



India-Burma Border

Strengthening Education for Chin Refugees and Mizoram Host Communities

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Introduction



Research Trip to Mizoram:
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Districts Visited: Aizawl, Champhai, Lunglei, Lawngtlai, Siaha

Methodology: Qualitative interviews with key informants



Introduction

- **Displacement Overview:** Since the 2021 Burma military coup, ~33,709 refugees from Burma (12,877 children) have fled to **Mizoram**, India.
- **Geography & Reception:** Mizoram shares a 400 km border with Chin State and has welcomed refugees as “brothers and sisters,” offering ID cards, shelter, and support.
- **Education Policy:** The Mizoram government mandated refugee school enrollment in line with the Right to Education Act (2009); schools provide tuition waivers, uniforms, and materials.

Introduction

- **Barriers to Access:** Refugee children face poverty, language barriers, and distance from schools; instruction in Mizo or English limits learning for Burmese/Chin speakers.
- **Community Response:** Civil society, including Central YMA, churches, and the State government, lead relief efforts, build schools, and provide basic needs.
- **UN Involvement:** UNICEF and partners could enhance capacity, offer language programs, support school integration, and follow models like UNICEF-Poland's response to Ukrainian refugees.
- **Vision:** Strengthen Mizoram's education system to benefit **both refugees and host communities**, ensuring dignity, learning, and long-term resilience.

Executive Summary

- **Crisis Background:** Since the military coup in Burma on February 1, 2021, over 33,709 people, including 12,877 children, have fled to Mizoram State, India, and 47,200 remain internally displaced in Chin State, Burma.
- **Displacement & Insecurity:** As of March 2025, the UNHCR reports over 3.29 million people displaced within Burma and 144,800 fled to neighboring countries. Conflict has worsened, particularly with airstrikes, drone attacks, and artillery shelling.

Executive Summary

- **Mizoram as a Refuge:** Due to cultural ties, Chin refugees have long sought shelter in Mizoram. Since the 2021 coup, numbers have surged. About 50% live in camps across 132 sites, the rest with relatives or in rental housing.
- **Child Impact:** UNICEF reported over 600 children killed or injured in 2024, some while at school. A March 28, 2025, earthquake (7.7-magnitude) affected 15 million people, compounding the crisis.

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. Approximately 50% of them live in 132 relief camps, and the other 50% live in rented space or with family and friends across Mizoram. The largest numbers of them are in five districts across the State: Aizawl, Champhai, Lunglei, Lawngtlai, and Saiha.

Key Findings

- 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. Conditions in the country went from terrible to worse when a 7.7 earthquake occurred in Burma on March 18, 2025. 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.

Key Findings (Aa Zi)

- The Central Government of India has provided 10 crore for the Chin refugees, approximately \$117,000 USD. 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. Importantly, the Indian Government has allowed the Chin refugees to remain in Mizoram and has not arrested, detained, or deported them.

Key Findings

- The Mizoram State Government, Mizoram civil society organizations, churches, and individuals have welcomed the refugees offering political support and refuge. 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.

Key Findings

- 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.

Key Findings

- 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. 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.

Recommendations for the US 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.

Recommendations 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.

Recommendations to 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.

Recommendations to Stakeholders

- 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.