

India-Burma Border: Strengthening Education for Chin Refugees and Mizoram Host Communities



Burma Research Institute

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Federal Education High School in Chepui, Saiha District, Mizoram State, India
Photos by BRI, Research Team Interns

About Burma Research Institute

The Burma Research Institute (BRI), formerly known as the Chin Association of Maryland (CAM), is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in the United States that conducts research and advocacy, primarily on freedom of religion or belief, human rights, and protection and assistance of refugees and internally displaced people from and in Burma. BRI also empowers the local Chin community in Maryland to successfully integrate into American society.

BRI is committed to fostering youth engagement by encouraging them to develop and expand their research and advocacy skills. As we move forward, our focus will shift even more toward research, with the goal of strengthening our impact and contributions to the field.

Since the February 2021 military coup in Burma, we have released eight reports, including this current report. Since the coup, our research team has conducted field work in Burma and Mizoram, India four different times. We have presented our findings to the Chin community across the U.S. and to stakeholders in Washington, D.C., including through a Congressional briefing for our public health focused report.

Acknowledgement

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Executive Summary

To escape the ongoing violence and human rights violations in Burma since the military coup on February 1, 2021, an estimated 33,709 people from Burma, including 12,877 children, have taken refuge in neighboring Mizoram State, India.¹ An estimated **47,200** internally displaced persons (IDP) remain in Chin State, Burma.² This report explores the state of and access to education for the 12,877 Chin refugee children in Mizoram, and presents a collaborative approach to strengthen the education system in Mizoram to help both the Chin refugee children and the local children of Mizoram. The report also provides four case studies of education in several small villages in Chin State, Burma.

Access to education in Mizoram is especially important for Chin refugee children since they cannot safely return to Burma in the near future as the situation continues to worsen. The UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that **3,294,400 people** have been displaced within Burma since the February 1, 2021, military coup, with **144,800** fleeing to neighboring countries as of March 25, 2025.³ Near the end of 2024, intensifying conflict in the Northwest and Southeast Regions in Burma has caused mass displacement and civilian casualties, especially with intensified air strikes, drone attacks, and artillery shelling.⁴ In September alone, artillery shelling caused the displacement of 31,000 people in Sagaing Region and one township in Magway Region. OCHA reported that from September 19 - October 1, 38 civilians were

killed and 54 were injured from shelling in Chin State, Magway, and Mandalay and Sagaing Regions, as well as Bago and Kayin States in the southeast.⁵ The UNRCH estimates there are approximately 86,300 people displaced within Chin State, 1.24 million displaced within the Sagaing Region, and 254,500 displaced within Magway Region.⁶ According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR, 2025), nearly a third of Myanmar's population—approximately 15.2 million people—are facing acute food insecurity in 2025 due to the ongoing conflict and humanitarian crisis following the 2021 military coup.⁷

Children in Burma continue to be at risk. In 2024 alone, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) indicated that over 600 children have been killed or injured in Burma, many of whom were killed while in school or in their communities.⁸ On September 5 and 6, airstrikes in Shan state, Chin state, and Magway Region killed ten children and injured eight more, destroying a learning center for Chin students.⁹ Children and families are deeply impacted by the violence. On top of the ongoing crisis caused by the military coup, a devastating 7.7-magnitude earthquake struck central Myanmar on March 28, 2025, with its epicenter near Mandalay, the country's second-largest city. The disaster has resulted in significant loss of life, injuries, and widespread destruction of homes and infrastructure.¹⁰ According to UNHCR an estimated 15 million people have been affected nationwide, including approximately 1.6 million IDPs who were already struggling due to

¹ Mizzima. "Over 200 Myanmar Refugees Enter India's Mizoram State, Bringing Total to Nearly 34,000." *Mizzima*, 27 Sept. 2024, <https://eng.mizzima.com/2024/09/27/14426>.

² Burma Refugee Repatriation Initiative (BurmaRI). "Refugees and IDPs." *BurmaRI*, <https://burmari.org/refugees-and-idps-2/>. Accessed 14 Apr. 2025.

³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2025, February 24). *Myanmar displacement overview*. UNHCR. <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/114731>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). (2025, March). *A third of Myanmar's population faces food insecurity – UN human rights experts*. OHCHR. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press->

[releases/2025/03/third-myanmars-population-faces-food-insecurity-un-human-rights-experts](https://www.unhcr.org/en/press-releases/2025/03/third-myanmars-population-faces-food-insecurity-un-human-rights-experts)

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ UNICEF, "At least 10 children killed in less than a week as deadly attacks continue in Myanmar," September 12, 2024, accessed October 1, 2024, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/least-10-children-killed-less-week-deadly-attacks-continue-myanmar#:~:text=BANGKOK%2C%2012%20September%202024%20%2D%20%E2%80%9C,including%20at%20least%2010%20children>.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ United Nations in Myanmar. (2025, March 29). *Myanmar earthquake flash update #1*. <https://myanmar.un.org/en/291860-myanmar-earthquake-flash-update-1-29-march-2025>

ongoing conflict.¹¹ The earthquake has severely impacted areas with large, displaced populations, worsening an already dire humanitarian situation. Immediate needs include emergency shelter, essential relief items, and protection services. UNHCR is actively working to provide life-saving support to those affected.

Over the last four years, many in Chin State, Burma, have found the conditions untenable for living and have made the difficult journey to Mizoram State, India, leaving behind their homes and livelihoods. The migration of Chin refugees to Mizoram dates back to at least the 1988 uprising in Burma. Historically, Chin refugees fleeing Burma in times of unrest have come to Mizoram State, India, due to geographic proximity and close ethnic, cultural, and religious ties shared between the Chin and Mizo people. However, there has been a significant increase of refugees fleeing Burma to Mizoram state since the most recent military coup.¹² While approximately 50% of the 33,709 Chin refugees stay with relatives or rent homes in Mizoram, the other 50% live in as many as 132 relief camps across eight different districts of the state, predominantly near the capital of Aizawl, in the central district of Lunglei, and in the three districts of Champhai, Lawngtlai, and Saiha, which border Chin State, Burma.¹³

India's Central Government has not openly welcomed refugees¹⁴ from Burma and international aid to the Chin refugees has been scarce. However, the Central Government of India has provided some support 10 crore, approximately \$117,000 USD, for the Chin refugees.¹⁵ Recently, the Central Government of India,

working through Mizoram State, provided in-kind donations to refugees in Mizoram (and to IDPs in Chin State, Burma) including food, medications, and shelter.¹⁶ Most importantly, the Indian Central Government has allowed the Chin refugees to remain in Mizoram and has not arrested, detained, or deported them. Despite the lack of verbal support from the Central Government of India, the Mizoram State Government, Mizoram civil society organizations, churches, and individuals have openly welcomed the refugees, offering financial support and refuge.¹⁷ Chin refugees are permitted to enroll in Mizoram's public schools and seek treatment at Mizoram's hospitals. Mizoram civil society and churches, including the influential Central Young Mizo Association, have taken a leading role in relief work, particularly in the first year of the crisis, building shelters and providing humanitarian assistance to refugees. However, even with the generosity of the government, NGOs, and local host community, the needs are great and the Chin refugees still experience a shortage of basic needs. Partnerships with UN Agencies, such as UNICEF, World Food Program, and UNHCR, and their international nongovernmental organization (INGO) partners, could help meet the needs of the Chin refugees and strengthen the long-term humanitarian infrastructure of refugee host communities in Mizoram State (See Appendix A).

Displacement for refugee populations almost always results in a disruption of education, putting school-aged children at-risk to become a "lost generation."¹⁸ Quality Education and access to education in Mizoram is a reality we must achieve for Chin refugees. At a

¹¹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2025, March 28). *Myanmar earthquake emergency*. UNHCR.

<https://www.unhcr.org/emergencies/myanmar-earthquake>

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Burmese Research Institute, September 28, 2024

¹⁴ For the purpose of this report, we use the term "refugee" to define those migrants who have fled Burma and are currently residing in Mizoram State, India. It is important to note that in India and to some in the broader international community, migrants who have fled Burma and who are residing in India are referred to as "migrants" or in some cases, as "internally displaced persons" simply because India is not a signatory to the Refugee Convention.

¹⁵ Vanlalruata, HC. "Centre to Provide Humanitarian Aid to Mizoram Refugees, IDPs: Shah to YMA." *The Times of India*, 16 Mar. 2025,

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/guwahati/centre-to-provide-humanitarian-aid-to-mizoram-refugees-idps-shah-to-yma/articleshow/119084698.cms>.

¹⁶ Vanlalruata, HC. "Centre to Provide Humanitarian Aid to Mizoram Refugees, IDPs: Shah to YMA." *The Times of India*, 16 Mar. 2025, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/guwahati/centre-to-provide-humanitarian-aid-to-mizoram-refugees-idps-shah-to-yma/articleshow/119084698.cms>.

¹⁷ Fishbein, Emily, "In India's Mizoram, ethnic ties drive response to Chin conflict", *Frontier Myanmar*, March 15, 2023, <https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/in-indias-mizoram-ethnic-ties-drive-response-to-chin-conflict/>

¹⁸ 'Lost generation' is a term used in various UNICEF reports underscoring the plight of refugee children from countries all over the world who face barriers to education while living outside their own country.

foundational level, it is a basic human right. Children attending school provides protection and prepares them to lead fruitful lives in which they can be self-sufficient and contribute to their communities, both during their time of refuge and in the future when they are able to return to their home country. Importantly, a Chin refugee and principal of a school for refugees in the Saiha District in Mizoram stated about the future of Burma,

“Once our country is better, we can use the education we receive right now to help grow our country and make it grow and flourish.”

We as a society must do all that we can to ensure the children of Burma do not become a “lost generation,” and that when they are able to return to their country, they can contribute to society’s flourishing.

Research Methodology

This report is one of four reports focused on Chin refugees in Mizoram State and one of ten reports produced by the Burma Research Institute (BRI), formerly known as the Chin Association of Maryland. For this specific report, BRI sent a team of seven research interns to conduct an assessment of the state of education and education access for the Chin refugee population in Mizoram State, India and Chin State, Burma from June 21 - July 4, 2024.

The research interns were trained in the appropriate research methodology including conducting interviews and implementing surveys. They participated in online training sessions where they discussed the research trip and methodology. The lead researchers developed key questionnaire formats, and the team contributed their input to refine the approach.

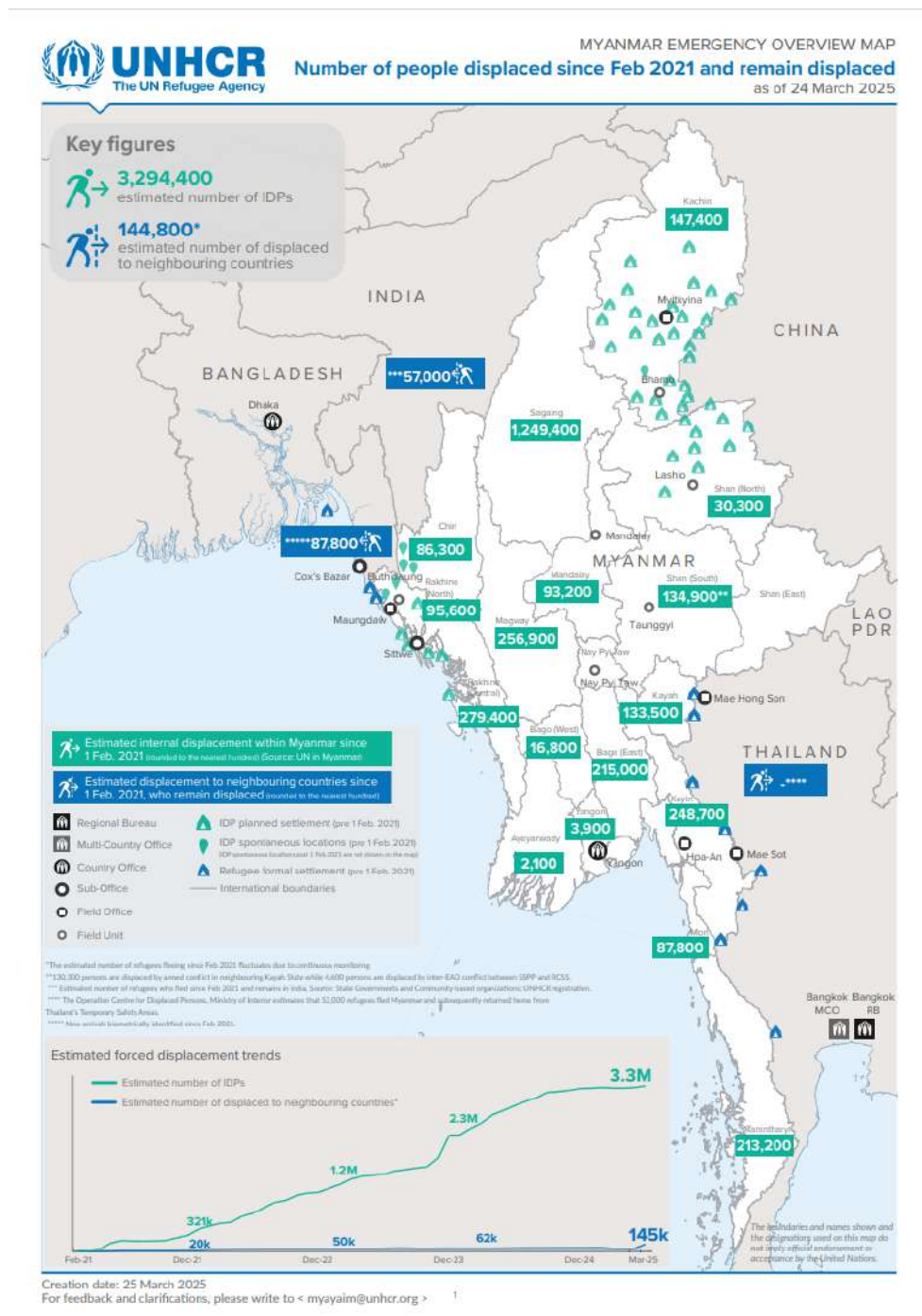
The research interns visited eleven refugee camps¹⁹ and conducted key format interviews with Mizoram State Government leaders and stakeholders, school teachers and principals, leaders in civil society organizations and churches, and refugees. The research team interns divided into three groups to cover different Regions of Mizoram, including Lawngtlai, Champhai, and Saiha Districts. In addition to conducting research at refugee camps and interviewing various stakeholders, the team also carried out case studies based on information about education practices in several villages in Chin State, Burma. The data gathered from Burma came from reliable local sources and contacts, as they were unable to travel there in person due to safety concerns. This allowed them to gather more detailed insights into the range of education challenges faced by Chin refugees in Mizoram and villagers in Chin State. The combination of these efforts provided a broader and more comprehensive understanding of the situation, helping to identify the educational needs of the IDP and refugee Chin community.

This research trip and study is one of the first to examine the education situation for Chin refugees in Mizoram State, India. Our research helps us to detail the need for financial support for the Chin refugees and the Mizoram community that hosts them, and it informs our advocacy with the Central Government of India, the Mizoram State Government, the U.S. government, and international non-governmental organizations.

¹⁹ For the purpose of this report, we use the term “refugee camps” to define the informally designated areas where refugees from Burma have resided in Mizoram State, India.

Because India is not a signatory of the Refugee Convention, those in India and some in the broader international community refer to these areas as “camps” or “relief camps”.

Figure 1: Overview Map of Forcibly Displaced People from Burma: IDPs in Burma and Refugees in Neighboring Countries²⁰



²⁰ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2025, March 28). *Myanmar earthquake*

emergency. UNHCR.

<https://www.unhcr.org/emergencies/myanmar-earthquake>

Key Findings

- As a result of ongoing violence since the military coup in Burma on February 1, 2021, over 33,709 people, including an estimated 12,877 children, have fled from Burma, mostly from Chin State, and have taken refuge in Mizoram State, India.²¹ Approximately 50% of them live in 132 relief camps, and the other 50% live in rented space or with family and friends across Mizoram.²² The largest numbers of them are in five districts across the State: Aizawl, Champhai, Lunglei, Lawngtlai, and Saiha.²³
- The military regime in Burma has made ongoing violent attacks across Burma creating massive forced internal displacement and a humanitarian disaster since February 1, 2021, including in Chin State.²⁴ Conditions in the country went from terrible to worse when a 7.7 earthquake occurred in Burma on March 18, 2025.²⁵ The return of the refugees to Chin State will not be safe in the near future.
- International aid to the Chin refugees has been scarce.
- The Central Government of India has provided 10 crore for the Chin refugees, approximately \$117,000 USD.²⁶ Recently, working through Mizoram State, they provided in-kind donations to refugees in Mizoram (and to and IDPs in Chin State, Burma). In-kind donations included food, medications, and shelter.²⁷ Importantly, the Indian Government has allowed the Chin refugees to remain in Mizoram and has not arrested, detained, or deported them.
- The Mizoram State Government, Mizoram civil society organizations, churches, and individuals have welcomed the refugees offering political support and refuge.²⁸ Chin refugees are permitted

to enroll in Mizoram's public schools and seek treatment at Mizoram's hospitals. Mizoram civil society and churches, including the influential Central Young Mizo Association, have taken a leading role in relief work, particularly in the first year of the crisis, building shelters and providing humanitarian assistance to refugees. However, even with the generosity of the government, NGOs, and local host community and of churches, the Chin refugees still suffer a dire shortage of basic necessities.

- Despite this being an international emergency entering its fifth year, United Nations Agencies are not present in Mizoram State, India. These agencies and the international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) with whom they partner exist to support countries that are facing humanitarian emergencies, especially protracted international ones. They exist to partner with the host government, INGOs, local NGOs and the local community to strengthen the infrastructure and capacity of the host community, enabling it to provide the basic resources and services needed for the community, including safe shelter, food, clean water, sanitation, and education for the most vulnerable persons impacted by the emergency.
- Consistent with national Indian law, Chin refugees are permitted by the State government to access Mizoram State's schools. So far, approximately 6,843 of the 12,877 refugee children, approximately half, are registered in state schools.²⁹ On the other hand, approximately 2,733 of the 12,877 students, 21%, attend schools in the relief camps. Unfortunately, there are a number of refugee children not enrolled in any school.
- The goal of full school enrollment and retention is not currently possible because the Chin refugees and the Mizoram host community welcoming them face numerous education challenges, including

²¹ Mizzima. "Over 200 Myanmar Refugees Enter India's Mizoram State, Bringing Total to Nearly 34,000." *Mizzima*, 27 Sept. 2024, <https://eng.mizzima.com/2024/09/27/14426>.

²² Burmese Research Institute, September 28, 2024

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Burma Refugee Repatriation Initiative (BurmaRI). "Refugees and IDPs." *BurmaRI*, <https://burmari.org/refugees-and-idps-2/>. Accessed 14 Apr. 2025.

²⁵ United Nations in Myanmar. (2025, March 29). *Myanmar earthquake flash update #1*.

<https://myanmar.un.org/en/291860-myanmar-earthquake-flash-update-1-29-march-2025>

²⁶ Vanlalruata, HC. "Centre to Provide Humanitarian Aid to Mizoram Refugees, IDPs: Shah to YMA." *The Times of India*, 16 Mar. 2025,

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Fishbein, Emily, "In India's Mizoram, ethnic ties drive response to Chin conflict", *Frontier Myanmar*, March 15, 2023, <https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/in-indias-mizoram-ethnic-ties-drive-response-to-chin-conflict/>

²⁹ Burmese Research Institute, September 28, 2024

financial and transportation barriers. For some Chin refugee students, education in Mizoram is simply unaffordable. Government run schools charge tuition to meet basic expenses, and not all schools are financially able to provide discounts to refugee students. While private schools, often run by local families and churches, provide additional options, many refugee families cannot afford the tuition and other school-related expenses that private schools must charge to meet expenses. Beyond the cost of education, some families may be in more dire economic situations and feel compelled to pull their children out of school to help earn money for the sake of family survival. Regarding transportation, many refugee children live in remote locations where safe transportation is not available and it is too far or too dangerous to walk to school.

- Another major barrier for Chin refugees to access education in Mizoram is language as the primary language of instruction in Mizoram schools is Mizo or English. Chin schools' instruction is primarily in Burmese and Chin students are not proficient in English or Mizo. This language gap makes it significantly harder for them to keep up in school and succeed academically.
- Due to the challenges faced by Chin refugees accessing government-run schools in Mizoram, many of the refugee camps have started schools for Chin students; however, these schools are severely under-resourced and often operate in camps with inadequate infrastructure and unhealthy conditions.
- The camp schools do not receive financial assistance from the Central Government of India and are often severely underfunded. As such, these schools have limited supplies and furniture for teaching and learning. Basic supplies such as tables and chairs or desks, whiteboards, stationary, and textbooks are either not available or severely limited in camp schools.
- Teachers in the camp schools are often underpaid or serve as volunteers due to limited school funding. This makes it challenging to keep teachers, as many find themselves needing to leave their underpaid or voluntary positions at the school to earn a living for their own families.
- There is no centralized organization or government entity to help the refugee community in Mizoram navigate the barriers to education the Chin community faces. Further, there is no government

entity to regulate or fund the camp schools to help strengthen their quality and safety, including through proper accreditation. Chin refugee students face many challenges related to accreditation. Many find themselves unsure if their education in Mizoram will be honored in Burma or honored by a university.

Recommendations

BRI urges an overall collaborative approach that supports both the Chins taking refuge in Mizoram as well as the local Mizoram communities that are welcoming them. As this international humanitarian emergency enters its fifth year, we urge strong collaborative engagement and problem solving, not only by the Chin community taking refuge in Mizoram and their supporters in the Chin Diaspora, the Government of India, and the government and civil society of Mizoram, especially the Young Mizo Association, other key NGOs, and the churches, but also by UN Agencies and INGOs with whom they partner, and important allies, such as the United States, and others of good will.

To all Stakeholders

- Work together to ensure a high quality, inclusive and safe education system for both Mizoram and Chin students, and whenever possible to enroll students in the accredited federal or State schools or in comparable accredited private schools.
- Collaborate to address the financial, transportation, and language challenges that currently prevent enrollment and retention of refugee and low-income local students. This includes assistance to cover tuition, uniforms, books, supplies and other costs. It also includes programs to provide Mizo and English language training or other tutoring to close crucial language learning or other gaps that any enrolled student might have that impedes his or her educational success, especially those issues related to forced migration or the COVID pandemic.
- Provide psycho-social support for students and teachers who are survivors of trauma related to the violence in Burma.
- Strengthen school infrastructure as needed to allow enrollment and retention of refugee students. This might include additional buildings, transportation,

furniture, equipment, supplies, and other services to ensure access to high quality education for all students. This also include hiring more teachers to increase the student-teacher ratio.

- Where the best education option is a camp school, create or improve existing camp schools to ensure students have safe, quality learning environments.
- Chin refugee children and youth, with the help of their families and of community and school programs should strive to maintain their native language capability and also language proficiency to help them be self- sufficient and able to contribute to both the host community now, and in the future to Burma.
- Bring together additional funding and services from the Central Government, Mizoram State Government, District Councils, UN Agencies, INGO partners, civil society, the United States, the Chin international diaspora, and others of good will to strengthen the educational system as described above for those currently in the system and to include the children who are not yet incorporated into the accredited State and private system.

To the Central Government of India

- Permit the operation in Mizoram of UN agencies such as UNICEF and the World Food Program, as well as international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) with whom they partner (see Appendix A).
- Allow Chin refugees to register freely with the UNHCR office in New Delhi. Allow UNHCR to come to Mizoram to perform registrations and provide legal protection and to support the host community's provision of protection and humanitarian assistance.
- Provide more humanitarian assistance to support the educational needs of Chin refugees in Mizoram.

To the Mizoram State Government

- Continue advocating with the Central Government of India for the continued protection of refugees in Mizoram, and increased delivery of humanitarian assistance and strengthening of State humanitarian infrastructure, including of education, to support both the refugees and local people of Mizoram.
- In coordination with the Central Government of India, explore potential grant opportunities with the U.S. Government to support the development of educational capacity in Mizoram State for both refugee students and local students.
- In coordination with the Central Government of India, incorporate the 12,877 refugee children and youth into State, district and local education planning and funding.

To the United States Government

- Continue conversations with the Indian Central Government to identify acceptable avenues for funding humanitarian assistance to Chin refugees, as well as education assistance for local schools in Mizoram providing education to Chin refugees, and, where access to State and comparable private schools is not possible, assistance for schools run within refugee camps in Mizoram.
- Provide financial assistance to UN agencies such as UNICEF and the World Food Program, along with international nongovernmental organizations and local nongovernmental organizations that partner with them in Mizoram.
- Provide financial support to the Chin diaspora organizations in the United States which are sending the majority of humanitarian funds, with the goal of increasing their capacity to raise charitable financial assistance for education in Mizoram.

To the International Community

- Continue to fund efforts by the refugee community and the Mizoram schools that remove financial, transportation, and language barriers to increase enrollment and retention of refugee and local children in quality, safe education. Funding could include, but is not limited to support for: tuition, uniforms, textbooks, and supplies; physical structures and infrastructure projects; teacher salaries and training; school materials including whiteboards, digital equipment, and furniture; psycho-social support; language programs to equip students to thrive in Mizoram now and helps them maintain their native language abilities for the future. For students in particularly remote relief camps, where enrollment in State and comparable private schools is not feasible, provide funding to strengthen the quality and safety of camp schools in the ways described above. Also improve access to clean drinking water and sanitation in the camps and camp schools.

To the Chin Community

- Produce and distribute informational materials that describe how to access education in Mizoram, with translations into Chin dialects, Burmese, English, and Mizo.
- Continue to collect district and Statewide data on the refugee population, both in camps and in rented homes, to inform humanitarian collaboration, problem-solving, and decision-making.
- Work to increase contacts between particularly isolated camps and the international community, especially contacts with the Chin diaspora in the United States.

Introduction

To escape the ongoing violence in Burma since the military coup on February 1, 2021, an estimated 33,709 people from Burma, including 12,877 children, have taken refuge in neighboring Mizoram State, India.³⁰ This report underscores the state of education and access to education for Chin refugee students in Mizoram State, India. It begins with an overview of Mizoram State's geography, Mizoram's welcoming reception of the Chins, their education policy, and barriers to education access in Mizoram. It outlines the key stakeholders assisting refugees in the state including civil society organizations, churches, and government entities. It provides an explanation of potential UN agencies who could help support the Chin refugees and the Mizoram community that has welcomed them. The report then details the education situation in five different districts in Mizoram including Aizawl, Champhai, Lunglei, Lawngtlai, and Saiha. It concludes with five case studies of education challenges in several small villages in Chin State, Burma.

Geography, Refuge, and School Policy

Mizoram is a landlocked State in northeast India and borders both Burma and Bangladesh. The population of Mizoram is 1,091,014.³¹ Aizawl, the largest city, sits in the northern part of the State and is the State capital. Mizoram is made up of eight different districts: Mamit, Kolasib, Aizawl, Champhai, Serchhip, Lunglei, Lawngtlai, and Saiha.³² Mizoram's shares a 400-kilometer border with Burma's Chin State. Mizoram's districts along this border, including Champhai, Lawngtlai, and Saiha, have been primary destinations for Chins fleeing Burma and seeking refuge.

State and district political officials from multiple parties in Mizoram continue to be supportive of the refugees from Burma. For example, as the refugee crisis was unfolding in 2021, from the then ruling Mizoram National Front (MNF), Zoramthanga, then Chief Minister of Mizoram, advocated with the Central Government of India for the people fleeing from Burma to be treated like refugees and not to be treated like undocumented aliens. Also, he and Lalrinliana Sailo, then Speaker of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly, were instrumental in securing the passage of a legislative resolution supporting Mizoram's continued welcome of Chin refugees. The resolution was introduced by a member of the Congress Party and was also supported by Lalduhom, the President of the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM), who after the November 2023 election became the new Chief Minister of Mizoram.

³⁰ Mizzima. "Over 200 Myanmar Refugees Enter India's Mizoram State, Bringing Total to Nearly 34,000." *Mizzima*, 27 Sept. 2024, <https://eng.mizzima.com/2024/09/27/14426>.

³¹ Mizoram State website, "About Mizoram", Accessed August 20, 2024, <https://mizoram.nic.in/about/glance.htm>

³² Ibid



Figure 2: Map of Mizoram State, India, Chin State, Burma, and the surrounding area³³

Lalrinliana Salio, then Speaker of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly stated, “For the people of Mizoram, these refugees are our brothers and sisters. We are members of the same family. They are fleeing horrible circumstances, and it is our responsibility to help them.”³⁴

The assembly resolution referred to the commendable “relief and reception” provided by the government and people of Mizoram. From a human rights perspective, the following response from India and its State of Mizoram continues to be very important: 1) the Chins and other refugees from Burma have not been treated like undocumented aliens, that is, they have not been turned back at the border, arrested, detained, or deported; 2) the State has registered an estimated 30,000 of them and begun the process of handing out State identification cards; and 3) the government and the people of Mizoram, through NGOs and churches, have provided what humanitarian assistance they are able to provide.³⁵

³³ Map produced by CAM staff using open source data and ArcGIS Online

³⁴ Chin Association of Maryland. “Chin Refugees in India’s Mizoram State: Helping the Refugees and Supporting the Local Communities Welcoming Them.” *Chin Association of Maryland*, June 2023, [https://burmari.org/wp-](https://burmari.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/CAM-Chin-Refugees-in-Indias-Mizoram-State-June-2023-xyz.pdf)

[content/uploads/2023/07/CAM-Chin-Refugees-in-Indias-Mizoram-State-June-2023-xyz.pdf](https://burmari.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/CAM-Chin-Refugees-in-Indias-Mizoram-State-June-2023-xyz.pdf), BRI+3

³⁵ Resolution of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly, February 24, 2023, passed without objection. Unofficial translation provided by the Office of the Speaker of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly

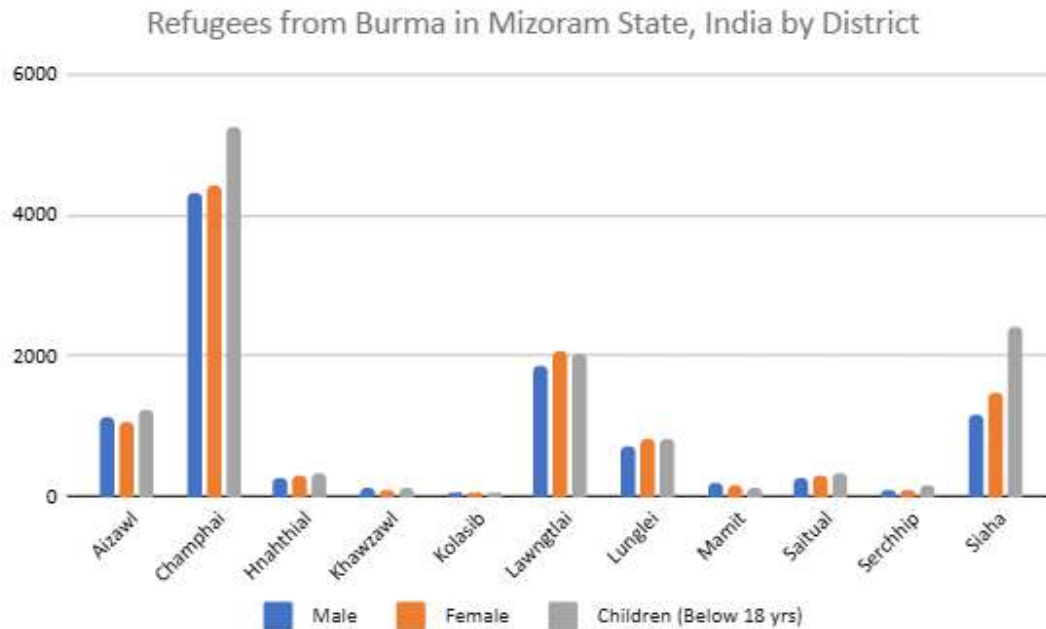


Table 1: Table of Refugees from Burma in Mizoram State, India by District³⁶

The Mizoram State government has shown support for Chin refugees.

On February 24, 2023, the Mizoram Legislative Assembly passed a resolution (See Appendix B) without objection calling for Chin refugees to be treated as refugees and supported by assistance. On August 31, 2021, Mizoram’s education director at the time urged all education officers throughout the state to “take necessary action” to enroll immigrant and refugee children in Mizoram schools.

Also commendable, government officials of the host community have welcomed Chin refugee students into their schools. On August 31, 2021, James Lalrinchhanda, then Mizoram State education director, wrote a letter to all education officers in Mizoram’s Districts and subdistricts urging them to “take necessary action” to enroll migrant and refugee children in their schools, citing a national Indian law,

Chapter 2(4) of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 (RTE Act-2009) (See Appendix B).³⁷ Since this time many of the schools in Mizoram have welcomed Chin refugees, setting up enrollment processes for the students and making efforts to provide uniforms and discounted tuition.

In addition to complying with India’s federal legal requirements that refugee and migrant children be granted access to primary education, the motivation of some State and district officials to help the refugee children is deeply personal. According to personal interviews with government officials, some officials’ motivations for helping Chin refugees are because of their shared religion of Christianity, shared ancestry, and deep ethnic ties that bind them together as fellow “brothers and sisters”.³⁸

³⁶ Table by BRI research team

³⁷ Utpal Parashar, “Mizoram schools to admit Myanmar refugee children”, Hindustan Times, September 3, 2021, accessed October 1, 2024,

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/mizoram-schools-to-admit-myanmar-refugee-children-101630606873521-amp.html>

³⁸ Personal interview, Mizoram government official, June 24, 2024

Despite the welcoming policy and personal support of the Mizoram host community, Chin students face numerous challenges when trying to access the government schools in Mizoram. Even when tuition is discounted, some Chin struggle to provide the money to send their children to school or need their children to drop out of school to help support the household. Some government schools are too far from the camps where refugees reside, making the journey to school too long or dangerous. Furthermore, education instruction is provided in Mizo or English, languages not spoken by Chin students making learning a challenge.

Refugees are permitted to attend government schools in Mizoram State. The Mizoram government is welcoming to refugee students attending the schools and makes efforts to provide access, specifically through the provision of tuition cost as well as providing for the cost of uniforms and textbooks.³⁹ The Minister of School Education in Mizoram is Dr. Vanlalthlana. Schools in India are broken down into Primary Schools (PS) for classes 1 - 4), Primary Middle Schools (MS) for classes 5 - 8, Secondary Middle Schools (MS) for classes 9 - 10, and Higher Secondary Schools (HSS) for classes 11 - 12. There are approximately 33,961 refugees from Burma in Mizoram and it is estimated that 12,877 are children, the majority of whom are school-aged.⁴⁰ Approximately 16,969 of the refugees are residing in the 160 relief camps throughout Mizoram, while 16,992 are residing outside of the camps with relatives or friends or in rented homes.⁴¹ Estimates indicate that approximately 6,843 refugee children and youth from Burma.⁴² These estimates do not include the students attending private schools and the privately-run schools within the refugee camps. Due to financial and transportation constraints, many students in more remote camps attend schools within the camps.

³⁹ Personal Interview with the Director of School Education Department, Government of Mizoram, Lalsangliana, MCS.

⁴⁰ United News of India, September 23, 2024, Accessed September 23, 2024, <https://www.uniindia.com/mizoram-records-influx-of-205-new-myanmar-refugees/east/news/3289755.html#:~:text=Mizoram%20shar>

[es%20a%20404%2Dkilometer,temporary%20shelter%20for%206%2C333%20refugees.](#)

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Personal Interview with the Director of School Education Department, Government of Mizoram, Lalsangliana, MCS.

Table 2: *Number of Schools by School and Management Type in Mizoram*⁴³

School Type	Management Type					
	Central Gov't	State Gov't	Local	Private	Samagra Shiksha	Other
Primary School Classes 1-4	4	793	289	641	195	0
Primary Middle School Classes 5-8	18	564	88	490	288	94
Secondary Middle School Classes 9-10	18	198	0	217	99	177
Higher Secondary School Classes 11-12	9	21	0	84	19	71
Total	49	1576	377	1432	601	342

Table 3: *Refugee Student Enrollment in Mizoram Government Schools by District*⁴⁴

Refugee Student Enrollment in Mizoram Schools by District <i>as of September 2024</i>	
District	Number of Students
Aizawl	1,554
Champhai	4,376
Hnahthial	262
Khawzawl	86
Kolasib	19
Lawngtlai	78
Lunglei	137
Mamit	21
Saitual	72
Serchhip	93
Siaha	145
Total	6,843

⁴³ Data from Mizoram State government officials

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Language

Most Chin children and youth speak Burmese and/or their native Chin language and schools in Burma mostly use Burmese for classroom instruction. However, schools in Mizoram primarily use English or Mizo for classroom instruction. This poses significant learning challenges for Chin refugee students and is one of the primary barriers for attending school. To address this barrier to education, some of the refugee camps in Mizoram have opened up their own schools, providing instruction in Burmese or Chin. For example, a refugee camp situated at Lawngtlai, Hnahthial and Lunglei towns opened a school specifically for Chin refugees, adopting the use of Myanmar school curriculum and textbooks, and providing instruction in Burmese.

Stakeholders to meet Humanitarian Needs of Chin Refugees

Various stakeholders have supported the Chin refugees in Mizoram. While the Central Indian Government has publicly expressed disapproval of the Chin refugees in India, they have still provided 10 crore, approximately \$117,000 USD, to support them.⁴⁵ Support from the Central Indian Government has also included recent in-kind donations to refugees in Mizoram (and to and IDPs in Chin State, Burma) such as food, medications, and shelter.⁴⁶ Most importantly, the Indian Central Government has allowed the Chin refugees to remain in Mizoram and has not arrested, detained, or deported them.

The Mizoram State Government, Mizoram civil society organizations, churches, and individuals have welcomed the refugees offering political support and refuge.⁴⁷ Chin refugees are permitted to enroll in Mizoram's public schools and seek treatment at Mizoram's hospitals. Churches and Mizoram civil society organizations, including the influential Central Young Mizo Association (YMA), took the leading role

in relief work, particularly in the first year of the crisis, by building shelters and providing humanitarian assistance to refugees.

The Central YMA is notably the largest civil society group in Mizoram and the leading organization assisting Chin refugees. The Central YMA has its main headquarters in Aizawl with five sub-headquarters, 47 groups, and 805 branches located throughout Mizoram as well as in other Northeast States and other parts of India that are ethnically similar to Mizoram.⁴⁸ Specifically related to education, the Central YMA has assisted by donating school supplies and textbooks to some schools within the refugee camps. They are most active in the Champhai district where they work closely with camp leaders and actively contribute to construction projects and help support economic development programs within the camp. Other civil society organizations also play a role in assisting refugees, including the Mizo Students' Association. The Central Young Lai Association (CYLA) is active in Lawngtlai State and provides support and welcome for Chin refugees in Lawngtlai. The Lai people in Lawngtlai make up the CYLA and share close ethnic ties and a shared language with the Lai people in the southern part of Chin State.⁴⁹ Various churches and religious organizations also play a significant role in assisting Chin refugees in Mizoram. For example, in Lunglei, the Baptist Church of Mizoram (BCM) funded and spearheaded efforts to build a church for the residents of the Thaizawl Camp. However, even with the generosity of the central and State governments, NGOs, and local host community and of churches, the Chin refugees still suffer a dire shortage of basic necessities.

⁴⁵ Vanlalruata, HC. "Centre to Provide Humanitarian Aid to Mizoram Refugees, IDPs: Shah to YMA." *The Times of India*, 16 Mar. 2025,

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Fishbein, Emily, "In India's Mizoram, ethnic ties drive response to Chin conflict", *Frontier Myanmar*, March 15,

2023, <https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/in-indias-mizoram-ethnic-ties-drive-response-to-chin-conflict/>

⁴⁸ Central Young Mizo Association Website, "About Us," Accessed September 3, 2024 <https://centralyma.org/about-us/>

⁴⁹ BRI Source

Potential Future Stakeholders from International UN Agencies

Despite this being an international emergency entering its fifth year, UN Agencies are not present in Mizoram State, India. These agencies and the INGOs with whom they partner exist to support countries that are facing humanitarian emergencies, especially protracted situations. They exist to partner with the host government, INGOs, local NGOs and the local community to strengthen the infrastructure and capacity of the host community, enabling it to provide the basic resources and services needed for the community, including safe shelter, food, clean water, sanitation, and education for the most vulnerable persons impacted by the emergency.

In recent years, where possible, UN agencies, including UNICEF, the international community, and refugee host countries collaborating to educate refugees, have focused on strengthening the educational capacity of host communities to enable them to include refugees in the host community's education system. This has marked a shift from building a separate, parallel refugee education system. The shift has come because of the large increase in the number of refugees globally, the increased number who are taking refuge in and near urban centers, and the protracted nature of refugees living in host countries. Finally, refugee host countries and humanitarian agencies have found it more financially sustainable and mutually beneficial to build on the existing education system. Strengthening the existing educational infrastructure to include refugee children can also increase and strengthen the long-term educational capacity of the host community and help both the refugee and local children receive a quality education that prepares them for life. Its aim is to build self-reliance and the ability to contribute to the community now. For refugees, it gives them the ability to contribute to the host community while they are in refuge and to their home countries when they are able

to return in the future.⁵⁰ UNICEF is currently carrying out a similar mission in collaboration with the host country of Poland and NGOs to include Ukrainian refugee children in their national system.⁵¹

If UNICEF were present in Mizoram State, it could work in similar ways as it currently does in Poland for Ukrainian refugees by helping to enroll and retain children in schools, provide language acquisition programs to teach refugees the host community's language, develop programs to identify and address knowledge gaps in or obstacles to a student's learning, integrate digital technology into the learning process, promote skill building and empowerment for students, and enhancing teacher training for supportive, quality learning environment.⁵² Indeed, UNICEF has a long history of collaboration with India of over 75 years.⁵³ It has been present in Northeast India for over 15 years, in nearby Assam State, where they carry out programming to strengthen the State education system.⁵⁴ (See Appendix 1).

⁵⁰ UNHCR. "Building Inclusive Education Systems for Refugees." *UNHCR*, 2023, <https://www.unhcr.org/media/building-inclusive-education-systems-refugees>.

⁵¹ UNICEF. "UNICEF and Ministry of National Education Sign 2025 Work Plan to Support the Education of Refugee Children from Ukraine." *UNICEF*, 24 Jan. 2025,

<https://www.unicef.org/eca/press-releases/unicef-and-ministry-national-education-sign-2025-work-plan>.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ UNICEF India. "About Us." *UNICEF India*, <https://www.unicef.org/india/about-us>.

⁵⁴ UNICEF India. "Children in Assam." *UNICEF India*, <https://www.unicef.org/india/children-assam>. Accessed April 14, 2025

Education Situation by District

This report focuses on the situation in five different districts in Mizoram State, including Aizawl, Champhai, Lunglei, Lawngtlai, and Saiha Districts (highlighted in grey below), which have the highest number of Chin refugees. This will include the details of the conditions at the camp schools visited by the research team. The table below provides a breakdown of the number of camps and refugees residing in each of the districts in Mizoram as well as the total number of students enrolled and teachers employed in Mizoram schools.

Table 4: *Number of Refugees and Refugee Camps by Location in Mizoram*⁵⁵

Name of Village/Camp/Locality	No. of Relief Camps	No. of Persons Refugees in Relief Camps	No. of Persons Refugees Outside Relief Camps	Male	Female	Children (Below 18 yrs)	Total
Aizawl	5	363	3028	1132	1041	1218	3391
Champhai	18	6333	7633	4312	4422	5232	13966
Hnahthial	15	347	544	259	310	322	891
Khawzawl	0	0	333	105	94	134	333
Kolasib	0	0	131	41	40	50	131
Lawngtlai	38	4026	1896	1850	2059	2013	5922
Lunglei	10	1287	1043	698	820	812	2330
Mamit	2	157	306	183	145	135	463
Saitual	3	89	814	274	306	326	906
Serchhip	0	0	347	101	90	156	347
Siaha	41	4102	930	1164	1455	2413	5032
Total	132	16704	17005	10119	10782	12811	33712

Table 5: *Students Enrolled and Teachers Employed in Mizoram Schools*⁵⁶

Students Enrolled and Teachers Employed in Mizoram Schools					
Stage	Boys	Girls	Total	Teachers	Teacher/Student Ratio
Primary Schools	71,637	68,103	139,740	7,478	1:19
Middle Schools	44,889	43,897	88,786	9,000	1:10
High School	18,928	20,385	39,313	4,239	1:09
Higher Secondary Schools	11,874	13,490	25,364	1,888	1:13
Total	147,328	145,875	293,203	22,605	

⁵⁵ Data from Mizoram State government officials

⁵⁶ Data from Mizoram State government officials

Aizawl District

About Aizawl

The Aizawl District is in the northern part of Mizoram and is situated between the Tlawng River Valley to its west and the Tuirial River Valley to its east. Aizawl is one of the most populous States in Mizoram and Aizawl City the largest city in Mizoram and the State capital. The district boasts of beautiful terrain and also houses many important government offices. Aizawl District is home to 107 villages with an estimated population of 404,054 people.⁵⁷ The inhabitants in Aizawl are mostly Mizo ethnicity and the predominant language is Mizo. Christianity accounts for the majority religion (94.7%), however there are smaller religious communities including Hindu, Muslim, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Jains.⁵⁸

There are approximately 10,000 Chins taking refuge in Aizawl since the 2021 coup, putting it on par with Champhai District as a main destination.⁵⁹ In general, Chin refugees stay with relatives they may have in the city, live communally in rented spaces, or live in small camps a few hours away. Aizawl has long been home to Chin refugees and migrants, dating back several decades. These more established migrants often provide financial and in-kind support to newly arriving Chin.⁶⁰ Chin religious groups in Aizawl, including the Zoram Entu Pawl, Bethel Baptist Church, and the Chin Christian Fellowship. These groups actively support Chin refugees including by providing social services and organizing food delivery to the camps. The Chin Christian Fellowship runs classes with refugee students who do not speak enough Mizo to attend public schools. There are 147 secondary high schools, 32 higher secondary schools, and 18 colleges and universities in Aizawl District.

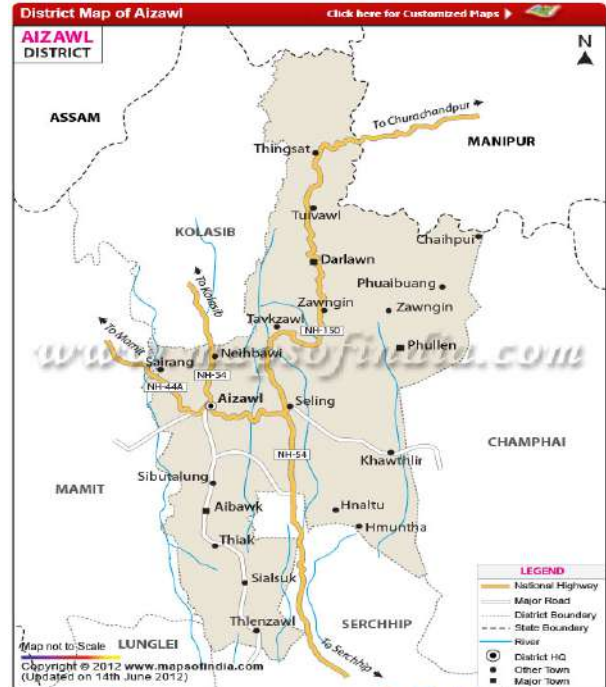


Figure 3: Map of Aizawl District⁶¹



Official of Mizoram State Government Education, Mizo Student Association and BRI research interns. Photo by BRI research interns

⁵⁷ Aizawl District Government website, accessed September 19, 2024, <https://aizawl.nic.in/>

⁵⁸ Aizawl District Government website, "Peculiarities in Demography", accessed September 19, 2024, <https://deoizawl.mizoram.gov.in/page/peculiarities-in-demography>

⁵⁹ Central YMA provided BRI with estimated numbers of Chin and other refugees from Burma in Mizoram by district,

as of April 30, 2023. See also: BRI Report, "Chin Refugees in India's Mizoram State," BRI, June 2023, page 11

⁶⁰ Burma Research Institute (BRI) Report, "Public Health on the Indo-Burma Border: The Situation of Chin Refugees in Mizoram," BRI, January 2024.

⁶¹ Maps of India. *Aizawl District Map*, Maps of India.

Retrieved from

<https://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/mizoram/districts/aizawl.html>.

Table 6: Relief Camps in Aizawl District⁶²

Name of Village/Camp/Locality	No. of Relief Camps	No. of Persons Refugees in Relief Camps	No. of Persons Refugees Outside Relief Camps	Male	Female	Children (Below 18 yrs)	Total
Sihhmui	0	0	392	119	114	159	392
Sairang	0	0	384	106	123	155	384
Thuampui	0	0	245	105	52	88	245
Edentharr	0	0	237	97	61	79	237
Phunchawng	0	0	219	69	60	90	219
Chhinga Veng	0	0	182	50	71	61	182
Sihhmui	1	134	0	37	42	55	134
Dawrpui Vengthar	0	0	115	40	37	31	108
Rangvamual	0	0	106	39	29	38	106
Tuirial	1	88	0	24	28	36	88
Seling	0	0	80	21	21	38	80
Chanmari	0	0	73	30	27	16	73
Luangmual	0	0	71	22	29	20	71
Electric Veng	0	0	65	21	23	21	65
Tuikual North	0	0	63	24	20	19	63
YHAI, Luangmual	1	61	0	21	20	20	61
Vaivakawn	0	0	51	21	11	19	51
Leitan	1	48	0	12	13	23	48
Ramhlun South	0	0	47	15	16	16	47
Hunthar Veng	0	0	46	25	12	9	46
Tuirial Airfield	0	0	42	12	13	17	42
Dinthar	0	0	40	18	8	14	40
Durtlang	0	0	40	16	12	12	40
Chite	0	0	36	14	15	7	36
Dawrpui Veng	0	0	35	12	11	12	35
Sairang	1	32	0	8	8	16	32
Khatla	0	0	30	13	10	7	30
Zonuam	0	0	28	8	12	8	28
Tuikual South	0	0	27	16	6	5	27
Armed Veng	0	0	24	6	11	7	24
Ramthar Veng	0	0	23	8	8	7	23
Govt. Complex	0	0	22	9	10	3	22
Lengpui	0	0	21	11	2	8	21

⁶² Data from Mizoram State government officials

Name of Village/Camp/Locality	No. of Relief Camps	No. of Persons Refugees in Relief Camps	No. of Persons Refugees Outside Relief Camps	Male	Female	Children (Below 18 yrs)	Total
Ramhlun Sports Complex	0	0	21	6	8	7	21
Zarkawt	0	0	20	3	7	10	20
Sesawng	0	0	19	8	7	4	19
Chawnpui	0	0	18	5	5	8	18
Tuirial	0	0	18	5	8	5	18
Kanan Veng	0	0	16	4	6	6	16
Darlawng	0	0	14	3	3	8	14
Nursery	0	0	14	2	2	10	14
Ramhlun Vengthar	0	0	14	4	4	6	14
Ramhlun North	0	0	13	3	8	2	13
Sairang Dinthar	0	0	13	3	6	4	13
Bawngkawn South	0	0	11	4	3	4	11
Dam Veng	0	0	10	2	4	4	10
Hualngohmun	0	0	10	3	2	5	10
Tanhril	0	0	9	4	4	1	9
Tlungvel	0	0	2	1	4	4	9
Aizawl Venglai	0	0	8	1	3	4	8
Zotlang	0	0	8	4	3	1	8
Chaltlang Lily Veng	0	0	7	6	1	0	7
Muallungthu	0	0	7	2	2	3	7
Chaltlang	0	0	6	3	3	0	6
College Veng	0	0	6	0	3	3	6
Falkawn	0	0	6	0	4	2	6
Durtlang North	0	0	3	1	1	1	3
Model Veng	0	0	3	2	1	0	3
Ramthar North	0	0	3	1	2	0	3
Venghlui	0	0	3	2	1	0	3
Thingsulthliah	0	0	2	1	1	0	2
Total	5	363	3028	1132	1041	1218	3391

Champhai District

About Champhai

The Champhai District is situated in a valley in Mizoram State and shares a border with Burma. Its district capital, also called Champhai, is the third largest town in Mizoram. Due to its location, it serves as a hub for cross-border trade and is one of the major destinations for Chin refugees fleeing across the border from Burma. According to the latest census, Champhai has a population of 127,660.⁶³

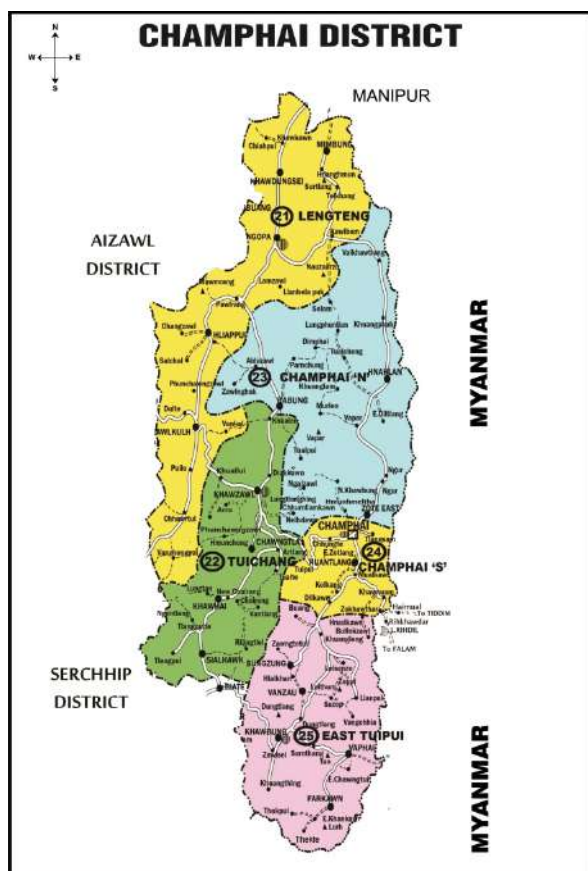


Figure 4: Map of Champhai District⁶⁴

In 2023, the Central YMA indicated that there were 10,250 refugees from Burma in the Champhai district.⁶⁵ Since then the population has grown by 50% and it is now estimated that there are approximately 14,212 Chin refugees from Burma in the Champhai district living in 18 different camps (6,333 Chin refugees) or staying with friends and family outside of the camps (7,879 Chin refugees).⁶⁶ Nearly 40% of the refugees in Champhai district are children and youth under the age of 18. Many Chin refugees crossing at Zokhawthar, a border town in Champhai district, have stayed in the area in camps or rentals. Others have moved up the road towards the town of Champhai or continued on to Aizawl. The Institute of Chin Affairs (ICA), a Chin NGO involved in humanitarian work, puts the pre-coup population of Zokhawthar at 600 households, and reports that the post-coup refugee population alone comprises an additional 740 families (4,500 refugees).⁶⁷ In early November 2023, Chin resistance forces led by the Chin National Army took over the town of Rikhawdar in Burma, directly across the border from Zokhawthar. The fighting temporarily displaced an additional 5,000 Chin into Champhai. During this time a refugee was also killed on the Indian side of the border and within a few days of Rikhawdar's capture, many Chin refugees returned to Chin State, with about 1,000 staying in Zokhawthar.⁶⁸

Various organizations provide assistance to the refugees in Champhai District including the YMA and Doctors Without Borders. Jesuit Refugee Services provides an afterschool program for students in the Zokhawthar Camps.

⁶³ Champai District Website, accessed September 20, 2024, <https://champhai.nic.in/>

⁶⁴ Map from the Election Office of Champhai webpage, accessed December 18, 2024, <https://electionchamphai.mizoram.gov.in/page/district-map>

⁶⁵ Central YMA provided BRI with estimated numbers of Chin and other refugees from Burma in Mizoram by district, as of April 30, 2023. See also: BRI Report, "Chin Refugees in India's Mizoram State," BRI, June 2023, page 11

⁶⁶ Personal Interview and government documentation, Champhai District, June 24, 2024

⁶⁷ Institute of Chin Affairs, "Lailun Medical Centre opened at Indian border," ICA, July 4, 2022 <https://chinaffairs.org/?p=2500>

⁶⁸ Personal Interview with the Director of School Education Department, Government of Mizoram, Lalsangliana, MCS.

Regarding government schools, there is one high school, six higher secondary schools⁶⁹, and one college, the Government Champhai College⁷⁰ in Champhai District. There are a total of 4,376 refugee students enrolled in the government schools from kindergarten through grade twelve in the Champhai District.⁷¹ Some officials have been particularly supportive and have even created a free daytime meal program for students in certain government schools.⁷²

NO. OF REFUGEE STUDENTS UNDER CHAMPHAI DISTRICT							
AS ON JUNE 2024							
CLASS	MYANMAR		MANIPUR		TOTAL		GTT
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Pre	442	453	1	0	443	453	896
I	308	325	4	1	312	326	638
II	289	276	0	2	289	278	567
III	311	238	2	1	313	239	552
IV	240	244	2	3	242	247	489
V	207	208	1	0	208	208	416
VI	199	181	3	0	202	181	383
VII	157	173	0	0	157	173	330
VIII	156	181	0	0	156	181	337
IX	121	130	1	1	122	131	253
X	52	73	0	1	52	74	126
XI	16	25	0	0	16	25	41
XII	3	15	1	0	4	15	19
TOTAL	2501	2522	15	9	2516	2531	5047

Table 7: Number of Refugee Students in Champhai District Schools⁷³

Camps in the District

There are 18 refugee camps in the Champhai District where 6,333 Chin refugees reside. Other Chin refugees, approximately 7,879, live with friends and family outside of the camps. Zokhawthar is the village where the largest Chin refugee population resides, with 3,245 living in one of five different camps in the village and 1,738 living outside of camps.⁷⁴ This includes 2,090 children and youth under the age of 18, most of whom

are school aged. Our team visited Zote Refugee Camp, Zokhawthar Camp 1, and Zokhawthar Camp 2. The Research team also visited Phoenix Primary School, which takes students from both Zokhawthar 1 and 2 Camps.

Phoenix School

Phoenix School is also run by Chin refugees for Chin students residing in Zokhawthar 1 and 2 Camps. Similar to Hope Primary School, there were 71 students enrolled in the school and eight teachers. The teachers expressed several challenges at the school, including no access to clean water. During the summer, the students drink rainwater and sometimes get sick from bacteria in the water. Furthermore, flooding near the school causes water pooling, a breeding ground for mosquitoes. There are also concerns about the mental health of the students. One teacher brought up that she has a 6-year old student who has not yet spoken a single word. The teacher is not aware of any mental health services she could refer the student to. Finally, the school is in desperate need of textbooks.



Phoenix Primary School in Zokhawthar. Photo by BRI research interns

⁶⁹ Mizoram Board of School Education website, accessed October 2, 2024, <https://www.mbse.edu.in/>

⁷⁰ Champhai District Website, "Directory: Colleges", accessed October 2, 2024, <https://champhai.nic.in/public-utility-category/colleges/>

⁷¹ Personal Interview, Champhai District YMA, June 26, 2024

⁷² Personal interview, Champhai district, June 26, 2024

⁷³ Data from Mizoram State government officials

⁷⁴ Personal Interview and government documentation, Champhai District, June 24, 2024

Table 8: Relief Camps in Champhai District⁷⁵

Name of Village/Camp/Locality	No. of Relief Camps	No. of Persons Refugees in Relief Camps	No. of Persons Refugees Outside Relief Camps	Male	Female	Children (Below 18 yrs)	Total Number of People
Zokhawthar	5	3245	1738	1457	1436	2090	4983
Farkawn	2	2000	0	899	920	181	2000
New Champhai	0	0	626	183	176	267	626
Kanaan Veng	0	0	614	144	168	302	614
Vaikhawtlang	0	0	606	100	210	296	606
Electric Veng	0	0	442	136	105	201	442
Vaphai	1	38	388	116	125	185	426
Bethel	0	0	373	86	117	170	373
Khawbung	0	0	347	48	68	231	347
Melbuk	1	326	0	108	120	98	326
Zion Veng	0	0	299	100	96	103	299
Dinthar	0	0	287	84	78	125	287
Vengthlang	0	0	223	113	84	26	223
Vengthar	0	0	188	40	46	102	188
Hnahlan	0	0	178	35	51	92	178
Thekte	1	176	0	51	52	73	176
Tlangsam	1	132	0	40	31	61	132
Venglai	0	0	130	42	37	51	130
Vengsang	0	0	122	33	44	45	122
Zawlsei	2	122	0	25	31	66	122
Buang	1	121	0	40	29	52	121
Khuangleng	1	70	49	41	45	33	119
Ruantlang	0	0	114	45	56	13	114
Khankawn	1	0	106	29	25	52	106
Kahrawt	0	0	85	23	26	36	85
Khuangthing	1	51	20	19	19	33	71
Bulfekzawl	1	35	35	24	20	26	70
Sazep	0	17	46	22	24	17	63
Chhungte	0	0	58	20	21	17	58
Sesih	0	0	50	15	18	17	50
Mualveng	0	0	49	17	12	20	49
Ngur	0	0	46	25	9	12	46
Lianpui	0	0	39	15	10	14	39
Khuangphah	0	0	36	7	19	10	36

⁷⁵ Data from Mizoram State government officials

Name of Village/Camp/Locality	No. of Relief Camps	No. of Persons Refugees in Relief Camps	No. of Persons Refugees Outside Relief Camps	Male	Female	Children (Below 18 yrs)	Total Number of People
Vapar	0	0	35	11	13	11	35
Dilkawn	0	0	34	13	11	10	34
Vangchhia	0	0	33	17	7	9	33
Vengthlang 'N'	0	0	63	29	14	20	63
Hruaikawn	0	0	31	13	9	9	31
Dungtlang	0	0	27	6	9	12	27
Bungzung	0	0	23	10	6	7	23
Samthang	0	0	19	7	6	6	19
Leisenzo	0	0	17	5	6	6	17
Leithum	0	0	13	5	2	6	13
Zawngtetui	0	0	13	5	4	4	13
Thekpui	0	0	11	4	0	7	11
North Khawbung	0	0	8	2	4	2	8
Chawngtui	0	0	7	2	2	3	7
New Hruaikawn	0	0	5	1	1	3	5
Hmunhmeltha	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	18	6333	7633	4312	4422	5232	13966

Lunglei District

About Lunglei

Lunglei District has the largest area and is the second most populous district in Mizoram with a total population of Lunglei district is 161,428.⁷⁶ The town of Lunglei in the central part of the district is just south of Aizawl and is the second largest town in the district.

There are approximately 2,100 refugees in Lunglei since the 2021 military coup.⁷⁷ While Lunglei is close to the major crossing in Lawngtlai East, most refugees continue north up the highway to Aizawl or move to an area where they have family or other kinship ties. The Institute for Chin Affairs (ICA) supports the refugee population in Lunglei and has provided financial and material assistance, including food and other essential items such as water tanks and tents.⁷⁸ Other organizations including the Mission Foundation Movement and Chin Humanitarian Aid International have provided assistance to Chin refugees in Lunglei. There are 50 government high schools (classes 9-12) in Lunglei District.⁷⁹

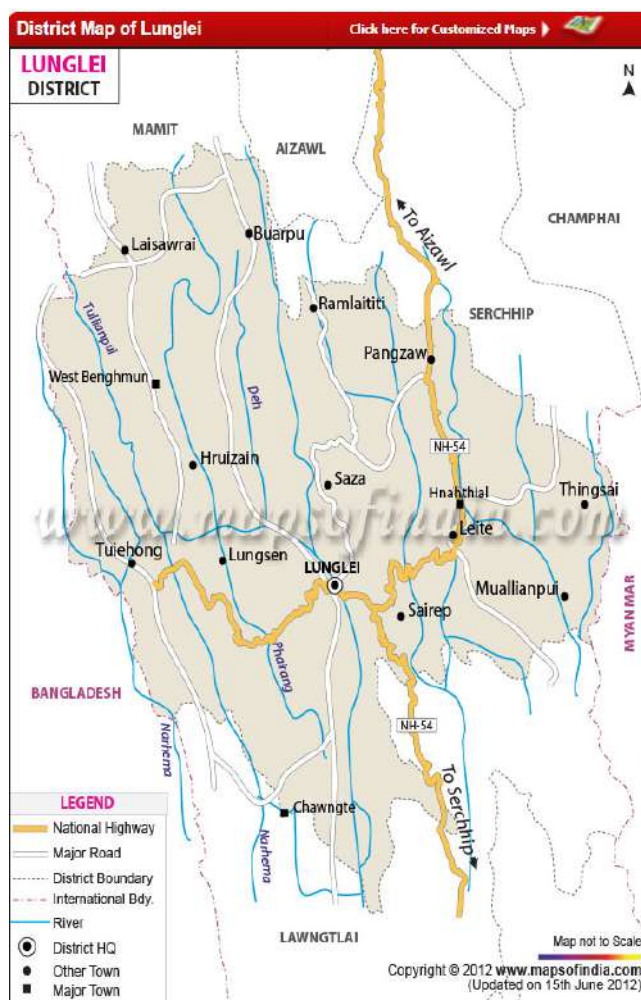


Figure 5: Map of Lunglei District⁸⁰

⁷⁶ The Lunglei District Website, accessed December 18, 2024, <https://lunglei.nic.in/>

⁷⁷ Central YMA provided BRI with estimated numbers of Chin and other refugees from Burma in Mizoram by district, as of April 30, 2023. See also: BRI Report, "Chin Refugees in India's Mizoram State," BRI, June 2023, page 11

⁷⁸ The Institute for Chin Affairs website, Accessed September 18, 2024, <https://chinaffairs.org/?p=3745#:~:text=To%20support%20t>

[he%20refugee%20communities,support%20initiatives%20for%20Myanmar%20refugees.](https://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/mizoram/districts/lunglei.html)

⁷⁹ Mizoram Board of School Education website, accessed October 2, 2024, <https://www.mbse.edu.in/>

⁸⁰ Maps of India. *Lunglei District Map*, Maps of India. Retrieved from <https://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/mizoram/districts/lunglei.html>.

Camps in the District

Lunglei is home to the largest and better resourced refugee camp in Mizoram, the Thaizawl Camp. Our team visited Thaizawl Camp, along with Hningput Camp located in Ramthar. The camp, much smaller than Thaizawl, has approximately 50 children under the age of 18-years, including 22 who attend school and an estimated ten school-aged children who do not attend school.



Thaizawl Camp School. Photo by BRI research Interns

Thaizawl Camp School in Lunglei

The Thaizawl Camp School, started to provide education for Chin students struggling with the language barrier in the Mizoram government schools, provides educational access for students in the camp from kindergarten through the 12th grade with nearly 250 students. Despite limited resources almost all the children in the camp attend school. Parents must pay for their children to attend school, including tuition and fees for supplies. High school students have to pay for their textbooks. Teachers in the school are paid; however, their salaries are minimal. The camp school buildings have no or limited access to clean water and sanitation is an issue.

The students at the school face various barriers to staying in school including economic ones. Some families need their older children to quit school and help support their household financially. Some students and families also feel pessimistic about their future opportunities after high school given their situation as refugees in Mizoram and their inability to return to Burma because of the unrest. Other students believe the war in Burma will be temporary, and they will soon return to their home villages, therefore some choose not to attend school during their time in Mizoram. Finally, due to the ongoing war in Burma and the public health crisis due to COVID-19, some of the older students have been out of school for two or three or more years and lack the motivation and the discipline to continue attending school.



Lunglei Refugees Camp-II school. Photo by BRI research interns

Hmingput Camp School in Ramthar, Lunglei

There is one school in the camp, a primary school with classes through the sixth grade. There are approximately 3-4 older youth in the camp who travel to Thazawl Camp to attend school, however this school is a long distance so they often stay with relatives or friends near the school.

Currently, Thazawl camp has 249 students from kindergarten to 12th grade and nine teachers, all accommodated in four classroom sheds. Despite being the largest camp in Mizoram, Thazawl camp school struggles to provide adequate educational support for its students.



Children and teachers of Hmingput Camp School with BRI research Interns. Photo by BRI research interns.

The classrooms are poorly constructed with wooden pillars and metal coverings, and lacking electricity they rely on natural light. Divided by curtains, the noisy and chaotic environment makes it difficult for students and teachers to focus. Each morning, students water the classroom floors to control the dust, which otherwise causes breathing difficulties and health issues. For recreation, they use an abandoned concrete helicopter landing field, which increases their risk of injuries.

Malnutrition is common, yet there is no school nurse or clinic, only a basic first aid kit. A small open shed on a steep hill serves as a urinal, while other sanitation needs require a walk down to the camp's bathroom section. Rainwater is collected for all purposes, including drinking, despite the lack of a purification system, posing a health hazard.

Uniforms are not required since the school cannot provide them. Parents bear the burden of the yearly 500-rupee enrollment fee and for school supplies and textbooks. Families with multiple children often have to choose which child can attend school, leading to about 10 children in the camp being out of school. Teachers earn about 5,000 rupees (roughly 60 dollars) per month, leading many to quit or seek additional income due to financial hardship.

The Hmingput camp school has 22 students from kindergarten to 6th grade and 3 teachers in two classroom sheds constructed from bamboo sticks. This isolated camp is located within a forest, a 25-minute drive from the main city, making it difficult for students to attend government schools. Since the school only goes up to 6th grade, older children either find work or attend Thazawl camp school, often living with relatives there.

The children's wellbeing is a major concern due to malnutrition, lack of clean drinking water, and no nearby clinics. The school has no bathroom, so students use the camp's shared bathrooms, with about 3 families sharing one. The dusty ground in front of the school serves as a recreational area.

Parents pool their money to afford uniforms and school supplies. The school has two volunteer teachers without prior teaching experience and one paid teacher who was previously a seasonal instructor. They rely on the internet for teaching improvements, struggling to manage 12 subjects. Despite these educational challenges, the teachers highlight the more pressing issue of food scarcity.



Outhouse at camp school. Photo by BRI research interns.

Table 9: Relief Camps in Lunglei District⁸¹

Name of Village/Camp/Locality	No. of Relief Camps	No. of Persons Refugees in Relief Camps	No. of Persons Refugees Outside Relief Camps	Male	Female	Children (Below 18 yrs)	Total
Thaizawl	1	840	0	229	282	329	840
Ramthar	0	0	387	108	147	132	387
Electrict Veng	0	0	134	40	58	36	134
Farm Veng	0	0	129	48	53	28	129
Ramthar (Nghasih)	1	114	0	35	43	36	114
Khawmawi	1	108	0	25	25	58	108
Serkawn	0	0	85	38	25	22	85
Venglai	0	0	71	27	22	22	71
Mausen	0	0	56	21	18	17	56
Haulawng	1	47	0	14	20	13	47
Hauruang	1	45	0	13	14	18	45
Tlawng	1	43	0	12	14	17	43
Phairuangkai	1	41	0	12	15	14	41
Mualthuam North	1	39	0	11	17	11	39
Chanmari	0	0	38	13	14	11	38
Zotlang	0	0	28	12	8	8	28
Bazar Veng	0	0	24	7	5	12	24
Changpui	0	0	14	2	3	9	14
Luangmual	0	0	12	4	7	1	12
Rahsi Veng	0	0	10	3	5	2	10

⁸¹ Data from Mizoram State government officials

Name of Village/Camp/Locality	No. of Relief Camps	No. of Persons Refugees in Relief Camps	No. of Persons Refugees Outside Relief Camps	Male	Female	Children (Below 18 yrs)	Total
Vanhne	1	10	0	2	3	5	10
Sethlun	0	0	9	4	3	2	9
Zobawk S	1	0	9	6	3	0	9
Thingfal	0	0	8	2	2	4	8
Chengpui	0	0	5	1	2	2	5
Tawipui S	0	0	5	3	1	1	5
Zohnuai	0	0	5	0	4	1	5
Ralvawng	0	0	3	1	1	1	3
Tawipui North-I	0	0	3	1	2	0	3
Dawn	0	0	2	1	1	0	2
Venghlun	0	0	2	1	1	0	2
Zobawk N	0	0	2	1	1	0	2
Bualte	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
Zawlpui	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
Belpei	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Collage Veng	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hrangchalkawn	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lungpuizawl	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mamte	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Putlungasih	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rualalung	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Salem veng	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sekhum	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Thehlepe	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Theiriat	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Thuampui	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tualthu	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tuisenchhuah	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Zotuitlang	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	12	1287	1043	698	820	812	2330

Lawngtlai District

About Lawngtlai

Lawngtlai District is made up of three different subdivisions, Chawnge, Sangau, and Lawngtlai. The district is in the southernmost part of Mizoram and broken up geographically by the Lunglei and Saiha Districts; the eastern subdivisions, Chawnge and Lawngtlai, are situated east of the Chhimtuipui River bordering Bangladesh and the western subdivision of Sangau borders Burma. Lawngtlai is governed by two autonomous district councils, the Lai Autonomous District Council and the Chakma Autonomous District Council.⁸² It is one of the most underdeveloped districts in Mizoram and relies heavily on agriculture, making up approximately 60% of its economy.⁸³

Lawngtlai district hosts the third largest Chin refugee population in Mizoram, with approximately 5,922 refugees.⁸⁴ Many Chin refugees sought refuge in Lawngtlai because it is part of the Lai Autonomous District. The Chin people, particularly the Lai tribe from Myanmar's Chin State, share linguistic and cultural similarities with the people of Lawngtlai, whose native language is also Lai. These shared ties have led the residents of Lawngtlai to warmly welcome the refugees as brothers and sisters. The decision of many Chin refugees to settle in Lawngtlai stems from the deep cultural bond and shared heritage they cherish with the local population. In Lawngtlai, refugees live both within the city and on its outskirts. Many from the Matu tribe reside in camps on the outskirts, while those from the Hakha and Thantlang tribes are more likely to live within the city. This distribution is influenced by social support networks. Hakha and Thantlang refugees often have relatives abroad who can provide financial assistance, enabling them to settle in the city. In contrast, those in camps, lacking such support, are among the most vulnerable and in need of help.



Figure 6: Lai Autonomous District Map⁸⁵

In Lawngtlai, the Young Lai Association, rather than the Young Mizo Association, is active in supporting the refugee population, especially in the Sangau subdivision.⁸⁶ The refugee population is permitted to work in the district and some have supported themselves through agricultural or construction activities, by opening up tea stalls or even small stores. The Young Lai Association has indicated this may not always be the case and is very dependent on the case of potential objections from the local community.

⁸² Lawngtlai district government website, "History", Accessed September 18, 2024, <https://lawngtlai.nic.in/history/>

⁸³ Lawngtlai district government website, "About District", Accessed September 18, 2024, <https://lawngtlai.nic.in/about-district/>

⁸⁴ United News of India, September 23, 2024, Accessed September 23, 2024, <https://www.uniindia.com/mizoram-records-influx-of-205-new-myanmar-refugees/east/news/3289755.html#:~:text=Mizoram%20shar,es%20a%20404%2Dkilometer,temporary%20shelter%20for%206%2C333%20refugees.>

<https://lawngtlai.nic.in/history/>

⁸⁵ Map from Lai Autonomous District Council webpage, accessed December 18, 2024, <https://ladc.mizoram.gov.in/page/ladc-political-map>

⁸⁶ Chin Association of Maryland (CAM) Report, "Public Health on the Indo-Burma Border: The Situation of Chin Refugees in Mizoram," BRI, January 2024, see page 10.

There are 88 secondary high schools, 37 middle schools, and 110 primary schools in the Lawngtlai District.⁸⁷ Since the influx of Chin refugees to the Lawngtlai district, the student population in the government run schools has increased nearly 5%.⁸⁸ The government schools in the Lawngtlai District are welcoming to Chin students and provide the financial support needed for their school enrollment, including tuition costs, supplies, uniforms, and textbooks. Many of the refugee students attend the schools available to them in the camps as they are much closer to where they live and the instruction is in their native language. As is the case throughout Mizoram, Chin students face substantial challenges in the government run schools as the instruction is not in their primary language and the curriculum is much different from what they were used to in Burma, creating barriers to learning.



Ngununsangi English High School located in the town of Lawngtlai. Photo by BRI research interns.

Our team visited Ngununsangi English High School located in the town of Lawngtlai. This is a private school for students in grades nine and ten and the instruction is offered in English. In general the school facilities are in need of improvement, including to repair damaged infrastructure as well as additional space for a library and sports activities.⁸⁹ At the time of our visit, approximately 25% of the 720 students in the school were Chin refugees and the school employed 28 paid teachers. The principal of the school indicated the refugee students in the school appear to thrive, however many are not able to access education for those in grades nine and ten as they cannot afford the tuition, even at the 50% discount given to Chin refugees, amounting to 7,500 rupees. Language is another challenge for the Chin students as not all are fluent in English, the primary language of instruction.

Camps in the District

Approximately 4,000 Chin refugees live within 38 different camps that line the borders of the Lawngtlai district while nearly 2,000 have found residence outside of the camps.⁹⁰ Many of the refugee camps are predominantly occupied by members of the Mara and Matu diaspora. In contrast, many Lai-speaking refugees tend to live within the cities, integrated with the local population, as they share the same language and have more cultural similarities. This shared linguistic and cultural connection allows Lai-speaking refugees to adapt more easily to urban life compared to the Mara and Matu communities, who remain in the more isolated camps on the outskirts.

⁸⁷ Personal interview, Lawngtlai District Council, June 25, 2024; see also Mizoram Board of School Education website, accessed September 20, 2024, <https://www.mbse.edu.in/#>

⁸⁸ Personal interview, Lawngtlai District Council, June 25, 2024

⁸⁹ Personal interview, Ngununsangi English High School, June 25, 2024

⁹⁰ United News of India, September 23, 2024, Accessed September 23, 2024, <https://www.uniindia.com/mizoram-records-influx-of-205-new-myanmar-refugees/east/news/3289755.html#:~:text=Mizoram%20shar es%20a%20404%2Dkilometer,temporary%20shelter%20for%206%2C333%20refugees.>



A Camp in Lawngtlai. Photo by BRI research interns.

With jobs already scarce for the local population, refugees struggle even more to find reliable employment. As a result, many rely on alternative means of income, such as fishing or gathering bamboo and mushrooms to sell at the local bazaar (market). These activities provide some income, but they are not enough to offer long-term stability for most families. The shelters are typically made from bamboo, with plastic sheets serving as roofs. However, these makeshift materials only last about a year, requiring frequent replacement. During the winter, most refugees are unable to afford essential items like blankets and warm clothing. They primarily survive on a diet of lentils and rice, as other vegetables and meat are too expensive. The remote locations of many camps, combined with the high cost of travel, make it difficult for refugees to access basic services, resources, or opportunities in urban areas.

Thingkah Camp

Our team visited the school in Thingkah Camp in Thingkah Village in the western subdivision of Lawngtlai. The Thingkah Camp School provides education for Chin refugee students in primary and middle school. At the time of our visit, there were 13 students at the primary school level and 27 students enrolled at the middle school level. The camp school does not currently have the capacity to offer education for students in high school or higher secondary school, as such students in the camp attend the local government school or a private school. As with many of the schools within the refugee camps in Mizoram, the camp school in Thingkah is characterized by failing infrastructure and poor sanitation with little access to clean drinking water. Many barriers exist for students attending the school including the cost of tuition, which is approximately 10,000 rupees. For families who are not able to earn wages in Mizoram, sending their kids to school is challenging. Teachers are also short on supplies, including whiteboards for classroom instruction and textbooks for teaching. The teachers we interviewed also indicated they would like to offer educational opportunities for the older students in high school and higher secondary school, but do not have enough teachers or building space to accommodate this need.



Thingkah Camp church. Photo by BRI research interns

Table 10: Relief Camps in Lawngtlai District⁹¹

Name of Village/Camp/Locality	No. of Relief Camps	No. of Persons Refugees in Relief Camps	No. of Persons Refugees Outside Relief Camps	Male	Female	Children (Below 18 yrs)	Total
Chandmary, Lawngtlai	1	674	0	222	214	238	674
Bethel Veng, Lawngtlai	1	507	0	137	157	213	507
Kakichhuah	0	0	459	151	234	74	459
Hruitezawl	1	93	171	94	102	68	264
Sangau-II	1	110	126	66	95	75	236
Vengpui, Lawngtlai	1	210	16	123	83	20	226
College Veng, Lawngtlai	1	220	0	62	73	85	220
Chawntlangpui	1	190	24	58	65	91	214
Council Veng, Lawngtlai	2	159	46	52	71	82	205
South Lungpher	2	117	82	54	64	81	199
Saikah 'U'	1	80	112	66	59	67	192
Sangau-IV	1	131	36	52	59	56	167
Paithar	1	157	0	41	49	67	157
Sangau-I	1	36	115	47	48	56	151
Chawnhu, Lawngtlai	1	128	0	42	36	50	128
Thingkah	1	118	0	33	40	45	118
Thaltlang	1	94	21	24	58	33	115
Zochachhuah	1	115	0	37	42	36	115
Lungzarhtum	1	79	32	30	33	48	111
Sangau-III	1	62	41	32	37	34	103
Vawmbuk-I	1	102	0	25	38	39	102
Siachangkawn	1	58	40	31	29	38	98
Saikah 'L'	1	79	11	23	24	43	90
Pangkhuah	1	52	29	23	30	28	81
Saizawh East	1	73	0	26	17	30	73
Bazar, Lawngtlai	0	0	71	17	31	23	71
Archhuang	0	0	69	25	25	19	69
Rulkual	1	58	0	19	14	25	58
Sentetfiang	1	54	0	21	18	15	54
Kawrthindeng	0	0	52	14	19	19	52

⁹¹ Data from Mizoram State government officials

Name of Village/Camp/Locality	No. of Relief Camps	No. of Persons Refugees in Relief Camps	No. of Persons Refugees Outside Relief Camps	Male	Female	Children (Below 18 yrs)	Total
AOC	0	0	51	14	15	22	51
Kawlchaw West	1	47	0	19	16	12	47
New Vengpui, Lawngtlai	0	0	45	15	15	15	45
Bualpui 'NG' - I	1	41	0	8	13	20	41
Cheural	1	28	12	21	11	8	40
Lungtian-I	1	28	12	21	11	8	40
R. Vanhne	1	18	22	13	7	20	40
Diltlang	1	25	12	10	9	18	37
Lungtian-II	0	0	37	10	12	15	37
Electric Veng, Lawngtlai	0	0	36	9	17	10	36
Bualpui 'NG' - II	0	0	31	12	19	0	31
Vaṭhuampui	1	31	0	10	7	14	31
Kamalanagar-I	0	0	28	2	8	18	28
Liapha	1	27	0	9	5	13	27
Lawngtlai-III	0	0	22	6	8	8	22
Dumzautlang	1	13	0	5	8	0	13
Ngengpuikai	0	0	12	3	3	6	12
Vawmbuk-II	1	12	0	5	4	3	12
Chawngtelui	0	0	6	4	2	0	6
Kamalanagar-III	0	0	5	3	2	0	5
Rawlbuk	0	0	5	1	1	3	5
Vartekkai	0	0	4	2	1	1	4
Nghalimlui	0	0	2	0	1	1	2
Sihtlangpui	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
Hmawngbuchhuah	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Laitlang	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
New Tuidangchhuah	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	38	4026	1896	1850	2059	2013	5922

Saiha District

About Saiha

Saiha District, located in the southeastern corner of Mizoram, shares borders with Chin State in Myanmar to the south and east. The district covers a diverse geographic area that ranges from the rolling hills characteristic of Mizoram to some relatively flat plains.

Saiha is the administrative hub and the headquarters of the Mara Autonomous District Council (MADC), which governs the autonomous region. The district is governed by the Mara Autonomous District Council, as outlined in the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. These councils function like small legislative bodies, with the ability to create and implement their own laws and regulations, pending approval from the Administrator, who is the Governor of Mizoram.²⁹ The district has a population of approximately 56,574, with its economy primarily driven by agriculture and small-scale trade.³⁰ Due to its geographic isolation and limited infrastructure, Saiha remains one of the less developed areas of Mizoram, with residents relying heavily on subsistence farming and small local businesses for their livelihoods. One of the leaders in the council, Chief Executive Minister M. Laikaw, has shown strong support for the Chin refugees. He has also advocated on behalf of Chin refugees with the Indian Central Government, along with the Union Home Minister and Union Finance Minister (See Appendix D).



Figure 7: Saiha District Map⁹²

In recent years, Saiha has become a key destination for refugees from Chin State in Myanmar, particularly among the Mara ethnic group, who share close cultural and linguistic ties with the local population. Refugees fled to Saiha due to ongoing conflict, instability, and persecution in Chin State, and the district's relative proximity and cultural affinity with their homeland make it a natural choice for resettlement. There are approximately 8,500 refugees in Saiha District,⁹³ with the majority living in temporary camps. These camps offer basic shelter but lack access to many essential services, forcing refugees to rely heavily on local support networks.

⁹² Map from Mara Autonomous Council District webpage, accessed December 18, 2024, <https://madc.mizoram.gov.in/post/saiha-district-map>

⁹³ Central YMA provided BRI with estimated numbers of Chin and other refugees from Burma in Mizoram by district, as of April 30, 2023. See also: BRI Report, "Chin

Refugees in India's Mizoram State," BRI, June 2023, page 11

²⁹ Saiha District website, "About Saiha", accessed October 4, 2024, <https://saiha.nic.in/about-district/>

³⁰ Census website, "Saiha District," <https://www.census2011.co.in/census/district/393-saiha.html>

Several civil society organizations are actively involved in supporting the refugee population in Saiha. The Mara Thyutlia Py (MTP), a local organization similar in function to the YMA in other parts of Mizoram, plays a crucial role in assisting refugees. Although the MTP historically restricted refugee participation in the local economy, its newly elected leadership in 2023 has signaled a shift towards greater support. The Myanmar Refugee Committee (MRC) is also active in Saiha. The MRC aims to address some of the educational challenges faced by refugees from Burma by teaching students in Burmese, preparing students for higher education, and helping Burmese students earn local and international scholarships. The MRC makes it a point to advocate for educational rights of Burmese students in Mizoram and works to ensure refugee students' education in Mizoram will receive accreditation within Burma. Additionally, the refugees have formed the Saiha Refugee Committee, which comprises leaders from different Chin dialect groups to advocate for their rights and coordinate assistance. Despite these efforts, resources remain stretched, and refugees continue to face significant challenges in securing economic opportunities, and basic services.

There are approximately 9,000 students enrolled in schools in Saiha district.⁹⁴ According to the Deputy Chief Executive Member of the Mara Autonomous District Council in Saiha, one of the most significant challenges in education is the poor infrastructure of the government and camp schools in Saiha district. Some of the schools lack adequate sanitation facilities, electricity, and have run down structures. There is a need for more funding from the Indian Central Government. There are 19 high schools and three higher secondary schools in the Saiha District.⁹⁵ In Saiha, there is no government to regulate or fund the schools operating within the camps, which are operated by the local communities. Families without support from their families abroad often struggle to send their children to local schools in Saiha.

Our team visited Federal Education High School in Chepui, a small village in Saiha. The school's principal is from Burma and is passionate about ensuring a good education for the students in the school. The school enrolls approximately 200 students, half of whom are refugees from Burma. In Chepui, all local school-aged children attend school, however, approximately 20% of the school-aged refugees in the village do not attend school largely due to the cost of tuition and the need for children to help the family earn a living. Furthermore, without the ability to attend university, refugee students lack motivation to finish school. The cost of school in Chepui, including uniforms, supplies, and textbooks, is 10,000 Rupees for primary school, 13,000 Rupees for secondary school, and 15,000 Rupees for secondary high school. At the time of our visit, the schools in Chepui were in desperate need of more teachers, especially with the growing number of refugee students attending the schools. One of the reasons for the teacher shortage is the low salary for teachers. The school also has poor infrastructure with no electricity and inadequate sanitation facilities.



*Federal Education High School in Chepui, Saiha.
Photo by BRI research interns.*

⁹⁴ Personal interview, June 23, 2024

⁹⁵ Mizoram Board of School Education website, accessed October 3, 2024, <https://www.mbse.edu.in>

Camps in the District

The camps near Saiha are primarily inhabited by refugees from the Matu and Mara communities. Unlike other camps, these refugees lack international connections or relatives to support them in times of need. However, the Saiha district allows them to farm on the land near the camps. While they grow vegetables and rice, the harvests are insufficient to sustain them throughout the year. The roofs of the houses and other buildings in the camps in Saiha district, including schools, are often made out of plastic or bamboo. They are in need of maintenance every year, and many blow off during heavy winds which occur with somewhat regular frequency.

Many of these camps have schools, but due to limited space, not all students can attend at the same time. To manage this, the students are split into two groups: one attends school in the morning, and the other in the afternoon. The teachers are refugees from Myanmar who were involved in the Civil Disobedience Movement. They brought a few Burmese textbooks with them and taught subjects such as mathematics, English, Burmese, and history.

The lack of resources is a significant issue. There are no whiteboards, so the teachers use chalk on blackboards, which often leads to health problems. Additionally, the refugee committees cannot afford to pay the teachers adequately; in some camps, teachers receive just 1,000 rupees a month, an amount insufficient even to buy a single bag of rice. The school buildings themselves are rudimentary, with bamboo walls and no flooring—just bare earth. Despite these challenges, the refugees are making every effort to provide education for their children in extremely difficult circumstances.

New Dawn Centre

Our team visited the New Dawn Centre in the village of Zawling. Providing education is challenging at the New Dawn Centre for various reasons related to poor infrastructure. One major challenge is the lack of proper physical division of the classrooms, making it challenging for the teachers to provide uninterrupted education based on grade levels. The school also has no electricity so when the weather is bad, the light quality is poor, and the students are not able to see very well. The school is in need of furniture as well, including chairs and tables or desks for the students to sit at. There are not adequate health services in Zawling, as such when students get sick they are absent from school for longer than is necessary.

Myanmar Refugee School

The Myanmar Refugee School is in Mawhrei, Saiha district. The school enrolls 68 students in primary and secondary school. One of the challenges at this school is bullying and discrimination the students experience outside of the school from the local children. This school also does not have electricity, making education difficult when there is bad weather. The school also has an inadequate supply of materials for teachers to do their jobs and to assist students in learning.

Saiha Refugees Camp school. Photo by BRI research interns.

Niawtlang Refugee School

The Niawtlang Refugee School is in Niawtlang village, Saiha district. This school was created out of desperation as the refugee students had nowhere to attend school due to their distance from a government school. When they initially started, students were only in school six months out of the year as that is all the school was able to offer. They recently received additional funding so they can now offer school for ten months out of the year. There are 40 students enrolled in the school from kindergarten through ninth grade. All six of the teachers at the school are volunteers and not paid for their work. Outside of education, the students need important services to address their mental health and health needs, including proper nutrition and medications.



Niawtlang Refugee School. Photo by BRI research interns.

Basic Education High School Tipang Camp School

Our team also visited the Basic Education High School Tipang Camp in Tipang Refugee Camp 1. The school enrolls 82 students. It costs 700 rupees for students to attend the school, with an additional 200 for supplies. Because of the insufficient infrastructure and the fact that the roof of the school blows off during high winds, the students are also expected to bring jackets and umbrellas. All of the teachers at this school are volunteers. There is concern for the students' physical safety given the location of the school it is at risk for landslides and high winds.



Tipang Camp School. Photo by BRI research interns.

Table 11: Relief Camps in Saiha District⁹⁶

Name of Village/Camp/Locality	No. of Relief Camps	No. of Persons Refugees in Relief Camps	No. of Persons Refugees Outside Relief Camps	Male	Female	Children (Below 18 yrs)	Total
Lopu	1	686	0	175	163	348	686
Khaikhy	1	670	0	210	295	165	670
Zyhno	1	581	0	128	159	294	581
Laki	1	375	0	73	103	199	375
No-aotla – I	1	64	242	56	98	152	306
Tipa V	2	193	92	82	72	131	285
Lomasu	1	261	0	41	55	165	261
Chapi	6	257	0	43	69	145	257
Tipa D	1	248	0	52	68	128	248
Mawhrei	1	210	0	45	50	115	210
Siatlai	2	120	0	21	28	71	120
Siaha Vaihpi – III	0	0	92	19	27	46	92
Lobo	0	0	84	14	17	53	84
Siasi	1	77	0	18	30	29	77
Meisavaih E	0	0	76	17	33	26	76
Iana	0	0	54	19	17	18	54
Miepu	1	54	0	20	14	20	54
No-aotla (10 Kms)	1	31	16	8	11	28	47
Thosai	2	37	0	10	10	17	37
Ahmypi	1	23	12	11	14	10	35
Chheihlu	1	31	0	3	4	24	31
Amobyu Vaithie	0	0	30	8	10	12	30
Siaha Vaihpi – II	0	0	27	7	11	9	27
Amobyu B	1	26	0	6	8	12	26
Phura South	3	25	0	5	7	13	25
Supha	0	0	25	7	8	10	25
Tipa B	1	24	0	6	4	14	24
Siaha Vaihpi – I	0	0	23	4	6	13	23
Council Vaih	1	22	0	4	5	13	22
New Colony – IV	0	0	22	4	4	14	22
Siata	1	21	0	4	4	13	21
Kaochao East	1	20	0	3	4	13	20
Siahatla – II	0	0	20	3	4	13	20

⁹⁶ Data from Mizoram State government officials

Name of Village/Camp/Locality	No. of Relief Camps	No. of Persons Refugees in Relief Camps	No. of Persons Refugees Outside Relief Camps	Male	Female	Children (Below 18 yrs)	Total
Khopai	1	19	0	3	3	13	19
Siahatla – I	0	0	15	3	4	8	15
Meisavaih W	0	0	14	4	4	6	14
Siahatla – III	0	0	14	3	3	8	14
New Colony – V	0	0	13	1	4	8	13
Kiasie	0	0	12	4	3	5	12
Vahia	1	12	0	3	3	6	12
Meisatla II	0	0	11	2	3	6	11
Amobyu Ch	0	0	10	2	4	4	10
Chakhei	1	8	0	2	2	4	8
Pala	0	0	8	2	3	3	8
Tisi	1	7	0	3	2	2	7
Chhoalo	2	0	5	1	1	3	5
Laty	0	0	5	1	1	3	5
Theiva	0	0	5	1	3	1	5
New Siaha West - I	0	0	3	3	0	0	3
Bymari	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Saikao	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	41	4102	930	1164	1455	2413	5032

Other Districts

Table 12: Relief Camps in Hnahthial⁹⁷

Name of Village/Camp/Localit y	No. of Relief Camps	No. of Persons Refugees in Relief Camps	No. of Persons Refugees Outside Relief Camps	Male	Female	Children (Below 18 yrs)	Total
Thingsai	2	67	240	110	122	75	307
N.Ngharchhip	1	67	38	28	33	44	105
Cherhlun	1	40	45	23	28	34	85
Hnahthial South -III	2	45	30	19	26	30	75
Bualpui H	2	28	17	15	21	9	45
Hnahthial North -I	1	12	27	10	13	16	39
Khawhri	1	20	18	11	13	14	38
Hnahthial North -II	1	20	14	8	8	18	34
Ngharchhip	1	20	14	8	10	16	34
Tarpho	1	8	19	8	9	10	27
Hnahthial South -I	1	10	14	5	10	9	24
Muallianpui	0	0	23	4	5	14	23
Hnahthial South -II	1	10	12	4	4	14	22
Tuipui-D	0	0	9	2	2	5	9
Rawpui	0	0	6	1	1	4	6
Thiltlang	0	0	6	0	1	5	6
S.Chawngtui	0	0	5	1	1	3	5
Lungmawi	0	0	3	1	1	1	3
Leite	0	0	2	1	1	0	2
Pangzawl S	0	0	2	0	1	1	2
Aithur	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pangzawl N	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	15	347	544	259	310	322	891

⁹⁷ Data from Mizoram State government officials

Table 13: Relief Camps Khawzawl District⁹⁸

Name of Village/Camp/Locality	No. of Relief Camps	No. of Persons Refugees in Relief Camps	No. of Persons Refugees Outside Relief Camps	Male	Female	Children (Below 18 yrs)	Total
Khawzawl Vengthar	0	0	60	17	21	22	60
Khawzawl Hermon	0	0	33	17	9	7	33
Biate	0	0	30	9	10	11	30
Khawzawl Lungvar	0	0	25	8	6	11	25
Khawzawl Dinthar	0	0	23	5	4	14	23
Chalrang	0	0	21	4	4	13	21
Khawzawl Zuchhip	0	0	20	5	4	11	20
Neihdawn	0	0	20	4	4	12	20
Chawngtlai	0	0	15	5	6	4	15
Tlangmawi	0	0	14	6	4	4	14
Sialhawk - I & II	0	0	12	5	2	5	12
Tualpui	0	0	11	5	4	2	11
Chhawrtui	0	0	10	3	3	4	10
Khawzawl Kawnzar	0	0	9	2	2	5	9
Ngaizawl	0	0	7	3	2	2	7
Rabung	0	0	7	1	3	3	7
Vanchengpui	0	0	6	2	2	2	6
Khawzawl Electric	0	0	5	2	1	2	5
New Chalrang	0	0	4	1	3	0	4
Kawlkulh N - II & Taitaw	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
Total	0	0	333	105	94	134	333

⁹⁸ Data from Mizoram State government officials

Table 14: *Relief Camps in Kolasib District*⁹⁹

Name of Village/Camp/Locality	No. of Relief Camps	No. of Persons Refugees in Relief Camps	No. of Persons Refugees Outside Relief Camps	Male	Female	Children (Below 18 yrs)	Total
Khamrang	0	0	63	19	21	23	63
Meidum	0	0	17	4	4	9	17
Kawnpui	0	0	16	5	5	6	16
Kolasib	0	0	12	5	3	4	12
Zanlawn	0	0	9	2	3	4	9
Bilkhawthlir South	0	0	6	2	2	2	6
N Chaltlang-I	0	0	5	2	1	2	5
Thingdawl	0	0	2	2	0	0	2
Kawnpui, Mualvum	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
Total	0	0	131	41	40	50	131

⁹⁹ Data from Mizoram State government officials

Table 15: Relief Camps in Mamit District¹⁰⁰

Name of Village/Camp/Locality	No. of Relief Camps	No. of Persons Refugees in Relief Camps	No. of Persons Refugees Outside Relief Camps	Male	Female	Children (Below 18 yrs)	Total
Dapchhuah	1	77	168	92	83	70	245
Nghalchawm	1	80	0	32	20	28	80
Khawrihnim	0	0	22	10	6	6	22
New West Phaileng	0	0	22	9	8	5	22
Zamuang	0	0	17	8	6	3	17
Ailawng	0	0	13	4	5	4	13
West Lungdat	0	0	10	5	5	0	10
Bazar Veng, Mamit	0	0	9	1	2	6	9
Rulpuihlim	0	0	8	6	1	1	8
Mamit Vengthar	0	0	7	2	2	3	7
Mamit chhim veng	0	0	7	0	2	5	7
Luangpawl	0	0	6	3	2	1	6
S.Sabual	0	0	5	1	1	3	5
Damparengpui	0	0	3	2	1	0	3
Phuldungsei	0	0	3	3	0	0	3
Field Veng Mamit	0	0	2	1	1	0	2
Marpara	0	0	2	2	0	0	2
Dampui	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
Lengte	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
Total	2	157	306	183	145	135	463

¹⁰⁰ Data from Mizoram State government officials

Table 16: *Relief Camps in Saitual District*¹⁰¹

Name of Village/Camp/Locality	No. of Relief Camps	No. of Persons Refugees in Relief Camps	No. of Persons Refugees Outside Relief Camps	Male	Female	Children (Below 18 yrs)	Total
Ngopa	1	38	122	54	65	41	160
Lailak	0	0	106	26	38	42	106
Mimbung	1	13	79	23	33	36	92
NE Khawdungsei	0	0	75	20	19	36	75
Khanpui	0	0	74	19	24	31	74
Keifang Venghlun	0	0	59	17	17	25	59
Suangpuilawn	0	0	53	11	20	22	53
Hliappui	0	0	48	26	15	7	48
Rulchawm	1	18	25	11	19	13	43
Tualbung	0	0	42	16	15	11	42
Chiahpui	0	0	33	7	8	18	33
Keifang Leitan	0	0	25	9	6	10	25
Keifang Venglai	1	14	8	8	6	11	25
Saitual III	0	0	21	11	6	4	21
NE Tlangnuam	0	0	14	6	6	2	14
Saitual Venglai	0	0	11	2	4	5	11
Khawkawn	0	0	10	3	2	5	10
Mualpheng	1	6	0	1	2	3	6
Changzawl	0	0	4	2	1	1	4
Zawngin	0	0	4	1	0	3	4
Daido	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
Dilkhan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kawlberm	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ruallung	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tawizo	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	5	89	814	274	306	326	906

¹⁰¹ Data from Mizoram State government officials

Table 17: Relief Camps in Serchip District¹⁰²

Name of Village/Camp/Locality	No. of Relief Camps	No. of Persons Refugees in Relief Camps	No. of Persons Refugees Outside Relief Camps	Male	Female	Children (Below 18 yrs)	Total
Chhingchhip Mualpui	0	0	57	13	13	31	57
Chhim Veng	0	0	43	11	12	20	43
Baktawng	0	0	32	13	6	13	32
Kawnpui	0	0	31	8	10	13	31
Leng	0	0	27	9	7	11	27
Dinthar Veng	0	0	25	7	5	13	25
Thenzawl East	0	0	22	7	8	7	22
Hmar Veng	0	0	16	5	5	6	16
P & E Veng	0	0	14	2	7	5	14
N Vanlaiphai	0	0	12	2	3	7	12
Kawnpui North	0	0	11	4	3	4	11
Darnam	0	0	10	3	2	5	10
Keitum	0	0	9	3	1	5	9
New Serchhip North	0	0	8	2	1	5	8
Vanchengte	0	0	7	3	2	2	7
Bawktlang	0	0	6	3	1	2	6
Chhuanthar Tlangnuam	0	0	5	2	1	2	5
East Lungdar	0	0	5	1	1	3	5
Bungtlang	0	0	4	2	1	1	4
Sailulak	0	0	3	1	1	1	3
Total	0	0	347	101	90	156	347

¹⁰² Data from Mizoram State government officials

Educational Needs in Mizoram State

Mizoram Government Schools

Chin refugees are permitted by the State government to access Mizoram government schools. In practice however, Chin refugees face numerous challenges when trying to access the schools in Mizoram State including financial, logistical, and language barriers. Some schools charge fees for tuition and textbooks, and the students must supply their own stationery. Some schools provide a discount to Chin students or can fully cover the costs, however in instances where Chin students have to pay it is very difficult for their families to come up with the money to cover the costs. In instances where the Chin refugee students live in the camps, the distance between the camps and the government schools can be great, making the journey to school difficult or impossible for some students. Finally, the Mizoram government schools are taught in their native Mizo language presenting a language barrier for Chin students who speak primarily Chin or Burmese. Such barriers have made it difficult for some Chin students to attend school at all.

Under-Resourced Camp Schools

Due to the challenges faced by Chin refugees accessing the government schools in Mizoram, many of the refugee camps have started schools for Chin students. These schools have been a great alternative to the government schools for when it is needed, however; the camp schools have their own set of challenges. For example, many are severely under-resourced and often operate in buildings with poor infrastructure. Sometimes the roofs are made of plastic and blow away easily in the wind as is the case in the Tipang Camp School in Saiha district. In some instances, there is mold or they lack sanitation facilities inside the building. Sometimes, like in the Thaizawl Camp School in Lunglei, the buildings used are not large enough to contain the classes needed for the number of students in the camp. Further, the schools in the camps often have limited supplies and furniture for teaching and learning. Basic supplies such as tables and chairs or desks, whiteboards, stationary, and textbooks are either not available or severely limited in camp schools. These conditions make learning and teaching extremely challenging.



Photo by BRI research interns.

Teacher Pay

Teachers in the camp schools are often underpaid or serve as volunteers due to limited school funding. This makes it challenging to keep teachers, as many find themselves needing to leave the school to earn a living for their families. For example, in the Niawtlang Refugee Camp School, all six of the teachers are volunteers and in the New Dawn Centre in Zawling, Saiha, all 18 teachers are volunteers. In many of the camps schools in which teachers receive payment, their wages are minimal and leave them in a position of having to choose between teaching or earning wages for their families.

The Cost of Education and the Need to Work

For some Chin refugee students, education in Mizoram is simply unaffordable. Government run schools charge tuition and not all are able to provide discounts to refugee students. Beyond the cost of education, families may pull their children out of school to help earn money to support their livelihoods. Chin refugees are legally permitted to work in Mizoram State, however they often work in low paying jobs and need multiple family members to work to help make ends meet. In these cases, it can become a decision between work and school.

Lack of School Accreditation

There is no government entity to regulate or fund the camp schools and Chin refugee students face many challenges related to accreditation. Many find themselves unsure if their education in Mizoram will be honored in Burma or honored by a university.

Chin State: Education in a Resistance-Controlled Area

The people of Chin State continue to defend themselves against the military regime of Burma that ousted the democratically elected government with a coup on February 1, 2021. In the midst of human rights violations and ongoing attacks by the Burmese military, the Chin State government continues to function. The Ministry of Education is currently working on a number of initiatives to improve the educational outcomes of Chin children and improve the access to education for Chin residents. One initiative is to strengthen their ability to gather educational data as they assess their current needs and plan for the future. In the 2024-25 academic year, despite the challenges of operating in wartime, the majority of the 619 schools across the 612 villages in Chin State were able to open. There are still districts that are in need of schools, including Mindat, Matupi, and Falam.¹⁰³

As part of its broader strategy to rebuild the education system, the Ministry is also establishing Chin National University (CNU). This initiative is a direct response to the collapse of higher education following COVID-19 and the military coup, which left thousands of students and educators unable to continue their academic or professional paths. CNU will offer accessible, high-quality higher education beginning with an 8-month foundational course in January 2025, followed by bachelor's degree programs. Courses will focus on English, ICT, peacebuilding, and other core academic skills. The university is being constructed in a secure location, with operations supported by student fees and donor contributions. Through CNU, the Chin government seeks to empower its youth and contribute to the long-term rebuilding of Chin State.¹⁰⁴

We gathered information from six different principals who represented six different schools. Many of them indicated that before the military coup, the education system was sound and improving. They explained that the National League for Democracy (NLD) government, led by Aung San Su Kyi, had been making various improvements. Prior to the NLD holding power, schools went up only to 10th grade, and they used a traditional, teacher-based education model. Once the NLD government came to power, various positive changes were made to the educational system, including schools raising the grade level to grade 12 and changing the education model to foster student-based education. The previous NLD government also provided the schools with essentials for teachers and students including solar power in the schools, teaching curriculum and learning resources, whiteboards, and other basic supplies.

Since the military coup, the Chin State education system has suffered. Many of the schools have aging or damaged infrastructure that they are not able to fix or replace and the central government no longer provides the schools with basic curriculum or essential materials for teaching and learning. Basic materials such as furniture (e.g., chairs and tables), uniforms, notebooks, textbooks, and pencils are scarce. Principals reported that many students are unmotivated because they struggle to find a clear vision for their future and teachers are demoralized because many of them are not getting paid at this time.

¹⁰³ Spruce Mountain Libraries. *Facebook*, Meta Platforms, www.facebook.com/sprucemountainlibraries/

¹⁰⁴ *Chin National University (Concept Paper) Draft*. Ministry of Education, Government of Chinland, 2024–2030.



Figure 8: Map of Myanmar by States, Regions, and District¹⁰⁵



Figure 9: Map of Chin State, Burma, by Township¹⁰⁶

Schools in Chin State¹⁰⁷

	Primary School	Middle School	High School	Total
No of schools	334	187	98	619
No of Students	35,951	13,179	4,081	53,211

¹⁰⁵ Myanmar Ministry of Immigration and Population, The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census, Chin State Report, Census Volume Report D-3, p I, https://myanmar.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Chin%20State%20Census%20Report%20-%20ENGLISH_0.pdf

¹⁰⁶ Ministry of Immigration and Population, The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census, Chin State Report, Census Volume Report D-3, 2016, p. ii, https://myanmar.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Chin%20State%20Census%20Report%20-%20ENGLISH_0.pdf

¹⁰⁷ Chin Ministry of Education

Case Studies of Six Key Villages in Chin State under Resistance Control (Zophei CDF, a Member of the Chinland Council)

The purpose of these case studies is to demonstrate that humanitarian assistance can be effectively delivered from Mizoram to areas of Chin State that are currently under the control of resistance groups, including the Zophei Chinland Defense Force (CDF), which is a member of the Chinland Council. These six villages are located near the border with Mizoram's Saiha district. While the research team did not visit the villages in person, the information was gathered through reliable sources who are familiar with the situation on the ground. According to the villagers and local contacts, essential services such as education can be and are being provided in these resistance-controlled areas.

Case Study One: Tluangram A and B Villages, under the control of Zophei CDF

Tluangram is a small village located in a rural setting just east of the Burma-Mizoram border. It is located in Thantlang Township in the Hakha District in Chin State. Tluangram is separated into two villages known as Tluangram A and Tluangram B. Since the military coup on February 1, 2021, the villages have struggled to provide the appropriate infrastructure for education for Chin students, especially because internally displaced persons (IDPs) displaced from other villages have been attending the schools in the villages. Both Tluangram A and Tluangram B utilize partially constructed buildings as schools. They lack the resources to create or even follow educational curriculums, having only minimal classroom materials. They also lack the funding to support the students and the teachers, and do not have enough teachers to support the number of students in the schools. All the teachers at the schools in Tluangram villages are unpaid. Occasionally they have been able to provide small gifts of appreciation, but this has never amounted to a salary.

Since the Burmese military coup, Tluangram has seen an influx of IDPs, including school-aged children and youth who are eligible to enroll in the local schools. The annual tuition is approximately 50,000 Myanmar Kyat (~\$23 USD at the time of this report); however, due to the situation in Burma, the Tluangram schools currently charge no tuition since many students are not able to afford it. This has put a strain on schools in the villages, since they no longer have revenue to help pay teachers and provide classroom materials. Schools in Tluangram A and B were receiving donations from the international community, including the Chin diaspora, to help provide access to textbooks and materials for teachers and students; however, due to waning donations, they are not able to provide textbooks, school materials, or clean water at the school. Students have to provide these things on their own, including bringing their own clean water, which many are unable to do. The schools also operate in buildings with infrastructure that is not appropriate for a school. At best, the schools provide pens, pencils, rulers, and a minimal number of textbooks. The buildings are incomplete structures with dirt floors and minimal furniture.

Health is also an issue impacting students at the schools in Tluangram A and B villages. Some students have contracted illnesses and have missed substantial amounts of school. There is no capacity within the schools to support the health of the students and there is no hospital in the village. For students, or anyone in the village, to receive any sort of medical treatment they must travel far away to the nearest hospital with capacity to treat them.

Tluangram A has a total of 35 students enrolled in primary and middle school, with 21 students enrolled in the primary school and fourteen students enrolled in the middle school. There is one single paid teacher and five volunteers. Tluangram B has a total of 105 students enrolled as primary or middle school students, with seventy-one students in primary school and thirty-one in middle school. Tluangram B has two schools, both with the same name and under the same organization.

Case Study Two: Vawngtu Village, under the control of Zophei CDF

Vawngtu is a small village in Thantlang Township in the Hakha District of Chin State. At one point shortly after the military coup on February 1, 2021, the Tatmadaw had established a small military post in Vawngtu, which was abandoned later in 2021.¹⁰⁸

Vawngtu has the largest population of students enrolled in primary, middle school, and high school in the district. Vawngtu schools welcomes IDPs and children from nearby villages as well. Many children from other villages live away from their parents and study at the schools in Vawngtu due to the village's educational infrastructure. Vawngtu's has a higher number of teachers and staff and has more school buildings as well as better infrastructure for schooling than the surrounding villages. During our visit, one of the biggest concerns raised by the principal, teachers, and elders of the village were concerns about how to access higher education. Due to the circumstances of Burma, students are not able to continue to university or higher education in their home country. In India education is more expensive than in Burma and almost unattainable for these villagers. Because of this, many students feel unmotivated to stay in school through middle and high school. To address these challenges, many leaders in the village would like to work with the international community to create an online education system for higher education that could provide greater opportunities for this current generation of students.

¹⁰⁸ Myanmar Junta Forces Abandon an Outpost in Chin State amid increasing Tension with Chinland Defence Force (CDF). 6 October, 2021.

<https://www.thechindwin.com/myanmar-juntas-forces-abandon-an-outpost-in-chin-state-amid-increasing-tension-with-chinland-defense-force-cdf/>

Case Study Three: Khuabung A and B Villages, under the control of Zophei CDF

Khuabung A and B Villages are in the Zophei Region located in Thantlang Township, Chin State. In 2023 the village was bombed by the Tatmadaw in airstrikes¹⁰⁹ and the Region has been under regular attack since the military coup. There has been an increase in the number of students in the school in Khuabung village due to an influx of IDPs.



Khuabung Village school. Photo: Source, Anonymous for security reasons.

In Khuabung A Village 86 students are enrolled in school, including 43 in primary school, 18 in middle school, and 18 in secondary high school. Reportedly, four students in the village are not enrolled in school due to a lack of interest in school. The school was originally built for students up to 7th grade; however, it now houses students up to 12th grade. All 13 teachers in the school were not getting paid at the time of this report. Many students are unable to pay the school fees and need assistance to continue with the schooling. The principal of the school expressed various needs including more school buildings to accommodate students up to the 12th grade. The school also lacks basic necessities for the students to learn and for the teachers to teach, including internet, textbooks, stationary, materials such as a printer and projector, bathrooms, first aid kits, and salaries for teachers. The school also does not have access to safe and reliable drinking water. Furthermore, the principal is concerned about the students' safety and physical well-being, given the conflict. Students do not have access to physical or mental health services in or outside of the school.

In Khuabung B Village there are 154 students enrolled in school, including 90 in primary school, 45 in middle school, and 19 in secondary high school. There are currently 18 teachers at the school, all of whom are unpaid. The cost to attend the school is 450,000 Myanmar Kyat a year (~\$214 USD) as well as the cost of uniforms. Despite being originally designed to accommodate students up to the 8th grade, they currently accommodate students up to the 12th grade, putting them well beyond student enrollment capacity for size of the school. The school does not have adequate sanitation facilities, clean drinking water, space for the students, and classroom materials. They also urgently need desks and tables. At one point, they were able to print textbooks from Hmawngtlang Village, but that is no longer affordable. As a result, students are being asked to bring their own textbooks. The school has various needs including light bulbs, a projector and small TV for educational purposes, a computer, textbooks, and funding to pay for teacher salaries. The school wishes to offer after-school tutoring sessions for students in need but needs more resources including light bulbs.

¹⁰⁹ Junta jets bomb a village in western Myanmar, killing 10. 30 March, 2023.

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/airstrike-03302023162908.html>

Case Study Four: Zephai A and B Villages, under the control of Zophei CDF

There are 1,086 people in Zephai A village, including 240 IDPs, some of whom attend the local school. There are 249 students enrolled in Zephai A village school, including 135 in primary school, 48 in middle school, and 44 in secondary high school. The tuition for students is 100,000 Myanmar kyat (~\$47 USD) as well as annual school fees of 5,000 Myanmar kyat (~\$2 USD). The school is not able to provide supplies to the students. There are 17 teachers at the school, all unpaid. At one point, the diaspora of Chin from Zephai living abroad have helped provide funding for the teachers' salaries at 150,000 Myanmar kyat (~\$72 USD) monthly; however, this is not sustainable. The minimal pay and appreciation given to the teachers when available is not enough to support their own basic needs, making it difficult to recruit new teachers. The school needs better infrastructure and repairs to damaged infrastructure. The school does not have sanitation facilities, access to clean drinking water, and classroom materials. The school also does not have enough space for recreational activities or to accommodate their secondary high school students.



Zephai A school. Photo Source, Anonymous for security reasons.

They currently divide their classrooms into two to make space for everyone. There used to be two school buildings but they quit using the original primary school because it is too run down. Furthermore, they do not have enough teachers. The school also lacks basic supplies including printers, textbooks, whiteboards, a projector, internet, a laptop, lab equipment for science classes, and a first aid kit. The principal we spoke with hopes that the school could partner with Chin people living in developing countries to help teach English virtually, as a skill his students could take with them.



Zephai B School. Photo Source, Anonymous for security reasons.

Zephai B Village is in Thantlang Township in the Hakha District of Chin State. The current population of Zephai B village is 401, including 202 men and 199 women. There are 94 IDPs also living in the village, including 44 men and 50 women. There are 152 students enrolled in the schools in Zephai B village, including 89 in primary school, 17 in middle school, and 46 in secondary high school. Nineteen of the students are IDPs. The cost to attend school is 200,000 Burmese kyat annually (~\$95 USD). Textbooks cost around 70-80,000 kyat (~\$22 - \$38 USD) and stationery is 5,000 kyat. The schools in Zephai B village attempt to provide whatever the students need, but the supplies are scarce.

There are 23 teachers and 11 volunteer staff at the school. The teachers are not paid at the time of this report, but they have been provided with monetary gifts donated by other sources. However, funding has been gradually decreasing each year. Prior to the military coup, they were receiving approximately 800,000 kyat (~\$381 USD) per month. There is a significant need for teacher training and resources as well, because not all of the teachers are trained as teachers. Many of the current teachers, especially those who have been there

for several years, are demoralized because of the lack of support and financial compensation they receive. They want the Chin State government, the local community, and international communities to stand with them. Many of them want to quit, but they remain working to help the students. At the time of our visit, there were six teachers who had been participating in the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) activities, which opposes the Tatmadaw. Because of this, those teachers feel afraid for their lives and feel unsafe traveling outside the village.

There is only one school in the Zephai B Village and the infrastructure is limited. The school was in the process of being built when the military coup occurred. As such the construction of the school has not been completed and there are not enough classrooms for all the grade levels to attend class at the same time. Primary school students attend in the morning and secondary school students attend in the afternoon, therefore students are only in the classroom four hours per day. In addition, the school and its infrastructure are falling apart and there are no funds to maintain, fix, or upgrade the facility. The school does not have adequate sanitation facilities, access to clean drinking water, enough space for the students, and classroom materials. The school is also in need of internet service, printers, laptops, projectors, lights, and first aid kits.

After 12th grade, many students aspire to study abroad, but they face challenges due to the quality of education they receive in Burma. While their high school (H/S) certification is recognized in Burma, it often does not meet the standards required by institutions in other countries. There is often a gap between the quality of education, including foreign language training, attained in Burma and the requirements of universities abroad. Finding ways to enhance the quality of education in Chin State would significantly improve students' opportunities to continue their studies abroad. Enhancing language skills would improve their chances of success in global academic settings.

**“They have no hope
in terms of their future
due to the
broken education system.”**

*~ Principal of a school
in Zephai village*

Appendix A

Briefing delivered to CM Lalduhoma (Edited for Public Release)
 Briefing on UN and INGO Presence in Northeast India
 April 18, 2024

In 2022, the United Nations spent \$192 million on programs in India. While there are not many examples of a UN presence in Northeast India, the UN funds multiple programs and works with implementing partners in the region. According to the UN Sustainable Development Group, in 2023 the UN had 33 programmatic interventions in Northeast India.

In Mizoram, the three interventions were 1. immunization (UNICEF), 2. malnutrition (UNICEF, UNHCR, World Food Programme, World Health Organization), and 3. agricultural value chains, food supply chains and infrastructure (WFP, International Fund for Agricultural Development). The UN has made the two immunization and food supply interventions in all Northeastern states and has made all three in Manipur and Assam.

Assam is home to the most robust UN activity, with a total of 17 programmatic interventions made in 2023. Assam also has a UNICEF office that covers the entire Northeast.

While the food supply intervention has been made in all Northeastern states, the Government of Meghalaya is the only one to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the World Food Programme to become an implementing partner.

What Services Could the UN Provide in Mizoram?

In 2021 the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the Indian Ministry of Development of the Northeast Region, and NITI Aayog produced their first report on Sustainable Development Goals progress in the Northeast.

According to this report, Mizoram's progress on the sixteen included SDGs is relatively strong for the region. While Mizoram does well on most SDGs, it lags behind on SDG 5 (Gender Inequality), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), and SDG 13 (Climate Action).

However, since this study was completed before the Burma refugee crisis hit its peak, it may not fully represent the humanitarian gaps and strained resources of the state today. The following are some examples of UN programs and their benefits in the Northeast:

UNICEF- In 2023, nearly \$40 million in funding went through UNICEF in India. UNICEF's 2023 targets included having 8,900,000 people access primary healthcare at UNICEF-supported facilities, ensuring 310,000 children could access education, providing 544,000 people with clean drinking water, and enabling 2,955,500 households to access new or additional social assistance from the government with UNICEF technical support. In Assam specifically, one of UNICEF's programs supported the education of children living on tea estates. The previous year, UNICEF used its existing presence in Assam to enable emergency relief after flooding. This included technical assistance and the dispatch of experts to affected areas. Even so, UNICEF relied on partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to distribute aid.

World Food Programme- In Meghalaya, where the state government has signed an MOU with the WFP and become an implementing partner, there are many examples of successful collaborations. According to the 2022 Annual Country Report, 2.1 million people in Meghalaya benefitted from WFP-developed information campaigns on One Nation One Ration Card and grievance redressal mechanisms. In 2023, the WFP helped create a monitoring system to track the price of essential commodities in the state. The WFP also helped improve the public distribution system through a pilot program with an automated grain-dispensing machine.

UNHCR- UNHCR offices in New Delhi and Chennai provide refugees with registration, financial assistance, and third country resettlement to countries such as the United States and Australia (with the permission of the Ministry of Home Affairs). CAM does not advocate UNHCR's resettlement of refugees in Mizoram, but for UNHCR to provide registration for the purposes of protection and assistance. UNHCR has not been permitted to operate directly in Mizoram.

UNHCR's formal implementing partners in India include ActionAid (AA), Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), Bosco Organization for Social Concern and Operation (BOSCO), Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), Development and Justice Initiative (DAJI), Gandhi National Memorial Society (GNMS), Modern Architects for Rural India (MARI), and Socio-Legal Information Centre (SLIC).

India is not a signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention. Signatories such as the United States provide protection and even work authorization to refugees, who have a pathway to permanent residency after one year and eventually citizenship.

However, India's non-signatory status does not prevent it from working with UNHCR. In Malaysia, another non-signatory state, refugees do not receive work authorization and cannot seek citizenship. Malaysia does still allow UNHCR to register refugees and supports resettlement to other countries, including the United States. UNHCR partners in Malaysia provide assistance to refugees while they are in-country.

Similarly, Thailand has both a UNHCR office in Bangkok and two field offices in Mae Sot and Mae Hong Son, which support temporary shelters for refugees from Burma. Among their services are refugee status determination, health care support, access to education (including Thai language courses), and cash-based assistance.

There is no legal obstacle to UNHCR playing a similar role in Mizoram except for the central government's reluctance to permit access. If the central government permitted UNHCR to operate in Mizoram, then refugees in the state would be able to receive protection and assistance as in other countries. Similarly, UNHCR's partner NGOs should be able to operate openly in Mizoram to provide assistance to both the refugees and local community.

Local and International NGOs- Local non-governmental organizations have played a key role in supporting refugees since 2021, providing services and humanitarian assistance. Groups such as the Central Young Mizo Association (Central YMA) raised and donated large sums to build shelters and provide supplies in the first year of the crisis. However, organized efforts to provide aid have since been affected by a lack of funds.

International NGOs are often better-funded but less able to access Mizoram and the refugee camps. Because of the Indian central government's strict regulation of INGOs and their finances, some have avoided coming to Mizoram. Crucially, the Central YMA is in the process of getting the registration needed to access international funding.

For local NGOs with the knowledge and presence needed to work in Mizoram, the U.S. government may be able to provide resources. In March 2024, President Biden signed the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2024. At least \$121 million was directly appropriated for Burma-related programs; of this amount, \$75 million is supposed to go to “assistance and cross-border programs, including in Thailand and India.” This is the first time that assistance and cross-border programs in India were mentioned in Burma appropriations.

In the past, CAM has arranged meetings with the U.S. State Department for Mizoram state government officials, including the Speaker of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly, and leaders from the Central YMA. To receive direct funds from sources such as the State Department’s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), Mizoram’s NGOs will need to submit applications for grants.

Recommendations

1. Explore deeper partnership with UN offices such as the World Food Programme, including a role as an implementing partner with an Memorandum of Understanding and physical presence in Mizoram.
2. Advocate for the presence of a UNICEF office similar to the one in Assam, which would provide assistance to the Mizoram host community as well as child refugees.
3. Explore opportunities to collaborate with UNDP on localization, particularly for the Sustainable Development Goals where Mizoram’s progress has been slower (SDG 5, SDG 12, SDG 13).
4. Advocate with the Indian central government to allow international NGOs, including UNHCR partners, to operate openly in Mizoram.
5. Encourage and provide technical support for local NGOS, such as the Central YMA, to apply for grants from the U.S. government and access the \$75 million in humanitarian funding appropriated for Burma crisis response in India and Thailand.
6. Encourage and facilitate cross-border assistance to Northwest Burma, where large populations of internally displaced people do not have access to aid.

Appendix B

Resolution adopted by Mizoram Legislative Assembly, Aizawl, Mizoram, India on February 24, 2023

Mizo -

“Kan ram thenawm Myanmar leh Bangladesh atanga sa himna zawnga kan unau raltlan lo kalte, Mizoram sorkar leh Mizoram mipuiten tha taka kan lo dawngsawng hi a lawmawm kan ti a, a tul ang zel a lo tuamhlawm chhunzawmin an awmna tur leh an mamawhte ngaihtuah zel ni se kan ti”

An Unofficial Translation in English.

“That this House commends the relief and reception rendered by the Government and the people of Mizoram towards the refugees from neighbouring countries of Myanmar and Bangladesh, and resolves to continue to provide shelter and other necessities in the future.”

Source: BRI

Appendix C

Letter from the Directorate of School Education in Mizoram State to the schools affirming the right to education for students from Burma for students ages 6 - 14 years in Mizoram State.

No.D.32019/3/2017-DSE(Estt)
GOVERNMENT OF MIZORAM
DIRECTORATE OF SCHOOL EDUCATION
Education Centre, Treasury Square, Aizawl – 796001
Phone – 0389-2326233 Fax-2317542 E-mail :dirsewn@gmail.com

Dated Aizawl, the 31st August, 2021

To

1. All District Education Officers
 2. All Sub Divisional Education Officers
- Mizoram

Subject: Admission for migrant/refugee children.

Sir/Madam,

I am to state that chapter 2(4) of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act-2009) mentioned that children aged between 6 to 14 years belonging to disadvantaged communities have the right to be admitted to school in a class appropriate to his or her age for completing elementary education.

I, therefore request you to take necessary action on admission to migrant/refugee children in your jurisdiction to schools so that they can continue their schooling.


Yours faithfully,


(JAMES LALRINCHHANA)
 Director
 School Education
 Mizoram :Aizawl

Memo No.D.32019/3/2017-DSE(Estt) : Dated Aizawl the 31st August, 2021.

Copy to:

1. PS to Hon'ble Minister, School Education Department.
2. PS to Secretary, School Education Department.
3. Guard file.


 Director
 School Education
 Mizoram :Aizawl

Appendix D

Pu M. Laikaw, Chief Executive Minister of Mara Autonomous District Council, Siaha, Mizoram State presenting the BRI's Report to Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah in New Delhi on August 7, 2023.

