of the LCs surveyed have mandatory student fees or cost-sharing initiatives for parents. For one LC, it is the major source of funds and the director reported that they operate at a significant loss each month and teachers often go unpaid for several months. Two directors mentioned that they utilized existing facilities, staff and resources to the maximum capacity as their main strategy to minimize costs. These two directors also mentioned that they would reduce expenses and possibly reduce teaching staff to counter loss in funding. All three directors

identified increasing student fees as one strategy to cope with a decrease in donor funding.

Political Sustainability

Control over property and general security contributes to sustainability concerns for the LCs in Bangkok. For example, BLC2, which operated on a rented property, was forced to relocate because of complaints from neighbors. Burmese teachers at the same LC also reported difficulty in obtaining proper documentation to work in Thailand and regular salary payments. Students who are either documented workers themselves, or are the children of documented workers, reported minimal security issues. In contrast, many of the children at BLC2 had fears related to transportation and security since, for the most part, they and their parents lacked proper documentation. This lack of documentation generates insecurity and fear, even though technically it is not a barrier to enrollment in itself.

Technical Sustainability

Teaching skills and resources, as well as physical resources and capacity, influence LCs and their ability to meet the needs of their students. LCs vary greatly in the quality and capacity of facilities, level of qualified teachers and staff, books, and teaching and learning resources.

LCs that provide learning materials for all children and resources for teachers not only provide a better quality learning environment, but retain qualified staff that contribute to school sustainability. One LC reported that teachers continually have opportunities for training, both internally and with other NGOs. Technical sustainability relies heavily on opportunities for migrant youth and adults to obtain training relevant to managing and teaching in LCs in Thailand. The Thai teachers at one LC are certified NFE teachers, whereas the Burmese teachers are former students who were identified as having potential to teach and have Thai and Burmese language skills. Regular turnover of volunteer teachers also made it difficult to provide adequate training for teachers to improve their skills. These centers are also lacking in physical resources with limited play areas and are dealing with issues of overcrowding.

6.2.2 Sustainability in RTG Schools in Bangkok

Financial Sustainability

All of the BMA schools surveyed reported no issues obtaining funding for students if they are enrolled in time. If enrolled prior to the start of the school term, the administration was able to receive the necessary funding. All students received the same services including free education, school uniforms, textbooks, meals and milk.

However, it should be noted that these schools are a minority within the 436 schools under BMA jurisdiction and may not be representative of all schools in the area.

Political Sustainability

BMA schools reported accepting migrant children who applied to their school regardless of legal status. However, they did mention that it was sometimes difficult to get budget allocations for students who enrolled in the middle of the school term. Additionally, when families move, enrollment is often delayed over confusion of how to transfer school records. This can result in a break in the child's schooling, particularly if they cannot show proper documentation to their new school.

Parents felt confident that their children had a place to study but expressed concern over their children's safety when traveling to and from school. These findings are aligned with those found by VSO (2013: 22) that migrant parents often felt there were gaps in child safety in terms of transport to and from home. However, Thai administrators were not aware of any security concerns and did not report any problems.

Technical Sustainability

All instructors at the BMA schools surveyed had degrees or qualifications in education, including 15-20 years experience teaching- some working with migrant children from Myanmar. These teachers felt comfortable teaching migrant students but identified communication with parents and Thai language instruction as particularly challenging. Most of the teachers surveyed had participated in seminars and trainings in techniques and strategies to teach migrant children, either organized by MoE, BMA or NGOs. While all teachers felt that their schools had sufficient teaching and learning resources, a few mentioned that they would like to have bilingual Thai and Burmese teaching materials. None of the teachers suggested the need for Burmese teaching assistants.

6.3.1 Sustainability in Learning Centers in Mae Sot

Financial Sustainability

All service providers and government stakeholders interviewed cited financial instability as the major threat to LCs as reliable educational institutions. In the 2014-2015 academic year alone, four LCs closed down. Nearly all stakeholders expressed serious concerns that more LCs would have to close their doors before the end of the academic year. In the last two years, the number of LCs supported by donors has decreased while the dependency on local private donations, typically from parents and community members, has grown. The LCs sampled obtain their funding from a variety of sources:

smaller stakeholders in migrant education, Thai foundations and international NGOs, and some without any regular funding.

In June 2013, migrant education service providers came together to deliver emergency funding. Coverage of basic costs was provided to 19 LCs to ensure that nearly 3,000 children enrolled in these centers would be able to complete the academic year. At the beginning of the 2014-2015 academic year, 25 LCs submitted requests for emergency funding. While a crisis was initially averted, clearly this does not represent a sustainable pathway forward for LCs or for migrant education in Tak province. Increasingly, LCs are being encouraged to develop strategies for sustainability. Some have begun charging school fees, introducing cost sharing with parents and parent teacher associations (PTAs) and initiating fundraising strategies in order to lessen their dependence on donors. In the 2014-2015 academic year alone, 15 LCs, in partnership with their PTAs, have raised over 98,000 baht (3,000 USD) to support school running costs. One LC in Mae Sot was particularly effective and raised 22,000 baht (700 USD) in two months.

Political Sustainability

Politically, LCs in Mae Sot are relatively secure and have good relationships with the MECC, as well as NGO and CBO service providers. LCs in Tak province are assured a certain level of security, even though large proportions of their students remain undocumented.

Donors and service providers acknowledge the importance of LCs, particularly for those wishing to return to Myanmar. Government stakeholders agree that well funded, transparent and accredited LCs should continue to operate, but those who do not offer recognized education should begin to close. Some donors are now asking LCs to offer some form of accreditation as a requirement for funding. There are suggestions that LCs not in this position can begin to phase out by working to prepare their students for entry into more established LCs or RTG schools, eventually transforming entirely into preparatory centers for RTG school enrollment.

Alternatively, those deeply invested in the migrant community placed strong value on the education provided in LCs as they provide education in the children's mother tongue, along with ethnic history and culture. Directors disagreed that LCs should have a diminished role within the community for these reasons, as well as the impact that it would have on employment rates within the area.

Technical Sustainability

A large refugee and migrant population has led service

providers to develop a range of programs for post-secondary learning, ranging from English language to teacher training and community development. As a result there are a large number of individuals with ample skills in the area, though it is worth noting that the vast majority of these programs offer no form of accreditation for graduates. Among teachers sampled, a little over half reported having at least a Bachelors degree, and nearly half reported having between three and five years of experience teaching. These figures indicate that there are highly qualified and experienced teachers within the sector, many of whom have brought their experience with them from Myanmar. In-depth interviews with teachers revealed that they would like additional training to increase their capacity, as well as recognition of their skills and qualifications.

Though there is a great deal of experience and skill within LCs, the financial challenges have forced many teachers to leave the profession. Long working hours, meager salaries, and instances of unpaid work in times of financial instability all contribute to high teacher turnover rates within LCs. Three LCs included in this study reported having serious problems with teacher turnover, which sometimes result in periods where there are no teachers to teach classes. The need to continually recruit and train new staff drains both time and resources from LCs, and impacts the quality of learning taking place in them.

6.3.2 Sustainability in RTG Schools in Mae Sot

Financial Sustainability

Among the RTG schools included in this study, a large proportion reported insufficient funds, materials, human resources or facilities that prevented them from enrolling more migrant students. The need for additional classrooms and resources for teachers and students was reported by 57% of RTG schools, with another 43% stating the need to hire additional teachers. These limitations are directly linked to the lack of accurate figures on the number of migrant children in the area, which would allow for more accurate budget projections. Gaps in funding are another source of difficulty for schools, particularly in cases where students register late and the school experiences a delay in receiving funding from the government.

Feedback from staff and government stakeholders pointed to NGOs and even LCs themselves as sources for increased support, as opposed to the government. Increased cooperation and cost sharing initiatives, along with fundraising were among suggestions. The main justification was that this burden should be shared, as migrants are not paying full taxes and the support from the government is not insufficient. However, many migrants in Thailand are subject to VAT tax, and, particularly in Mae Sot, as undocumented workers, receive far less than the minimum wage. With such insufficient incomes, it would be very unlikely that migrant

workers could afford to pay full taxes as Thai citizens do, making this a far more complex issue linked to migrant labour laws and rights.

Political Sustainability

Negative attitudes toward migrants and their children have direct implications for the students within RTG schools. Nearly half of schools sampled had negative attitudes towards migrant children or for the provision of free education for these children. Some feel particular groups of migrant children exhibited poor behavior, and others suggest that migrant families should have to pay for their education at RTG schools. These views can propagate discrimination toward migrant children within schools and the wider community, create less welcoming learning environments, and even prevent the enrollment of migrant children in extreme cases.

Technical Sustainability

Technical sustainability is directly dependent on the financial capacity of institutions. Without accurate figures of migrant students, and realistic budget projections to meet their needs, technical sustainability will remain elusive. With many schools unable to hire sufficient teachers to meet the demand, the likelihood of schools being able to hire specialized staff is currently low but critical to serving the migrant population. Teachers within RTG schools have standardized and recognized skills, but not necessarily those specific to teaching Myanmar migrant students. Teachers expressed a specific need for bilingual teaching materials and Myanmar language skills. Based on evidence that bilingual teaching assistants may lead to greater success among migrant students in RTG schools, support for recruiting these teachers needs to be provided. One sampled school reported instances of students failing classes up to three times in a row due to academic difficulty. With greater technical support for students in the classroom repetition can be avoided, reducing the associated costs.

Recommendations for Sustainability

• Increase financial sustainability initiatives at LCs: Direct service providers and donors should be at the forefront of these activities, requiring all funding recipients to have a strategic plan, as well as activities that reduce their dependence on donors. LCs could consider cost sharing initiatives with parents and PTAs, fundraising activities within the community, school businesses, resource sharing or merging, and income generation. Those without funding should consider whether or not they are in a position to provide reliable and quality education. For all LCs and service providers, plans need to be set in place to ensure that children have immediate access to education in the case that an LC closes.

• **Support and scale-up accredited programming and registration of LCs:** There will be greater success in the long-term sustainability of LCs if they offer accredited education and are registered with the RTG as schools. Those LCs unable or unwilling to introduce such programming should transition into preparation centers or support the transfer of their students into accredited programs. To enable wider registration of LCs, the government should make sure the criteria are flexible. This will help ensure that LCs can continue to offer a mother- tongue based education relevant to migrant children while also serving as preparation centers for migrant children to transition to Thai language schools and integrate into Thai society. A mother-tongue based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) approach may be most effective with this in mind.

• **Collect accurate data on migrant children** in order to effectively calculate budget and resource demands in the provision of education for migrant children.

• **Continue and scale-up technical support for institutions and teachers:** Capacity building of education providers to meet needs of migrant children is required in a variety of settings, both in RTG schools and LCs. For LCs, this should include management and financial planning skills for directors, and pedagogy and subject training for teachers. For both RTG schools and LC's, specific language support programs are needed, including bilingual materials and teaching assistants, as well as Thai language preparation programs.

• **The RTG should continue its provision of 15 years of free basic education to all children regardless of nationality:** Reduced support would see an increase of students dropping out of school, compounding an already dire situation. EFA policies should be supported with clear implementation guidelines for educators and institutions. Incentive programs could encourage schools to enroll migrant children, with increased resources or flexibility on national state exams.

• **Share information on registration process and timelines in RTG schools:** Greater efforts need to be made to inform migrant parents of registration dates and the enrollment process. More consistent recruitment and registration practices also need to be developed. This will ensure migrant students are registering on time and that budget is delivered to schools on time, helping to avoid gaps in funding that are experienced by some RTG Schools.

Students assist in various activities at LCs, providing them with valuable life skills (credit: WE).
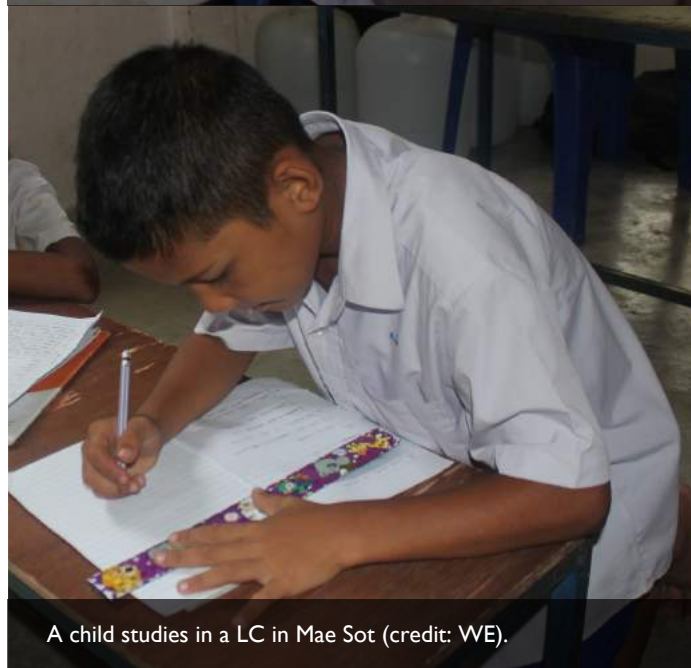
A child studies in a LC in Mae Sot (credit: WE).

Teachers in both LCs and RTG schools require training to support the development of migrant children living and learning in Thailand (credit: WE).

CHAPTER 7

Analysis of Key Issues in the Provision of Education for the Children of Myanmar Migrants in Thailand: Quality

A quality education should meet the needs and interests of students and prepare them for their future. The education provided to migrant children in Thailand varies significantly in quality depending not only on whether it is delivered in a RTG school or LC, but also across individual institutions. The impacts of decentralization among LCs, and the diversity in education models being implemented as a result, will be presented in this chapter. While RTG schools benefit from governance and structure, there remain inconsistencies in policies at the school level, which have significant impacts on students and their quality of learning. These will be analyzed in both Bangkok and Mae Sot, as well the quality of teaching, learning environment, and academic performance.

Key Findings on Accreditation

• Students in LCs and RTG schools are generally very happy at school
• Teachers in RTG schools are highly qualified
• Most LC teachers have strong qualifications, but there are inconsistencies in training and experience
• High teacher turnover is a challenge for LCs
• There is a lack of standardization and oversight of LCs
• RTG schools in Mae Sot have high student teacher ratios
• Parents are unaware of registration processes and timelines in RTG schools
• Placement policies for migrant students in RTG schools vary depending on the institution, resulting in a high proportion of over-age migrant students in some schools, particularly in Mae Sot
• Thai language and academic support for migrant students in RTG schools varies depending on the institution
• There is a lack of bilingual materials and support in both LCs and RTG schools

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7.1 Quality in Migrant Education in Thailand

With no unified governing body overseeing LCs in Thailand, there are vast differences in the vision, management, structure and curricula of these institutions. The lack of common standards and controls in LCs can affect the quality of education and learning, and can contribute to child protection risks. There have been reported cases of unsafe learning environments in LCs and their dormitories, as well as instances of sexual and physical abuse directed toward students by staff within LCs.

In some cases, donors and service providers are attempting to introduce consistency into the sector by developing standards amongst partner LCs. This has helped to increase management and financial transparency, safety and security of students, standardized hiring and reimbursement schemes, lesson planning quality and classroom management. At this point, these strategies are being implemented on a small scale and are not being used to establish nationwide standardization in LCs.

Unlike LCs, RTG schools are monitored and must meet minimum standards in order to remain open. For this reason, the level of quality in RTG schools across the country is far more consistent in comparison. However, schools are now being faced with the challenge of educating large numbers of non-Thai children that come from different cultural, linguistic and educational backgrounds, and have different needs compared to Thai national students. These realities demand more from schools and educators to provide migrant children with a high quality education suitable to their unique needs.

7.2.1 Quality in Learning Centers in Bangkok

LCs in Bangkok deal with a broad range of challenges in regard to delivering quality education: inconsistencies in teacher qualifications, limited teaching and student resources, a lack of unified curriculum and limited classroom space.

Some teachers have education degrees from universities in Myanmar, while others have previous experience teaching NFE to students 15 years and older, but no other qualifications in education. Many new teachers have no background or experience in education, but a willingness to be a teacher. To fill the need for more teachers LCs often rely on volunteers. Although workshops and training are periodically provided, the high turnover of volunteer teachers makes it difficult to provide teacher training. Some LCs in this study had relatively low student-teacher ratios (13 and 16 to one), while others experienced overcrowding. In many cases, students in LCs are not in age-designated classes, forcing the teachers to develop different teaching strategies and techniques that are suitable to multi-aged groups or multi-grade settings.

There were a variety of curricula being implemented in LCs in Bangkok. Some used the early childhood education curriculum [B.E. 2546 (2003)] and primary education curriculum introduced by the MoE. Others developed their own curriculum incorporating play, recreational activities and life-skills to support child development in an age-appropriate manner. Training and teaching materials are supported by various NGOs including World Education and Right to Play. One LC focused on Thai literacy at the primary level to prepare children for entry into RTG schools. Another LC adapted and used the primary school curriculum designated by the Myanmar government.

Students identified academic aspects, reputation and English language learning as reasons for attending LCs. All students at the LC transitioning students to RTG schools identified Thai language as the most important subject. Several parents remarked that they wanted their children to be enrolled in accredited programs if they were available. They were confident of their children's safety, but felt that LCs needed additional facilities and more classes, such as computer and English language programs.

7.2.2 Quality in RTG Schools in Bangkok

RTG schools follow the standard Thai curriculum endorsed by the MoE, which is conducted entirely in Thai. BMA schools in this sample had adequate textbooks, teaching resources and learning materials, as well as facilities such as libraries, music rooms, outdoor play areas, cafeterias and multipurpose rooms. Several teachers commented that the schools have sufficient resources for all students.

All the teachers interviewed had undergraduate degrees in education and several had graduate degrees in education administration with 10-20 years of teaching experience. Teachers are hired and evaluated based on standardized qualifications and assessments designated by the MoE and BMA. Some teachers had attended workshops or seminars led by local NGOs to increase their understanding of migrant children, yet expressed the need for additional training.

Migrant children are enrolled based on age and placement exam results in math and Thai language. Children younger than six-years-old are placed in kindergarten or first grade. Unless they demonstrate proficiency in Thai, older students are placed in grade one, resulting in high proportions of over-age migrant students and associated challenges. Several teachers commented that older students could be promoted from their current grade if they could demonstrate increased Thai literacy skills on a case-by-case basis. One teacher interviewed mentioned that a standardized and common understanding of this process among different schools

was currently lacking. None of the schools surveyed provided formal additional assistance in Thai language learning, although several teachers mentioned giving help before and after school as needed.

Most of the teachers used social studies topics about culture, language and ASEAN to encourage migrant children to share their culture, language and traditions in the classroom. All of the schools had prominent displays on ASEAN in their common areas that reinforced the upcoming ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015. One teacher interviewed mentioned that migrant students integrated well into the classroom and were well liked by their Thai peers. Several teachers said they respected the work ethic of migrant students and mentioned that their background and economic situation was not very different from the Thai students from the same community.

The majority of primary aged students, 79 %, were very happy when they were at school. Well over half of the lower secondary school aged students at BMA schools were also satisfied with their school primarily because it was a free education option that is accredited.

7.3.1 Quality in Learning Centers in Mae Sot

The lack of a governing body to establish, monitor and uphold standards in LCs has resulted in varying levels of quality in the 66 LCs in Tak province. This has resulted in donors introducing standards and requirements for funding, withdrawing funding in some cases and prompting a push for increased academic quality. Among those included in the sample, half of donors require LCs to offer recognized accredited learning pathways in order to receive financial support. These service providers have, in some cases, specified that recognition come from the RTG through the NFE program or transition into RTG schools with the SWS program. Other donors have allowed LCs to select their own form of accreditation, such as the Myanmar NFPE program.

Over half the LCs sampled require a grade ten education for elementary teachers and university degrees for those teachers at the secondary level, while others require only prior experience, commitment, language abilities, and, in one case, to be of a particular religion. These requirements are not consistently enforced by any organization, leaving major gaps in the quality of teaching in LCs. Almost all teachers reported that they had attended some form of pre or in-service training relevant to their current position. The majority, 73%, of LCs sampled reported that their teachers had received some form of training or support from World Education or its affiliated programs and partners. World Education was also noted as a significant contributor to teacher monitoring and evaluation.

Due to changes in Myanmar, 93% of LCs are using either the full Myanmar government curriculum or significant portions of it to better prepare students for an eventual return.

However, this curriculum also has gaps in relevance and quality, and many reported the need to supplement or adapt material based on local community needs. Many parents revealed serious concerns about the quality of education being provided and felt their options were limited due to financial and security constraints.

Roughly 40% of directors felt that student academic performance was either good or great, with students demonstrating high levels of motivation and commitment to learning. Directors felt that half of their students were struggling or unmotivated, the most common reasons being drug and alcohol use, a lack of parental support and value of education, a greater interest in employment, language barriers, age, home environment, and large class size. One LC directly attributed a drop in quality to losing the support of donors, particularly as they lose teachers. Some LCs report ratios as high as 28 students per teacher.

Among elementary level students, 77% reported that they were happy or very happy at their LC. However, approximately a quarter felt sad, angry, bored, afraid or confused at their school or with their teacher. About a quarter of students at all levels reported being dissatisfied with the social environment as well as with the physical environment of their LC.

7.3.2 Quality in RTG Schools in Mae Sot

Among sampled RTG schools in Mae Sot, there were various examples of schools providing supplemental resources to improve migrant students' Thai language abilities: by providing extra Thai language classes (43%), offering one-on-one after school tutoring for struggling students (29%), bringing a bilingual teaching assistant into the classroom (29%), utilizing additional materials for students to practice with (57%), and generally spending more time on language acquisition and vocabulary within the classroom (29%). Through an assessment of literacy skills, it was found that students in schools with additional Thai language support perform better academically than their counterparts in schools without these services, as analyzed in detail in the following chapter. Additionally, over half of the sampled schools are now offering Burmese language classes to prepare children who wish to return to Myanmar.

Student-teacher ratios are, on average, 25:1, higher than in LCs, with some schools reporting as many as 52 students per teacher. This indicates that the burden on RTG teachers may be too great to adequately meet the needs of migrant, as well as Thai, students in their classes.

When asked about migrant student academic performance, 71% of directors and 43% of teachers said that most of their students are struggling with Thai language. All acknowledged that the first year language poses significant challenges to students-even for students who are doing well academically. Despite these challenges, directors and teachers were impressed with the academic performance of migrant students, with some (29%) stating that they perform better than Thai students in math and English.

Overwhelmingly, parents noted that the most important requirement for their children's education was a recognized certificate and reported being very pleased with the quality of education at RTG schools. Students in RTG schools reported high rates of satisfaction with their education and cited Thai language to be their favorite part of school. Three of the 26 sampled students at the lower secondary level reported poor student teacher relationships and discrimination at school. While representing a small proportion of respondents, discrimination was also mentioned by parents as a barrier to attending RTG schools, revealing that this is a real challenge for some.

Both teachers and directors at RTG schools noted that over-age students seem to struggle the most. While these students generally have valuable prior learning experiences and school readiness skills, it is difficult for them to adapt to a new learning environment and language. Many schools implement a placement policy in which students older than kindergarten age are placed directly into the first grade, but there is great diversity of readiness levels. Some schools allow for students to take a Thai language placement test (43% in this sample) to determine the appropriate grade, while others require students, regardless of their age or prior learning, to progress through each level of their elementary education. This stands in contrast to schools in Bangkok, all of which allowed for placement tests, and results in large numbers of over-age students in RTG schools in Mae Sot. This means that students are in classrooms with content and methods not ideal or appropriate for their developmental stage, and peers far below their age. Stakeholders and educators noted these challenges and, in some cases, attributed drop-out to the challenges associated with being an over age student.

Recommendations for Quality

• Donors and education stakeholders should standardize management practices and quality frameworks within LCs: Cooperation and opportunities to share resources between LCs should be encouraged. Efforts should be made to introduce standardized quality frameworks in all LCs, such as SCI's Quality Learning Environment Framework, which is used in many countries around the world and could be adapted to the LC context.

• Support and scale-up teacher training: Teacher training and skill development opportunities should be combined with regular, standardized monitoring and evaluation of teachers to ensure quality.

• Further investigate placement policies and the impact on overage students in RTG schools: A standardized and common understanding for placement should be agreed upon to ensure consistency. Where students do not have the minimum knowledge or skills in order to be placed in an age-appropriate grade, alternative options such as accelerated NFE or remediation programs should be explored.

• Increase language support for students in RTG schools: Results from a literacy assessment indicate that students who attend extra Thai classes, receive additional activities to practice Thai language, or who have the support of a Thai-Burmese bilingual teaching assistant have higher literacy skills in Thai language. Bilingual teaching assistance should be introduced into kindergarten and grade one classes to support students as they enter RTG schools. RTG schools should offer specialized assistance to migrant students in the form of extra Thai language classes and bilingual materials to both teachers and students. For students who are not ready to study in Thai, LCs could introduce a MTB-MLE program. This would allow students to gradually transition from their home language to Thai language education programs so they are ready to attend a RTG schools or Thai NFE.

• Explore the positive impact of introducing Burmese language classes in RTG schools: Burmese classes would not only ensure that migrant students are prepared to return to Myanmar, but would also have a positive impact on Thai national students.

• Increase access to quality, accredited education: The career aspirations for children in LCs and RTG schools often required further studies to secondary and tertiary school. If pathways to accredited educational options are not facilitated, the children in LCs may not be able to realize these aspirations.

LC directors spoke openly about the challenges associated with finding committed, skilled and experienced teachers (credit: WE).

Students of all ages provided feedback on their experiences, challenges, and hopes for the future (credit: WE).
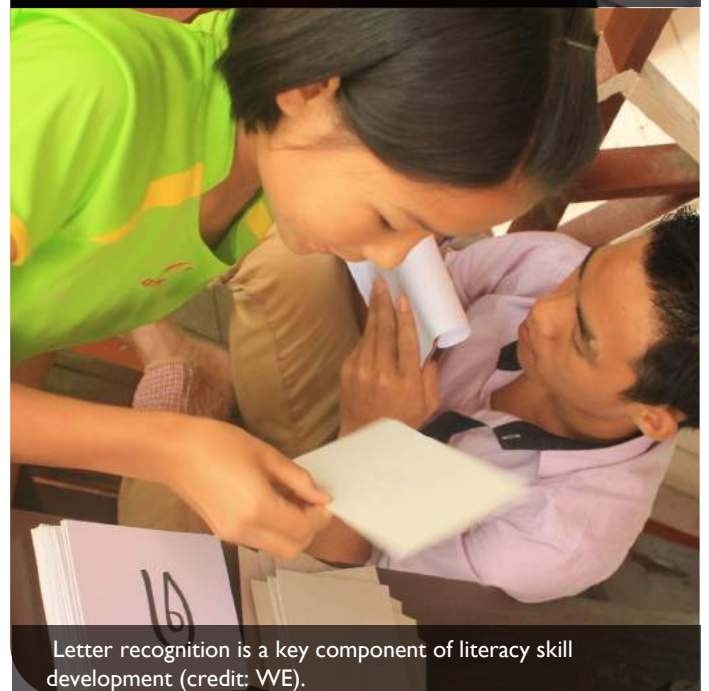
Letter recognition is a key component of literacy skill development (credit: WE).

CHAPTER 8

Analysis of Key Issues in the Provision of Education for the Children of Myanmar Migrants in Thailand: Assessing Early Grade Literacy Skills

In order to gauge the quality of learning, particularly with regard to literacy in language of instruction, a literacy assessment was carried out with students in LCs as well as RTG schools in Mae Sot and Bangkok where Burmese and Thai are used as the language of instruction respectively. This assessment was intended to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of reading skills in the target schools?
2. What is the level of reading skills among students learning in Thai versus those learning in Burmese?
3. Are certain groups of students struggling to master reading skills more so than others?

Key Findings

• Students in learning centers are performing better than those in RTG schools: Most students learning in Burmese in LCs are learning basic reading skills by the age of nine. Students in RTG schools do not perform quite as strongly, but around two thirds of them are able to read a simple text independently, which is encouraging, with schools in Bangkok performing particularly well.

• Comprehension is particularly challenging for students: The area where students generally had the most difficulties was comprehension, which is the ultimate purpose of reading, with students in Mae Sot struggling the most.

• Students learning in a second or third language struggle with reading skills: As is consistent with the theory and evidence on language acquisition, students who are studying in a different language to their first language tend to struggle more. This applies both to non-Thai speakers in RTG schools and to non-Burmese speakers in LCs.

• On average, girls performed better than boys on the reading assessment.

• Exposure to books and reading activities outside of school were found to be related to stronger reading skills.

• Early childhood education in the primary school language of instruction was found to be a significant predictor of reading skills.

• Language preparation and in-school language support seem to result in better reading skills: From the reading monitoring tool, there was no statistically significant relationship found between extra language classes and reading skills. However, the analysis of results by school, coupled with the information from the wider situational analysis research, does point to benefits from language preparation programs and in-school support programs in supporting children to read. The one to two year language preparation and school readiness program in Bangkok seems to be particularly promising in supporting students in Thai schools.

• External factors that decrease focus and attendance seem to negatively impact reading skills: The school by school results and the situation analysis also point to the role of other factors external to the classroom, such as the accessibility of the school and the student's need to work, which cause them to miss school.

8.1 Sample

A sample of 354 second grade students was taken from 21 institutions in Mae Sot and Bangkok. Five schools in Bangkok were included (1 LC and 4 RTG schools), along with 16 institutions from Mae Sot (8 LCs and 8 RTG schools). One school in the sample was ungraded, so children aged 9-10 years were targeted for inclusion in the assessment. At each institution, 10 boys and 10 girls were randomly sampled. However, in some there were not 20 students, so all eligible students were included and the final sample has 163 boys and 178 girls. Children were assessed in their language of instruction – either Burmese or Thai.

8.2 Methodology

The Save the Children Monitoring Reading tool was applied individually with each of the 354 students. This tool has two main components; the first component contains a series of questions to identify the students' personal, academic and literacy background, the second component is an assessment of the student's reading skills. Four reading skills were assessed- letter recognition, accuracy reading a text, fluency reading a text, and comprehension of the text.

8.3 Student Profiles

Burmese students living in Thailand have diverse backgrounds and learning experiences. Table 1 summarizes student background characteristics by city and school type. Due to the small sample size, particularly for students in LCs in Bangkok, tests of significant differences between groups are not shown here, so the discussion in this section is referring only to general trends in the data, not statistically significant differences.

Table 10: Student Background Characteristics by City and Institution

	Average Bangkok LC (N=13)	Average Bangkok RTG school (N=59)	Average Mae Sot LC (N=155)	Average Mae Sot RTG school (N=108)
Grade	NA	2.3	2,1	2,0
Sex (1- Female)	54%	63%	48%	53%
Age	9.3	9.9	9.9	9.8
Speak Thai at home	15%	59%	1%	18%
Speak Burmese at home	62%	49%	70%	66%
Speak Karen at home	0%	3%	26%	22%
Attended prior school	83%	75%	64%	43%
Attended ECD	67%	51%	56%	80%
ECD in Thai	15%	47%	4%	58%
ECD in Burmese	54%	14%	41%	24%
ECD in Karen	0%	0%	11%	0%
Repeated a grade	10%	8%	37%	35%
Have extra Thai lessons	0%	29%	45%	21%
Have extra Burmese lessons	18%	3%	43%	25%
Live with parents	85%	92%	81%	65%
Storybooks at home	23%	53%	31%	51%
Read outside of school	17%	49%	50%	50%
Visit library	31%	56%	45%	65%
Someone at home reads to child	23%	36%	62%	41%
Someone at home seen reading	54%	54%	57%	62%
Someone in community reads to child	17%	27%	64%	37%
More than one room home (BKK)	23%	36%	62%	41%
Share home (BKK)	0%	12%		
Rent home (MST)			59%	55%
Own TV (MST)			66%	84%
Own motorbike (MST)			31%	45%

8.3.1 Home Language

Overall, students in RTG schools in Bangkok are more likely to speak Thai at home (59%) and less likely to speak Burmese (49%) than any other group. Interestingly, about the same proportion of students in LCs in Bangkok and proportion of students in RTG schools in Mae Sot report speaking Thai or Burmese at home (15 and 18% Thai; 62 and 66% Burmese). Children attending LCs in Mae Sot are the least likely to report speaking Thai at home (1%), and most likely to speak Burmese (70%). Finally, about the same proportion of students in both RTG school and LCs in Mae Sot report speaking Karen at home (22 and 26%), where almost no children in Bangkok report speaking Karen at home.

8.3.2 Previous Schooling

On average, the majority of students in Bangkok report having attended a school prior to their current school, but are very unlikely to report having repeated a grade, whereas students in Mae Sot were less likely to report attending a prior school and more likely to have repeated a grade. Children attending RTG schools in Mae Sot were the most likely to report attending an ECD program (80%), and, of those, most attended Thai preschools (58%). The most common type of preschool for students at RTG schools in Bangkok was also Thai (47%), and students attending LCs in Bangkok and Mae Sot predominantly attended Burmese centers (54 and

41%). However, while many children attended preschool in the language they are currently learning, overall 45% attended preschool in a language other than their current language of instruction.

8.3.3 Literacy Environment

Exposure to print and interaction with stories and text is a strong driver of literacy skill development. Children attending in LCs in Mae Sot are the most likely to report someone at home or in the community reading to them outside of school, unlike children in LCs in Bangkok, where only 17% say they are read to outside of school.

Finally, students attending LCs in Bangkok are also the least likely to report having visited a library (31%), followed by students attending LCs in Mae Sot (45%), and then students attending RTG schools in Bangkok (56%) and Mae Sot (65%).

8.3.4 Home Possessions

Children in Bangkok and Mae Sot were asked different questions about the possessions in their homes in an effort to attain information about the relative wealth of families in the study. Slightly more children in RTG schools in Bangkok report sharing a home compared to children in LCs in Bangkok but no large differences are apparent in the data. In Mae Sot, children in RTG schools are more likely to own a TV or a motorbike than children in LCs, suggesting their families may have more resources than children in LCs.

8.4 Reading Skill Profile

Figure 32 displays average skill scores for students attending LCs in Mae Sot. On average, 83% of students could read a simple Burmese text independently, meaning that they were able to read at least ten words a minute accurately. We next turn to consider children's background characteristics and ask whether there are relationships between skills and different groups that have implications for program planning and implementation.

Figure 32: Skill Profiles for LC Students in Mae Sot, Burmese Language

All students (n=155) Readers (n=135)

Figure 33: Skill Profiles for RTG School Students in Mae Sot, Thai Language
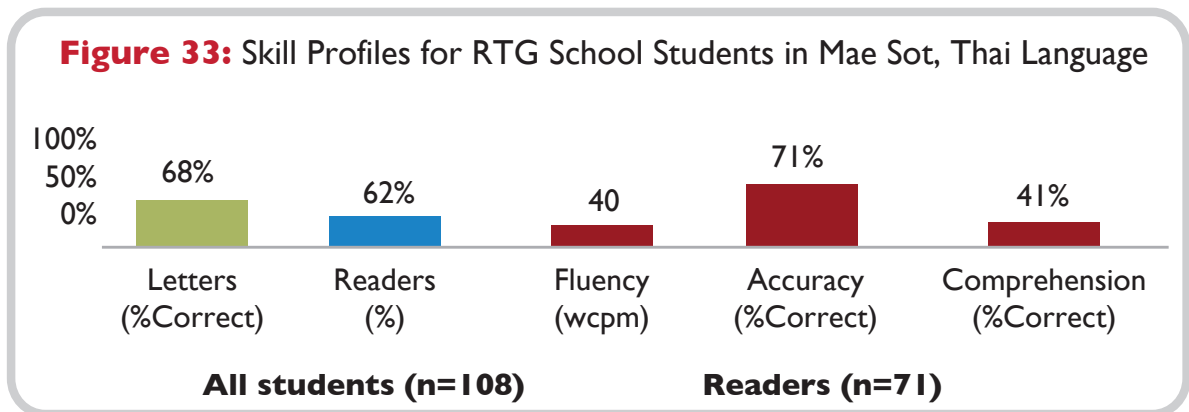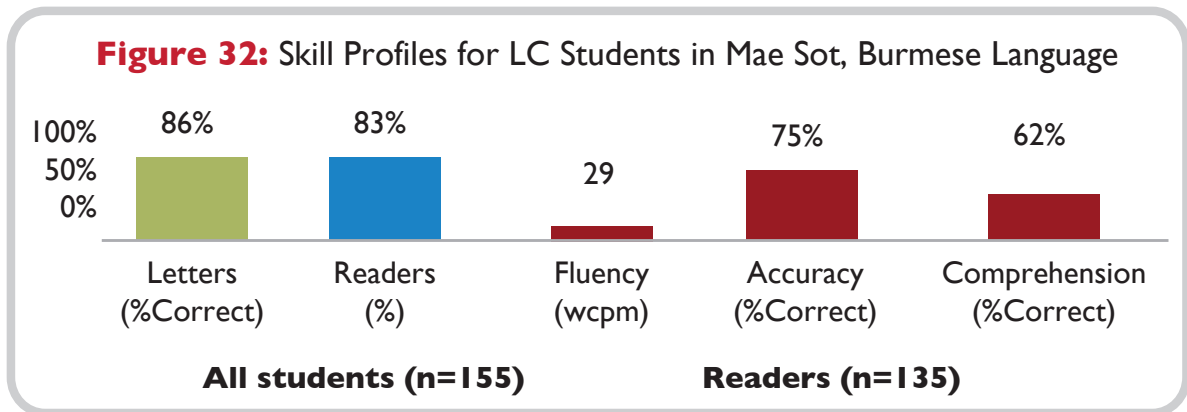
All students (n=108) Readers (n=71)

Figure 33 displays average skill scores for students attending RTG schools in Mae Sot. On average, 62% of students could read a simple Thai text independently.

Figure 34: Skill Profiles for RTG School Students in Bangkok, Thai Language

	Letters (%Correct)	Readers (%)	Fluency (wcpm)	Accuracy (%Correct)	Comprehension (%Correct)
	78%	67%	70	89%	67%

All students (n=70)   **Readers (n=49)**
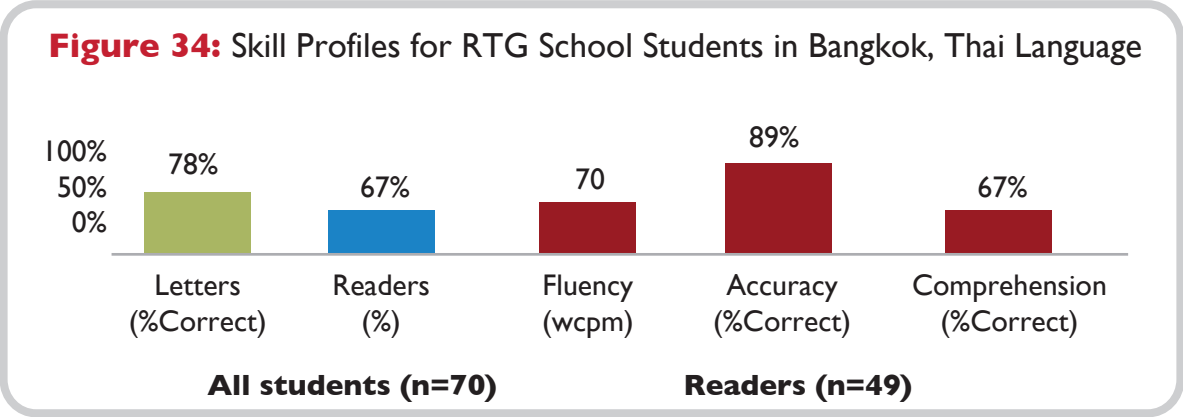
Figure 34 displays average skill scores for students attending RTG schools in Bangkok. On average, 67% of students could read a simple Thai text independently.

Figure 35: Skill Profiles for RTG School Students in Mae Sot and Bangkok

	Letters (%Correct)	Readers (%)	Fluency (wcpm)	Accuracy (%Correct)	Comprehension (%Correct)
	68% / 78%	62% / 67%	40 / 70	71% / 89%	41% / 67%

■ MST Thai (n=108, readers=71)   ■ BKK Thai (n=70, readers=49)
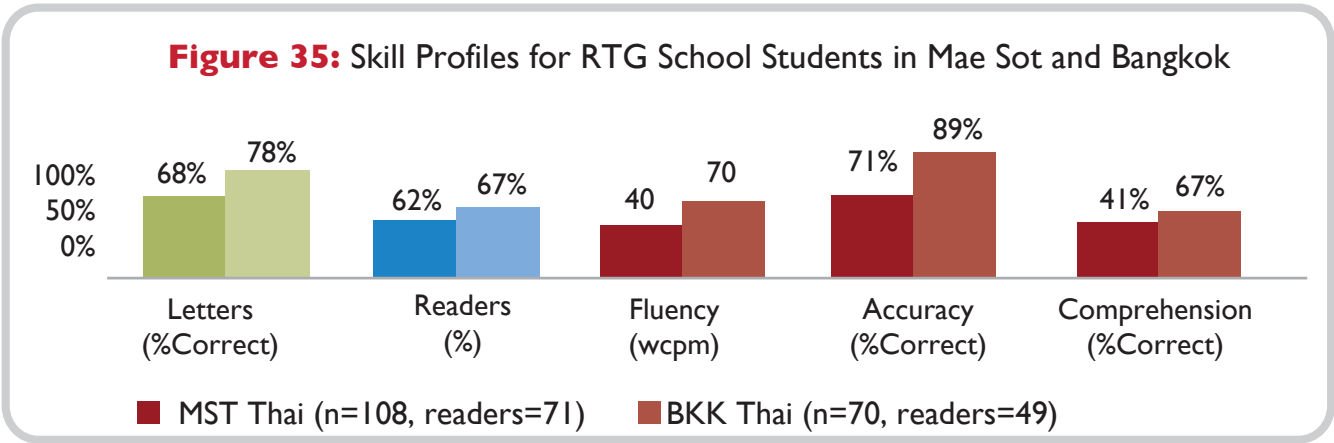
Figure 35 combines Figures 2 and 3 to display average skill scores for children attending RTG schools in Mae Sot and Bangkok. On average, a slightly higher proportion of children can read independently in Bangkok and children who are independent readers in Bangkok tend to have stronger higher order skills than independent readers in Mae Sot.

Figure 36: Reading with Comprehension

■ Emergent Reader   ■ Beginning Reader   ■ Reader with Comprehension

	Emergent Reader	Beginning Reader	Reader with Comprehension
BKK Thai (in=70)	49%	31%	20%
MST Thai (n=108)	64%	32%	4%
MST LC (n=155)	30%	55%	15%
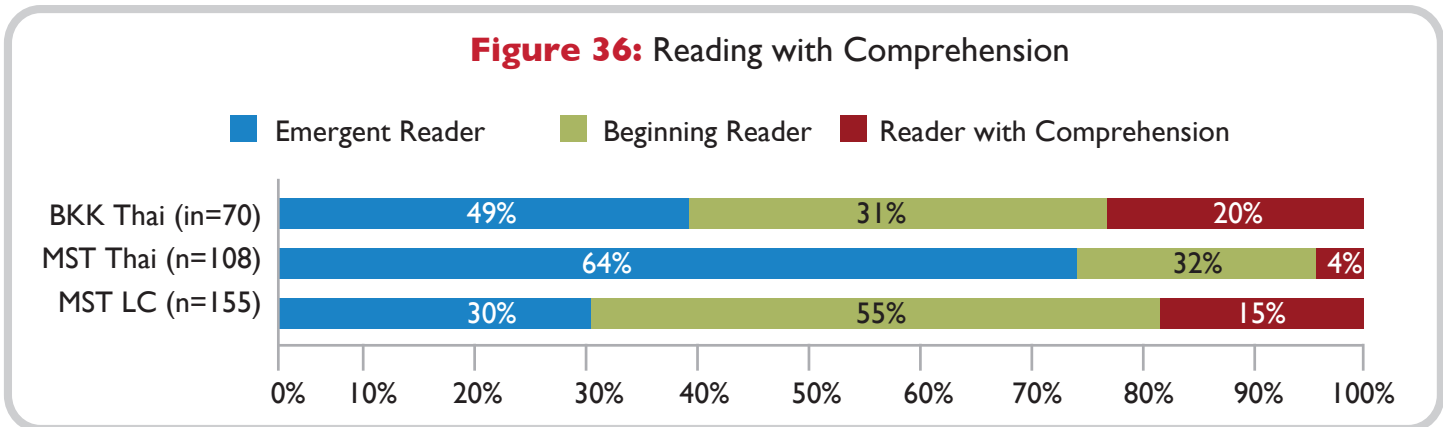
Figure 36 displays the percent of all children who are in emergent reader, beginner reader and reading with comprehension categories, by location and assessment language. Emergent readers are those who answered 2 or fewer comprehension questions correctly; beginning readers answered 3 or 4 questions correctly, and children reading with comprehension answered all 5 comprehension questions correctly. This again shows that while in Mae Sot LCs there is a higher proportion of students who are at least beginner readers, there is a higher proportion of students in RTG schools in Bangkok who are readers with comprehension.

8.5 Equity and Reading Skills

This section summarizes the background information collected about the children's lives and considers whether and how these characteristics are related to their current skills status. This can offer insight into effective program targeting for specific groups of struggling learners. The categories of background information are: general background, educational experience, home language and literacy environment, and socioeconomic status.

8.5.1 Gender

Figure 37: Average Skill Score for RTG School Learners, by Gender

Figure 38 displays that, on average, girls in RTG schools tend to have more advanced literacy skills than boys in Thai. No differences were found between the skills of boys and girls in LCs, but this could be due, in part, to the small sample size in the study.

Note: *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$
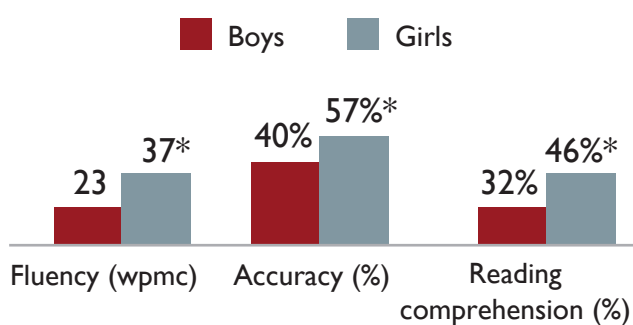
8.5.2 Educational Experience

Burmese children living in Thailand have a wide variety of educational experiences that they bring to primary school. Investigating the impact of prior schooling on literacy skills, we find that children in LCs who report attending an ECD program in the language of assessment tend to have stronger skills than children who did not attend an ECD program. Further, children who report attending an ECD program in a language other than the assessment language tend to have weaker literacy skills. Specifically, children who were assessed in Burmese and who attended a Burmese ECD program have significantly stronger fluency and comprehension skills, whereas children who were assessed in Burmese and who attended Thai ECD programs had significantly weaker fluency and reading comprehension skills than children who did not (Figure 7). A similar relationship was found with reading comprehension tiers for children in RTG schools but a trend was not apparent across the majority of skills.

Figure 38: Burmese Fluency (wpmc), by EDC Experience

Looking at other forms of schooling, attending extra Thai or Burmese lessons was not predictive of literacy skills, nor was attending a school prior to the current institution. This does not mean that there is no relationship between prior schooling or extra lessons and learning, just that no clear relationship was found in this data. This may be due to students having difficulties understanding the question on extra language classes.

On the other hand, it is important to note that there is other evidence to suggest that preparation and support programs may help students in RTG schools to read better. The vast majority of students attending RTG schools in Bangkok had been through a 1-2 year Thai language and school readiness program, which may partly explain why they performed better than students in RTG schools in Mae Sot. Furthermore, the better performing RTG schools in Mae Sot also offer some form of additional language support for migrant students, this is discussed in more detail in the section below on school by school results. Further investigation into the role and quality of language preparation and support programs could be informative.

8.5.3 Home Language

The literacy environments facing Burmese children in Thailand are complex. Some children are living and learning in the same language while others speak one language at home and another in school. Table 11 displays the proportion of independent readers by home language. If a child reported speaking multiple languages at home, they were included in multiple categories. As noted earlier, there is a relationship between the language spoken at home and the schools children are enrolled in so families of children in different types of schools and in different cities are likely quite different. Therefore, this table is purely descriptive and no statistical testing was performed. However, this information is displayed in an attempt to gain a better understanding of the children enrolled in different schools and who may be struggling the most.

Table 11 shows that in Mae Sot children who report speaking Burmese at home are more likely to be independent Burmese readers, compared to children who speak Karen at home, and there are almost no children who report speaking Thai at home who are enrolled in LCs. Children who speak Thai at home in Mae Sot tend to be enrolled in RTG schools and are more likely to be independent Thai readers compared to Burmese speaking children in RTG schools. Interestingly, children who speak Karen at home are nearly as likely as those speaking Thai at home to be independent Thai readers. In Bangkok, children who speak Thai at home are much more likely to be independent Thai readers than those not speaking Thai at home. These trends are generally consistent with the wide body of theory and evidence pointing to the fact that children learn to read better and more quickly when they receive instruction and materials in their home language.
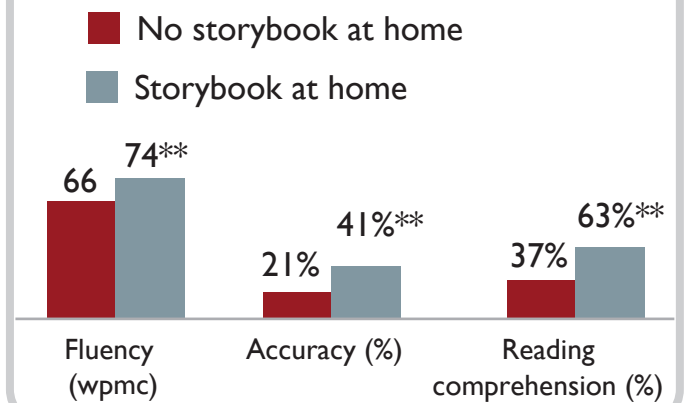
8.5.4 Home Literacy Environment

Print and reading activities can have a powerful effect on children's reading skills development. This study finds that children who were assessed in Thai and had storybooks at home tended to have significantly higher literacy skills than those who did not have a book at home (Figure 39). In addition, children in RTG schools who had strong community literacy environments (i.e., reading outside school, visiting a library, having someone in the community who read to them) had significantly stronger letter identification, accuracy, and reading comprehension skills (Figure 40).

Having storybooks at home was not found to be a significant predictor of literacy skills for Burmese children in LCs but having someone in the community who read to them did predict significantly higher fluency, accuracy and reading comprehension tiers.

Table 11: Average Proportion of Readers, by Home Language

City	% Reader	Home language					
		Burmese	N	Karen	N	Thai	N
Mae Sot	Burmese	88%	108	70%	40	NA	2
Mae Sot	Thai	59%	71	71%	24	74%	19
Bangkok	Thai	62%	37	NA	3	84%	37

Figure 39: Average Skill Score for RTG School Students, by Reading Material at Home

■ No storybook at home
■ Storybook at home

Fluency (wpmc): 66, 74**
Accuracy (%): 21%, 41%**
Reading comprehension (%): 37%, 63%**

Note: *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Figure 40: Average Scores for RTG School Students, by CLE Support

% Correct

Community literacy environment scale

Letter ID — Accuracy — Reading comprehension

Letter ID: 65%, 68%, 72%, 75%
Accuracy: 35%, 44%, 54%, 63%
Reading comprehension: 31%, 37%, 43%, 48%

(scale: 0, 1, 2, 3)
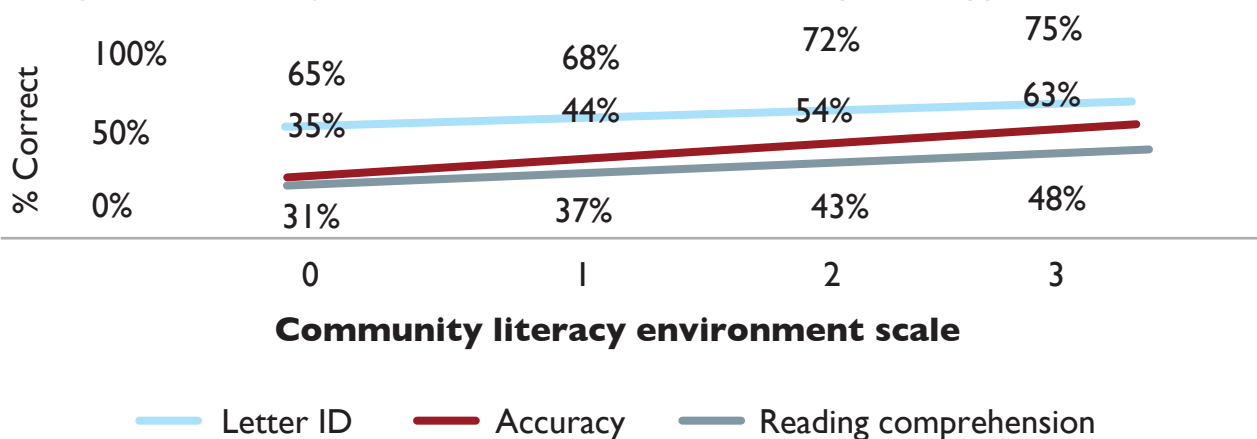
8.5.5 Equity Conclusions

In this section, gender, early childhood education experience in the language of instruction, instruction in the home language, and exposure to print and literacy activities outside school were found to be traits or activities related to reading skills. All analyses used variables of interest as predictors of reading skills and controlled for city only (in the case of RTG schools) due to the small size of the dataset. These relationships are not causal – they do not indicate that, for example, having a storybook at home in this context causes a higher fluency score – these observations simply point to who are among the more and less successful readers at this point in time. Conversely, they reveal who might be in need of more assistance. The group who appears to be most in need of support are boys and those who have less exposure to print or reading activities outside of school. There was no statistically significant relationship found between prior education experience or extra language classes and reading skills.

However, the school-by-school analysis and evidence from the situation analysis, presented in the following section, does suggest that preparation and support programs may be beneficial for children's reading, and this is an area for further investigation.

8.6 School by School Results and Situation Analysis

Looking further into the literacy assessment results, we find that children's average literacy skills vary quite a bit school by school. Figures 41 and 42 display the variation in the proportion of readers and overall reading comprehension for RTG schools and LCs in Mae Sot.

Within RTG schools in Mae Sot, we see that the proportion of readers per school ranges from 44% to 90%, while the proportion of reading comprehension questions answered correctly only ranges from 23 to 46%. In addition, there does not appear to be a strong relationship between the proportion of independent readers in a school and overall reading comprehension scores. That is, average reading comprehension scores do not increase with the proportion of readers in a school.

This data suggests that there is a wider range in Burmese's children's Thai literacy abilities compared to their literacy skills in Burmese, and many are still struggling with higher-level skills like comprehension.

An analysis of these scores alongside student profile information and data collected during the situational analysis reveals some interesting relationships between student background, learning environment and literacy. These relationships are presented in an attempt to compliment statistical findings from this assessment, and, in other cases, to present interesting findings that, while not statistically proven, may be relevant for future programming.

Most striking in RTG schools, is the fact that four of the five schools with the highest proportion of readers provided some form of additional Thai language support, whether it be in the form of after school classes, one on one tutoring, or additional resources and homework for students to practice with. Interestingly, the school with the largest proportion of readers did not provide support of this kind, but they do participate in the School within School program, wherein students study the Thai curriculum with a Thai national teacher in their LC before transferring into the partner RTG school in grade two. While no statistical evidence was gathered to investigate this relationship, it can be inferred that increased exposure and additional support in the language of instruction, whether before or during entry into RTG school, may well have a positive impact on the literacy levels of students, particularly those learning in a second language.

Furthermore, half of the four schools with the highest proportion of readers provided targeted support to students at younger grades by providing bilingual language and teaching assistants in the classroom who can speak Thai as well as the students' mother tongue language. In some cases this was Burmese and in others it was Karen. This support seems to not only improve reading skills, but also higher-level skills like comprehension. Once again, while these relationships are not statistically proven, the data does seem to show a positive relationship between bilingual support in the classroom, particularly at lower grade levels, and second language acquisition.

Figure 41: Average Proportion of Readers and Reading Comprehension for RTG Schools in Mae Sot, by School
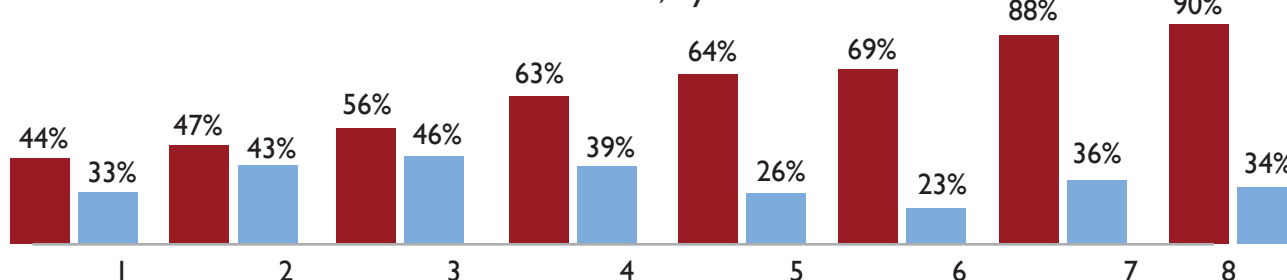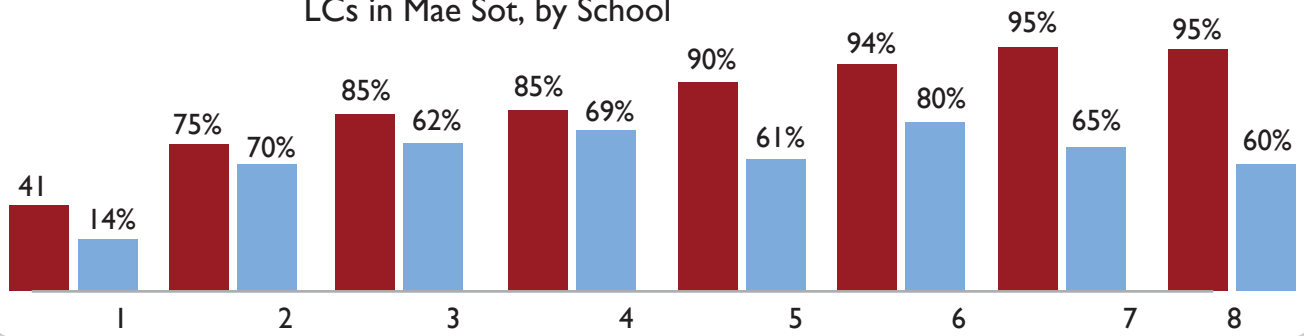
Figure 42: Average Proportion of Readers and Reading Comprehension for LCs in Mae Sot, by School

Interestingly, three of the eight sampled schools are providing Burmese language classes to students. In the case of School 5, where 95% of the student body is Burmese, these classes are taken not only by Burmese students, but also by Thai students, helping to increase bilingualism among all students in the school and increase the level of support that peers can offer one another in the language acquisition process. While no visible trends exist to indicate that these classes help to improve literacy, they do seem to be prevalent among schools with high levels of support for students, both academically and socially, which fosters greater integration and academic success. The relationship between support for social integration and literacy can also be seen with School 7, which not only provides additional Thai classes for migrant students and language training for teachers, but has also trained three individuals to be migrant student support staff. It seems that forms of social support like this have a positive impact on students and their overall success in school.

The results from the students in RTG schools in Bangkok also seem to suggest that support and preparation programs can be beneficial. As outlined in detail above in the analysis of the assessment results, the students in RTG schools in Bangkok performed better than students in RTG schools in Mae Sot, and in fact their comprehension skills were the strongest of all the students in the assessment. The situational analysis found that the overwhelming majority of these students in Bangkok had attended a Thai language and school readiness program for a minimum of one year and, in some cases, two years. This program, implemented by a local organization specializing in preparing migrant students for integration into schools, may be a contributing factor to students in RTG schools in Bangkok outperforming students in schools in Mae Sot.

Thus, with a school by school analysis, possible relationships can be identified between literacy and additional language support and exposure, bilingual teaching and language assistance at younger grades, and support for social integration in the school community.

A wide range in the proportion of readers and average reading comprehension per school can also be seen in

LCs in Mae Sot. The proportion of independent readers per school ranges from 41 to 95% and the average reading comprehension scores range from 14% to 80% correct. However, when one school that appears to be an outlier, School 1, is removed, the range of reader and reading comprehension reduces to 75 to 95% readers and 60 to 80% comprehension, a smaller skill range than is seen in RTG schools. Similar to the schools, we do not see a linear relationship between the proportion of individual readers in a school and the overall reading comprehension.

In general, the majority of children who were attending LCs can read independently in Burmese and understand text at a higher level than their peers in RTG schools in Mae Sot. This is consistent with the finding outlined above that students learning in their home language performed better, and with the theory on evidence on mother tongue based education. This again underlies the need for support and preparation for children who will be learning in their second language.

The importance of mother tongue language comes into play in the LC context as well, as indicated by the results displayed in Figure 43. The two schools with the lowest proportion of independent readers are schools where Karen is the most common mother tongue language of students. Not only that, but directors and teachers in both of these LCs reported that language was one of the major challenges experienced by students, and that difficulties with language often led to lower academic performance, decreased motivation and student drop out. Thus, the issue of students struggling when learning in a second language is not only relevant in RTG schools, but also in LCs in multi-ethnic areas where students' first language may not be Burmese.

Another factor that was identified by the situational analysis which may have an influence on reading skills was students' personal circumstances. While the learning environment plays an important role in students' academic performance, each of the four schools with the lowest proportion of independent readers reported external issues and their impact on academic success. One of the major issues was accessibility and attendance at school, with schools reporting that students often had to leave school for periods of time to work, which disrupted their learning, resulting in decreased academic

performance. In three of these schools, a significant proportion of the sampled students were above the typical age for their grade level, indicating that they had taken breaks in their education or repeated grades. A lack of student motivation, an interest to earn money rather than attend school, limited encouragement from parents to study and economic barriers were also cited as having impacts on students' academic performance by these LCs. When all of these factors are considered alongside the results of these LCs, it can be inferred that external forces may well also have an impact on students' academic success and can thus influence literacy rates among students.

Recommendations for Literacy

• **Programs to promote access to books and reading activities outside of school are needed:** The assessment finds that these two factors appear important in supporting children's literacy. The RTG, schools, NGOs, and other stakeholders working to promote education quality, should therefore consider programs such as community libraries and book banks, parent and community reading activities, or reading buddy systems which promote children's access to books and support reading outside of school. There appears to be a particular lack of books in Burmese (and Karen) for students attending LCs and this should be a priority. Given the lower performance of boys the programs should also make specific efforts to ensure boys also receive support outside of school.

• **Programs to support children's second language skills should be developed and scaled up:** While around two thirds of migrant children in RTG schools are able to read a basic text, this means that there is still a significant proportion of children who are struggling to read. Karen children attending Burmese LCs are also finding it more difficult to read. This confirms that children studying in a second language require additional support. More investigation is required to understand what type of support is most effective. Some options are second language and school readiness preparation programs and bilingual teaching assistants. The Bangkok RTG school preparation program may be a model to further investigate for scale-up. For students who are not ready to study in Thai, LCs could introduce a MTB-MLE program. This would allow students to gradually transition from their home language to Thai language education programs so they are ready to attend a RTG school or Thai NFE.

• **Scale-up ECD programs to support strong literacy skills:** The importance of ECD programs for children's learning and development is well known, and the assessment confirms that ECD programs, particularly those in the language of instruction of primary education, are helping students to develop stronger reading skills. The RTG, LCs, and NGOs should scale-up efforts to ensure migrant children

have access to quality ECD programs in the language of primary school. There are programs already existing in Bangkok and Mae Sot that can provide a reference point for scale-up.

• **Reading comprehension should be promoted:** Lower scores in reading comprehension often relate to instruction and indicate that children are not being effectively taught to read for understanding and meaning. The RTG, schools and organizations working on teacher training should therefore make efforts to ensure that teachers know how to teach children to read, with special focus being paid to teaching reading and writing for meaning and communication. Community based programs which include book sharing should also ensure that those who are sharing books with children emphasize enjoyment, meaning and communication which are the ultimate purposes of reading.

Children learning in their mother tongue language displayed stronger reading skills than their peers learning in the Thai language (credit: WE).

Chapter 9
Summary of Recommendations

9.1 Recommendations on Access and Opportunity

• **Increase support for the implementation of EFA:** The MoE needs to support the integration of migrant children into the Thai school system by actively promoting the implementation of EFA. There is a need to develop a comprehensive plan for awareness raising and capacity building among schools in order that enrollment procedures and placement policies are fully understood and are being implemented consistently. One place to start would be to prioritize this issue in the yearly guidelines and order letters that all RTG receive from OBEC. Community attitudes can influence enrollment policies at the school level, as well as impact the learning environment in which migrant students are learning. Education stakeholders and directors at RTG schools can help to develop more positive attitudes of migrants within Thai society by publicizing positive images of migrant students. This could be done in school competitions or public events. Incentive programs could encourage schools to enroll migrant children, such as increased resources or flexibility on national state exams.

• **Continue to provide subsidized education for migrant children in RTG schools:** The RTG should continue its provision of 15 years of free basic education to all children regardless of nationality. Reduced support would see many students dropping out of school, contributing to the marginalization, poverty and exploitation experienced by many migrant children, families and communities. Not only is education a fundamental right, but the migrant community will be well placed to make great contributions to Thai society and economic development if they are well-educated.

• **Gather accurate and current data on migrant children:** A systematic effort should be made to obtain accurate and current estimates of the total number of migrant children, including mapping of out of school children, in order to respond with increased support and resource allocation in the form of teachers, materials and facilities like classrooms. Schools could be supported with appropriate resources so they can take responsibility for this initiative by implementing mapping and information sharing activities as part of their community outreach. Other sectors, such as the Ministry of Health, could also be engaged as they have an extensive network of community health volunteers who already gather population data.

• **Increase awareness of educational opportunities amongst migrant students, parents and communities:** Significant proportions of students and parents are unaware of their educational opportunities, as well as policies and important dates regarding registration. There is a need to increase awareness of options within institutions, since educators are a great source of information for students. Efforts also need to be made at the community level to access parents, who often make education decisions, as well as out of school children. These should be developed and delivered with consideration to work schedules, as well as language and cultural differences. Timely registration will also help to avoid gaps in funding, reducing the burden placed on RTG schools.

• **Scale up initiatives to increase survival rates in LCs and RTG schools and programs to support over-age students:** Flexible models of education need to be provided that allow students to attend school in the evening, on weekends or for particular times of the year, for instance, not during harvesting season. Stay-in-school initiatives need to be implemented in LCs and RTG schools in order to avoid drop out at the elementary and secondary level. These could include activities that increase the value of education among students and parents, as well as vocational training programs alongside formal learning. It is also important that viable pathways are offered for over-age students, who dropout of primary school at much higher rates, as discussed in more detail earlier.

• **Increase Thai language preparation and support for migrant students in Thai formal, non-formal and transitional learning:** Results from a literacy assessment indicate that students who attend extra Thai classes, receive additional activities to practice Thai language, or who have the support of a Thai-Burmese bilingual teaching assistant have higher literacy skills in Thai language than those who do not. Thai language support and preparation is also a key indicator of success in transition programs, as well as the Thai NFE program. Students who do not receive this support suffer academically. Teachers and students require bilingual teaching and learning materials in order to support the acquisition of Thai language at RTG schools. Bilingual teaching assistants should be introduced in early grades to support communication and language acquisition.

9.2 Recommendations on Accreditation

• Continue to support and scale up accredited pathways in LCs: Greater enrollment in accredited pathways needs to be facilitated first by increasing the awareness of these programs amongst parents, and next by expanding their accessibility and availability within LCs and focused centers. Those LCs unable or unwilling to introduce such programming should transition into preparation centers or support the transfer of their students into accredited programs. LCs should cooperate with one another to finance these programs or coordinate the transfer of students to access these programs. Accredited programs should be flexible, ensuring that they are accessible to all students, depending on their need.

• Conduct further research and piloting of the Thai NFE program for Special Target Groups: For the majority of parents who envision staying long-term, the Thai NFE for Special Target Groups program will meet their needs, while the Myanmar NFPE program will prepare students for a return to Myanmar and fill the void of opportunities to receive an education in Thailand that is recognized within Myanmar. Thai NFE should be scaled-up and mainstreamed as part of the basic education offer of OBEC schools, rather than a separate program offered by ONIE. Alternatively, there needs to be a clear referral system and process for schools to refer over-age students to ONIE programs. As NFE is scaled-up it will require extensive funding for teacher salaries, teacher training, and materials.

• Increase support for returning Myanmar migrant students: Service providers and LCs should coordinate their efforts to assist in preparing students to sit the matriculation exam and access accredited higher learning opportunities in Myanmar to ensure greater success.

• Continue to support and scale-up RTG school transition programs: Transition and bridging programs that facilitate access to Thai education need to be supported and strengthened in order that those students wishing to follow this route can do so. Programs should target those currently at the pre-primary and primary level, who are in the greatest position to succeed in RTG schools. All programs should place emphasis on language preparation to ensure the success of students post-transition.

9.3 Recommendations on Sustainability

• Increase prioritization of and support for sustainability strategies in LCs: Direct service providers and donors should be at the forefront of these activities, requiring all funding recipients to have a strategic plan as well as activities that reduce their dependence on donors. LCs could consider cost sharing initiatives with parents and PTAs, fundraising activities within the community, school businesses, resource sharing, income generation and even the possibility of amalgamating with other LCs. Those without funding should consider whether or not they are in a position to provide reliable and quality education. For all LCs and service providers, plans need to be set in place to ensure that children have immediate access to education in the case that an LC closes. LC directors and management, with the support and oversight of service providers, must develop plans for students in the case of closure. This could include avoidance measures like school businesses and cost saving efforts, as well as contingency plans such as amalgamating LCs in close proximity to one another. It could also include developing partnerships to facilitate the transition of students from one LC to another in response to closures.

• Support and scale-up registration of LCs: There will be greater success in the long- term sustainability of LCs if they offer accredited education and are registered with the RTG as schools. Those LCs unable or unwilling to introduce such programming should transition into preparation centers, offer accredited programming, or support the transfer of their students into accredited programs. To enable wider registration of LCs, the RTG should make sure the criteria are flexible and achievable. This will help ensure that LCs can continue to offer a mother-tongue based education relevant to migrant children while also serving as preparation centers for migrant children to transition to RTG schools and integrate into Thai society. A MTB-MLE approach may be most effective with this in mind.

• Share information on registration process and timelines in RTG schools: Greater efforts need to be made to inform migrant parents of registration dates and the enrollment process. More consistent recruitment and registration practices also need to be developed. This will ensure migrant students are registering on time and that budget is delivered to schools on time, helping to avoid gaps in funding that are experienced by some RTG schools.

9.4 Recommendations on Quality

• **Introduce standards and monitoring of LCs:** Donors and education stakeholders should cooperate to develop frameworks for standardization among LCs. Cooperation between LCs should be encouraged and opportunities for LCs to band together to share information and resources should be scaled up. Efforts should be made to introduce standardized quality frameworks in all LCs, such as SCI's Quality Learning Environment Framework, which is used in many countries around the world and could be adapted to the LC context.

• **Continue support for and provision of teacher training programs for LC teachers:** Teacher training and skill development opportunities should be continued and ensured for the future, and these programs should also adhere to some common standards. These should be combined with regular and standardized monitoring and evaluation of teachers to ensure quality.

• **Continue and scaled up technical support for institutions and teachers:** For directors, this should include management techniques and financial management, particularly in the case of LCs. RTG school teachers should be provided with opportunities to develop skills relevant to teaching multi-ethnic and linguistic students. Bilingual teaching assistants at the KG and G1 level should also be brought into RTG schools with the support of the RTG or NGOs.

• **Review placement policies and management of over-age students:** Greater consideration should be given to the impacts on overage students in RTG schools. A standardized policy and procedure should be established, including the widespread introduction of placement and fast-track promotion tests. The research indicates that over-age students are more likely to drop-out, and therefore where an age-appropriate grade placement is not possible, students should be supported to progress through the grades more rapidly or to enter NFE programs.

• **Explore the positive impact of introducing Burmese language classes in RTG schools:** Burmese classes would not only ensure that migrant students are prepared to return to Myanmar, but, would also have a positive impact on Thai national students.

9.5 Recommendations for Literacy

• **Programs to promote access to books and reading activities outside of school are needed:** The assessment finds that these two factors appear important in supporting children's literacy. The RTG, schools, LCs, NGOs, and other stakeholders working to promote education quality, should therefore consider programs such as community libraries and book banks, parent and community reading activities, or reading buddy systems which promote children's access to books and support reading outside of school. There appears to be a particular lack of books in Burmese (and Karen) for students attending LCs and this is should be a particular priority. Given the lower performance of boys the programs should also make specific efforts to ensure boys also receive support outside of school.

• **Programs to support children's second language skills should be developed and scaled up:** While around two thirds of migrant children in RTG schools are able to read a basic text, this means that there is still a significant proportion of children who are struggling to read. Karen children attending Burmese LCs are also finding it more difficult to read. This confirms that children studying in a second language require additional support. More investigation is required to understand what type of support is most effective. Some options are second language and school readiness preparation programs and bilingual teaching assistants. The Bangkok RTG school preparation program may be a model to further investigate for scale-up. For students who are not ready to study in Thai, LCs could introduce a MTBMLE program. This would allow students to gradually transition from their home language to Thai language education programs so they are ready to attend a RTG school or Thai NFE.

• **Scale up ECD programs to support strong literacy skills:** The importance of ECD programs for children's learning and development is well known, and the assessment confirms that ECD programs, particularly those in the language of instruction of primary education, are helping students to develop stronger reading skills. The RTG, LCs, and NGOs should scale up ECD programs to support strong literacy skills. There are programs that already existing in Bangkok and Mae Sot that can provide a reference point for scale-up.

• **Reading comprehension should be promoted:** Lower scores in reading comprehension are often related to instruction and indicate that children are not being effectively taught to read for understanding and meaning. The RTG, schools and organizations working on teacher training should therefore make efforts to ensure that teachers know how to teach children to read, with special focus being paid to teaching reading and writing for meaning and communication. Community based programs which include book sharing should also ensure that those who are sharing books with children emphasize enjoyment, meaning and communication which are the ultimate purposes of reading.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Chapters 1-7

Table 12: Research Sample

Mae Sot Total Sample	Bangkok Total Sample
23 Educational institutions	7 Educational institutions
23 Directors	5 Directors
32 Teachers	12 Teachers
125 Students	55 Students
48 Parents	16 Parents

Thailand Total Sample

30 Education Institutions (18 MLCs, 12 Thai Schools)

Directors = 28
Teachers   = 44
Students   = 180
Parents   = 64

28 Stakeholder & Key Informant Interviews

Table 13: Stakeholder and Key Informant Sample

Stakeholder & Key Informant Sample

CBOs, NGOs & Foundations (18)

BEAM Education Foundation, Migrant Education Integration Initiative (MEII)
Burma Education Partnership (BEP)
Burmese Migrant Teacher's Association (BMTA)
Burmese Migrant Worker's Education Committee (BMWEC)
Child's Dream Foundation
Foundation for Rural Youth (FRY)
Help Without Frontiers (HWF)
International Rescue Committee (IRC)
Labor Rights Protection Network Foundation
MAP Foundation
Mae Tao Clinic
Migrant Education (ME)
Migrant Working Group (MWG)
Raks Thailand
Room to Grow Foundation
Suwannimit Foundation
Thai Children's Trust
World Education

UN & International Agencies (4)

International Organization for Migration (IOM)
International Labor Organization (ILO)
UNESCO Bangkok

Government Bodies (3)

Tak Province Primary Education Service Area Office 2 (ESAO 2)
Migrant Education Coordination Center (MECC)
Thailand Office of Basic Education Commission (OBEC)

Table 14: Educational Pathways Available in LCs Sampled in Mae Sot

Program	Number of LCs Sampled
School within School	5
Informal Bridging/Transitioning into RTG School	2
Thai NFE for Special Target Groups	5
Myanmar NFPE	1
Myanmar Matriculation Exam Preparation Program	1
GED Preparation Program	2
No Accreditation Program Available	5

Figure 43: Service Provider Representation in LCs in Four Districts of Tak
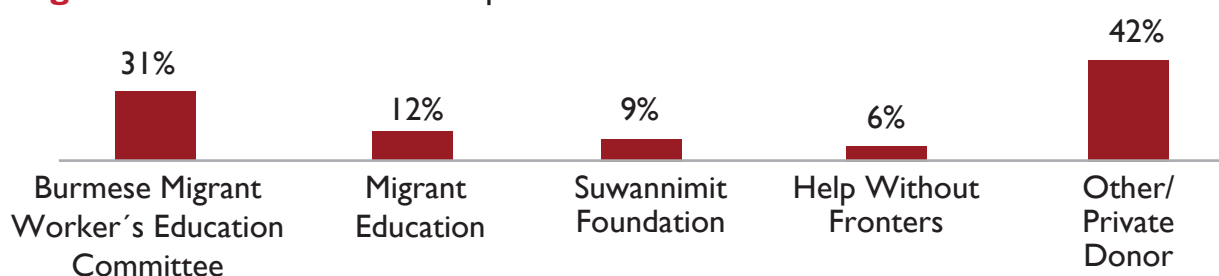
(Source: MECC, June 2014)

Table 15: Sources of Funding for LCs in Bangkok, Reported by Directors

| Learning Center	Student Fees/ Cost-sharing	Donor Funding	Major Donor(s)
BLC1	Yes	Yes	VSO Thailand, Thai Health Promotion Foundation, Save the Children, Life Prep
BLC2	Yes	Yes	Individuals
BLC3	Yes	Yes	Public Delivery, Phil America, Brackett Refugee Education Fund, The John P. Hussman Foundation

Table 16: Funding Support of LCs Surveyed in Mae Sot

Funding Source	Number of LCs
Burmese Migrant Worker's Education Committee	2
Help Without Frontiers	3
Migrant Education	2
Suwannimit Foundation	2
Independent/Private Donor(s)	6
Total Sampled	15

Table17: Summary of Data Collection Tools

Data Collection Method	Target Groups	Information Gathered
Interviews	RTG school and LC Directors	Teacher qualifications, support for teachers, support for students, student academic performance, accredited pathways, curriculum, resources, funding and sustainability, barriers to access and dropout, population figures, parent involvement, etc.
	Teachers	Teacher qualifications, support for teachers and students, student academic performance, curriculum, resources, challenges of teachers, barriers to access and dropout, parent involvement, strengths and weaknesses of education, quality of education, fears and concerns, etc.
	Donor Organizations	Funding criteria, funding strategy, extent and nature of funding, future plans, vision for future, best practices, sustainability, needs and challenges of community, etc.
	Stakeholder Organizations	Best practices, policy and its implementation, accreditation, sustainability, good governance, community needs, vision and motivations, etc.
	Key Informants	Best practices, policy and its implementation, accreditation, sustainability, good governance, community needs, vision and motivations, etc.
Survey & Focus Group	Parents	Educational background, parent profile, socio-economic situation, legal status, employment, needs, interests, vision and ambitions, future plans, awareness of educational opportunities, hopes for children, challenges and barriers, fears, satisfaction, etc.
Questionnaires	Elementary, Lower/Upper Secondary	Feelings and experiences of school, educational background, interests and ambitions, pressures and challenges to accessing education, responsibilities, knowledge of educational opportunities, etc.
Literacy Assessment	Elementary	Letter recognition, reading fluency, accuracy, and comprehension
Primary Document Review	NA	School data, policy documents, program reports, press releases, etc.
Literature Review	NA	Existing research on migration, education in Thailand, access to education, etc.

Figure 44: Proportion of RTG Schools with Migrant Students in Five Districts of Tak ESA 2

Mae Sot	Mae Ra Mad	Phop Phra	Tha Song Yang	Um Phang	Tak ESAO Average
100%	96%	96%	100%	93%	97%
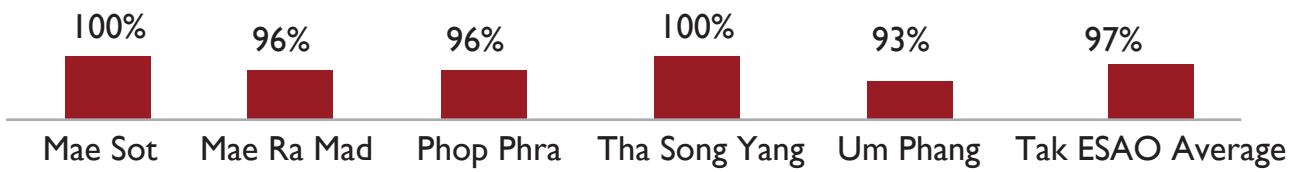
(Source: Tak ESAO 2, 2013)

Figure 45: RTG School and LC SWS Partnerships in Tak ESA 2, 2009 - 2014

2009

7 SWS partnerships established

⬇

2010

2 SWS partnerships from 2009 terminated   2 SWS partnerships established

⬇

2011

1 SWS partnership from 2009 terminated

⬇

2012

1 SWS partnership established

⬇

2013

1 SWS partnership established

⬇

2014

8 active SWS partnerships
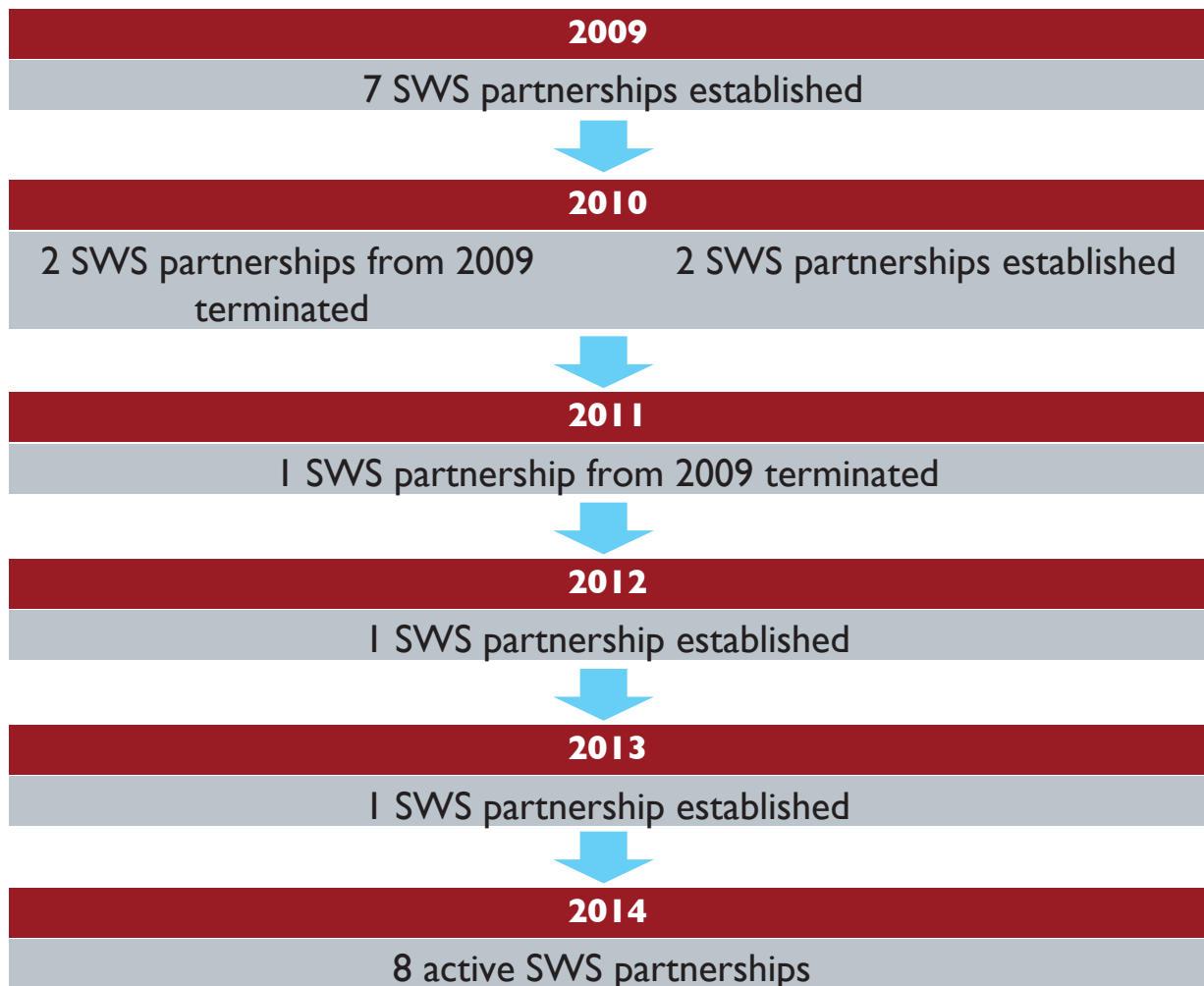
(Source: MECC, 2013)

In order to ensure that data collectors agreed on recording measures and to test inter-rater reliability, two children at each school were jointly assessed with one enumerator leading the administration and one listening and marking scores. Long one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) calculated the intra- class correlation within pairs of assessors for a measure of reliability. Table 1 presents the results below. Using Fleiss' (1986) benchmarks for excellent (ICC>0.75), good or fair (0.75>=ICCA>0.4), and poor (0.4>=ICC).

Table 18: Reliability, Thai Language Assessment

	N	**Intra-class correlation**
Letters	196	0.98
Fluency	202	0.99
Accuracy	201	0.99
Comprehension	202	0.98

Of the 202 children participating in Thai language assessment, 21(10.3%) were selected for inter-rater reliability testing, and the inter-rater reliability for the Thai language assessment is excellent. There were not enough paired observations to calculate intra-class correlations for the Burmese language assessment. However, while only one language of assessment was tested, information about the scoring of this assessment suggests that the assessment was administered in a consistent manner.

Table 19: Detailed Literacy Assessment Scores

		Average BKK LC (N=13)	Average BKK RTG school (N=59)	Average MST LC (N=155)	Average MST RTG school (N=108)
Thai	Letter ID	30.54	48.46		40.75
	Letter ID (%)	55%	82%		68%
	% Reader	0%	81%		62%
	Fluency	0.00	58.47		26.31
	Accuracy	0%	75%		47%
	Reading comprehension #1	0%	51%		16%
	Reading comprehension #2	0%	75%		60%
	Reading comprehension #3	0%	37%		21%
	Reading comprehension #4	0%	64%		33%
	Reading comprehension #5	0%	80%		53%
	Reading comprehension total	0	3.07		1.81
	Reading comprehension total (%)	0%	61%		36%
	Reading with comprehension tier	0.00	0.83		0.40
Thai Readers only (N=49 in BBK; 71 in MST)	Fluency	0.00	71.60		42.12
	Accuracy	0%	91%		75%
	Reading comprehension total	0.00	3.44		2.18
	Reading comprehension total (%)	0%	0%		44%
Burmese	Letter ID			28.45	
	Letter ID (%)			86%	
Burmese Readers only (N=135)	% Reader			83%	
	Fluency			25.18	
	Accuracy			68%	
	Reading comprehension #1			86%	
	Reading comprehension #2			27%	
	Reading comprehension #3			52%	
	Reading comprehension #4			61%	
	Reading comprehension #5			79%	
	Reading comprehension total			3.04	
	Reading comprehension total (%)			61%	
	Reading with comprehension tier			0.85	
	Fluency			29.81	
	Accuracy			79%	
	Reading comprehension total			3.26	
	Reading comprehension total (%)			65%	