



# BORDER CROSSINGS

A Newsletter of the Brackett Refugee Education Fund (BREF)



## School Reopens in Maw Kwee Village

In May of this year Russell Brackett, Chair of The BREF Board of Trustees, visited many of the projects we support in Thailand and Bangladesh. Early on he visited Maw Kwee village and the reopened school.

Maw Kwee, the 400 person village of hill tribe Karen from Burma was first settled over 25 years ago. Under the direction of Naw Tamla, BREF funded a primary school there for village children. By 2018 with conditions relatively calm, families began repatriating to Karen State and the school was closed. The situation in Burma deteriorated rapidly in 2021 and families started moving back. **Tamla reopened the school in 2022** on a shoestring and this year they project well over 100 students, needing 8 teachers and administration. Kids whose families don't live in the village are boarding in the church and the preacher's house. It is an impossibly beautiful, tidy little village with a school made of teak and tin, all through volunteer efforts of the town.



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With your support, the children in Maw Kwee continue to study and work hard toward a better life for themselves and their community.

## A Visit to Kutapalong

In Kutapalong refugee camp near Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh children learn through creative expression. Few of them have held a paintbrush before today. The challenge is to inspire creativity and imagination in children whose lives have been so unrelenting and desperate, they struggle with the facility for abstract thought. With nurture and encouragement, they bloom quickly.



A Young Rohingya child sounds out a word in his native tongue, then writes the word on the board. He is using an alphabet and script that is being developed expressly for this purpose. Seven million Rohingya speak the language and until this pilot, there has been no effort to develop a script and teach children how to write it. This young child is using phonics to sound out the word. After several kids shouted out the Rohingya word for lion (sounds like the Sanskrit word transliterally: sin hah) this one jumped up and wrote it on the board. In our work, it does not get any better than this. Coming soon to Google Translate.



**With support from BREF, Children on the Edge (COTE) aims to help give these kids agency so they can gain their rightful place in today's world.**



COTE's digital team in Cox's Bazar is very sharp bunch. They produce and promote videos made by primary school children in the camps where these kids tell their stories and share their experiences with others in similar distress. This team also develops videos to support instruction from textbooks written in a language kids don't understand. They are developing a script for their spoken language that to date has none. This is very inspiring to see.

With success, children will be able to write in the language of their ancestors for the first time. These children only know what they have seen and much of that has been the horrifying abuse of their families. They don't know what a 'right' is. They know of nothing beyond their immediate surroundings. The work of COTE aims to give these kids agency so they can gain their rightful place in today's world.

**We could not be more honored than for the opportunity to support this work.**



## Ban Nai Soi Founder Passes Away

Finally, we'd like to send our deepest condolences to a life-long friend of BREF, Rosie, whose father recently passed away. She had a four day funeral, one day each for the Baptists, Buddhists, Catholics, and Anglicans. Over 1000 former students, teachers, and community leaders showed up to pay their respects and celebrate his memory. Rosie and her in-laws hosted the event cooking, cleaning, and providing accommodations for those who attended. It had been over 100 degrees all week. Rosie soldiers on. Michaelburi, Rosie's husband, recently came across the border from Karenni State into Mae Hong Song and is now stateless. He is a member of Parliament, largely in exile, in Karenni State and knows just about everybody working to get children educated in the region. We have great hopes for this power couple and their work with refugees and migrants in Mae Hong Son and with IDPs in Karenni State.

We know Rosie's father would be extremely proud of her. His dream and his legacy will live on through her and her dedication to educate under-privileged children in the community.

# The Brackett Refugee Education Fund

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[www.brackettfund.org](http://www.brackettfund.org) 

[brackettoffice@gmail.com](mailto:brackettoffice@gmail.com) 



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

- All administrative and communication costs will be supported by the trustees.
- Living and travel expenses of trustees and volunteers, while on business for the Fund, will be donated by themselves.
- The Fund will not sell or give away the names and addresses of any of its contacts or contributors.
- Although the Fund is happy to receive contributions at any time, only one fundraising campaign will be made each year.
- Because the trustees donate far more than required for administrative purposes, every dollar you donate will go towards helping people receive an education.