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Creating a better  
future

MAP Foundation

Bridging the Gap between Policy and Practice



## Ellen Nadia Gylfadóttir

"Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory."



Article 26,  
Universal  
Declaration  
of Human  
Rights, 1948

Over seventy years ago education was declared a human right for every person in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This right has been reaffirmed in many international human rights instruments since then. Decades later, an Ed-

ucation for All (EFA) movement was set in place when the international community made a commitment to provide quality education for all children, youth, and adults. The movement was established in 1990 when over 150 government

adopted the World Declaration on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand. At the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, the international community reaffirmed its commitments and identified six goals in order to achieve EFA.

In order to achieve these goals the signatory countries will establish national legal and policy frameworks so that everyone, no matter their circumstances, can access education.<sup>1</sup>





In the last decade a significant progress has been made towards increasing access to education and the number of enrolled children in schools has increased in all levels. However, over 265 million children still remain out of school in the world (22% of which are of primary school age). It is crucial to ensure that education is inclusive for all, as education is the key to sustainable development. Through education, people are given the opportunity to break from the cycle of poverty. Education, therefore, reduce inequalities and improves gender equality. Moreover, it is empowering and fosters tolerance between people that leads to more peaceful societies. Governments around the world need to place education as a priority, not only in policy but also in practice.<sup>2</sup>

## Migration and Education

People migrate for many different reasons, some in the hope of finding better opportunities, while other are fleeing danger. Migrants and refugees are among the most vulnerable people in the world and often have difficulties accessing education and in some cases are denied entry into schools.<sup>3</sup> About 31 million children are living outside their country of birth in the world today. Education can be even be major push factor for children and their families to migrate. However, when arriving in the new home country the children sometimes face barriers when beginning their education, often resulting from legal barriers, such as restrictive migration polices in the host

<sup>1</sup> Campaign For Education. “Education for All.” <https://www.campaignforeducation.org/en/what-we->

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 Quality education <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Goal-4.pdf> <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/> and <https://en.unesco.org/themes/right-to-education>

<sup>3</sup> Global Education Monitoring Report 2019: Migration, Displacement and Education, Building Bridges, Not Walls. Foreword and Executive Summary





Migrant children future prospects based on whether or not they are welcomed in their new homes. Sadly, research has shown that migrant children are likely to encounter discrimination in the new schools in the form of insults, unfair treatment, and or exclusion. This can result in distrust, hopelessness, and problematic behavior as well as an overall negative attitude towards education. Moreover, migrant children can also be subject to discriminatory practices outside the classroom, preventing them from receiving the same services as other children. Misinformation, prejudice, and xenophobia are also factors that block children from receiving the services they are entitled to. <sup>4</sup> The school environment thus must adopt to the needs of those on the move with well-trained teachers that are able to multicultural classes and curriculum the promotes positive thinking and tolerance towards diversity. If the education of migrants is ignored, a great deal of human potential is wasted and the migrants' prospects for a better and brighter future is hindered. <sup>5</sup>





## Migration and Education in Thailand

Thailand has long been a regional hub for workers from neighboring countries. Over the last decade, millions of workers from Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos, have crossed over to Thailand along with hundreds of thousands of their children.<sup>6</sup> It is estimated the Thailand is now home to 4 million migrants and between 300,000 to 400,000 migrant children.<sup>7</sup>

The largest migrant group in Thailand consist of people from Myanmar who flee from conflict and extreme poverty. As the population of migrant children has grown, so has the need to provide education for them. Thai authorities and local and international organizations have made an effort to provide services for these children. The Royal Thai Government (RTG) adopted the EFA policy in 1990, and in 2005, a RTG Cabinet Resolution gave all children who lack legal status the right to education at all levels. These laws stress that all children, regardless of their nationality and legal status, have the right to receive 15 years of free education. This has led to a growing number of migrant children enrolling in Royal Thai Government (RTG) schools.<sup>8</sup> Despite the Education For all policy there still remain over 225,000 migrant children who are not enrolled in school in Thailand, indicating that not enough is being done to implement the EFA policy.<sup>9</sup> Research conducted by Save the Children and World Education in 2014 showed that migrant children living in Thailand face barriers in accessing education. These barriers prevent parents from enrolling and keeping their children in school, and include language barriers, lack information about EFA,

<sup>4</sup> Uprooted: The Growing Crisis For Refugee and migrant children, Unicef 2016, 14, 40)

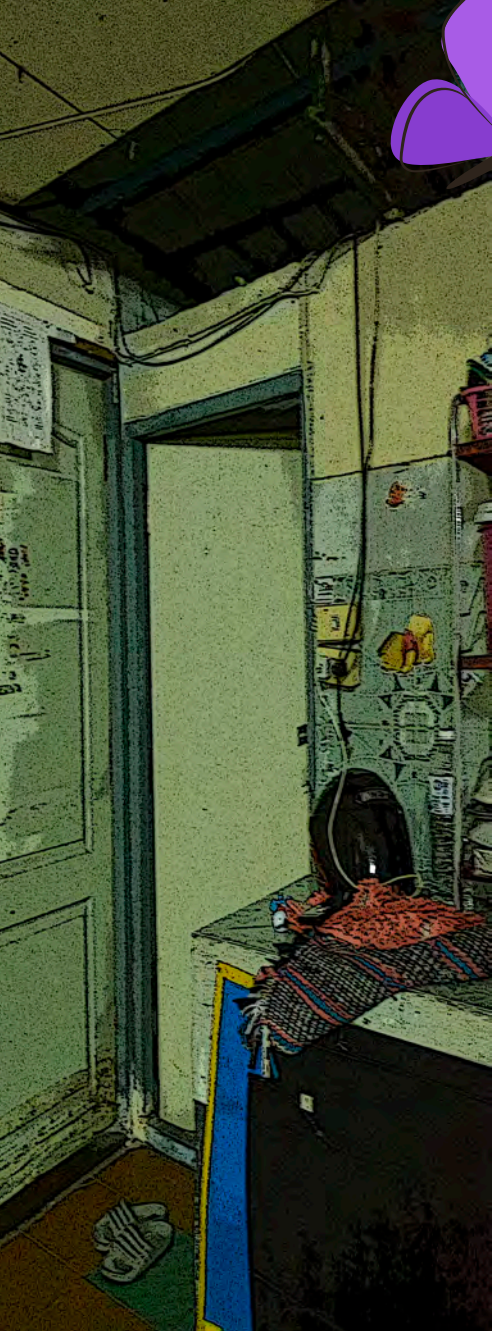
<sup>5</sup> Global Education Monitoring Report 2019

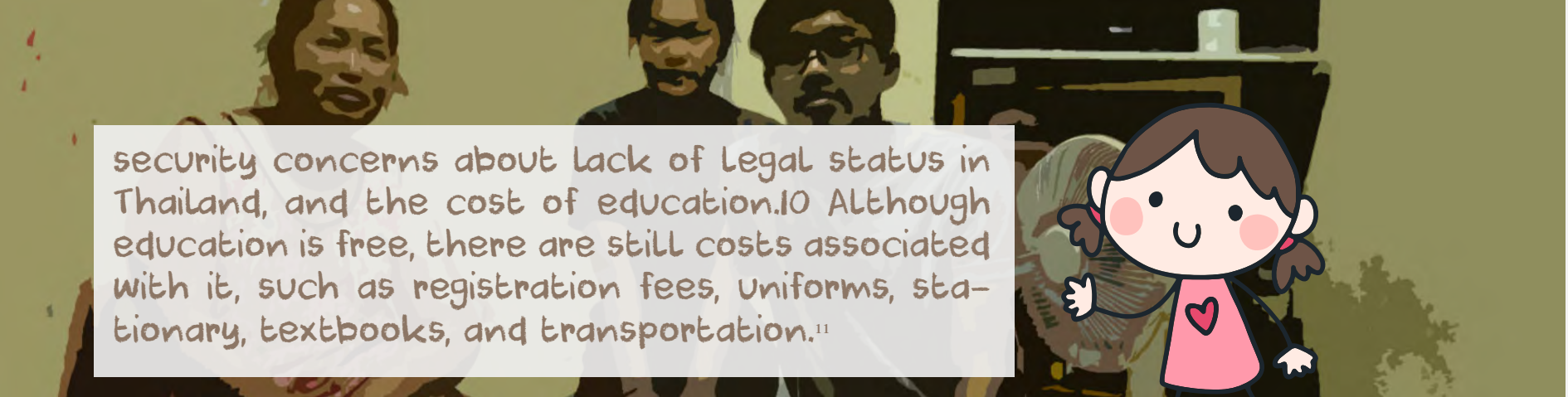
<sup>6</sup> Save the Children 2014, 5-6.

<sup>7</sup> IOM Thailand, <https://thailand.iom.int/sites/default/files/Infosheets/IOM%20Infosheet%20-%20Assistance%20to%20Migrant%20Children.pdf>.

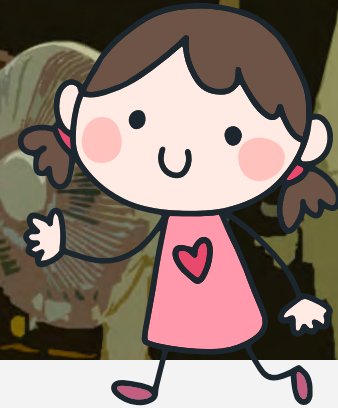
<sup>8</sup> Save the Children 2014, 5-6.

<sup>9</sup> (Mam Katerenchuck 2018, <https://campaigns.savethechildren.net/blogs/mam-katerenchuk/breakthrough-education-migrant-children-thailand>)





security concerns about lack of legal status in Thailand, and the cost of education.<sup>10</sup> Although education is free, there are still costs associated with it, such as registration fees, uniforms, stationary, textbooks, and transportation.<sup>11</sup>



## The Role of MAP Foundation

Since 2008, MAP foundation has, through its Education and Identity Program, encouraged and assisted migrant parents to enroll their children in Thai public schools. MAP works to provide information to migrants about the “Education for All” policy in Thailand and children’s rights to an education in Thai public schools. It also works to inform parents on how they can register their children to fulfill these rights. MAP also works with schools to facilitate and promote positive attitudes. Despite this policy, migrants still face obstacles in enrolling and keeping their children in school. These obstacles include the fi-

nancial burden of uniforms and school supplies, issues of mobility, differences in the Thai and Myanmar school systems, and language and cultural differences.

Most migrant’s barely make minimum wage, leaving them in need of financial assistance to support their children through school. MAP provides scholarships to support these families, so that their children can receive an education like their peers.

“We aim to provide scholarships and support to migrant children and families that have financial difficulties to help with the education of their children. Many families don’t have enough income to send their children to school, especially if they have several children. If the families cannot support their children, MAP tries to at least support one child in order to reduce the burden/ the family expenses. With this support, parents are less likely to ask their children to drop out of school to work, and this increases their chances pursuing higher education” Ning, the manager of the education project at MAP, explains.





## How do Migrant Families Access the Scholarship?

“The children in primary and secondary levels are often identified in outreach activities MAP has in migrant communities, and we work closely with teachers in schools that give information about the children that are most in need of support. We also provide information about the scholarship on MAP Radio, particularly for students pursuing higher education, such as vocational schools and universities.” Ning answers.

The Education Program also has other supportive activities both at schools and in the migrant communities that address the barriers migrant children face. These activities are carried out through parents and at school director meetings identity workshops, youth camps, etc.

<sup>10</sup> (Save the children, Education for All in Action in Thailand: A Case study of good practice, 2015, 2).

<sup>11</sup> IOM Thailand <https://thailand.iom.int/donate>).





“We have regular parent meetings, in order to keep them updated about changes in migrant policies in Thailand, to advise them on budgeting strategies, and also to hear from them about their worries and problems. We help set up parent groups, a space where parents can meet and discuss issues, seek advice and help each other. Parents group also assists MAP in collecting the number of children in the community that are in need of school uniforms and shoes, as well as their sizes and other needed supplies. In the youth camps we train the youth about child protection, health and rights. It aims to create a platform for them to meet, share experiences, and be empowered. Another activity we have is

the principle meetings, where we introduce our program and share information about migrant children situation. This is done both to push schools to accept more migrant children and to encourage them to share this information at a higher government level that may result/lead/push for policy changes” says Ning.


In recent years more international and community-based organizations, like MAP, have been providing information about the EFA policy and connecting migrant families with Thai schools. As a result, migrants understanding of the education system in Thailand has improved and an increasing number of migrant children enroll in Thai

schools. However, there are many migrant children that still do not attend school in Thailand, especially if they arrive with their parents at an older age and are already old enough to work.

“To address these issues, we try to inform the parent about different options for their children to receive education, such as adult school (a school for older children) where they can learn primary and secondary level at an accelerated pace. We try to explain to them that if their children learn how to read and write, they will be able to get a better job in Thailand in the future.”








## What Are the Most Pressing Issues Faced by Migrant Youth?

“There are many issues, but there is one issue in particular that needs to be addressed. Without a Thai citizenship, migrants can only work in manual labor. That is why when migrant students finish their education, it is unlikely that they will get good jobs. For example, after a migrant that does not hold Thai citizenship finishes university, he cannot get work that allows him to use his diploma/certificate. Because of this many young migrants do not try to access higher education, and many give up their future dreams. Some children dream big, but their dream cannot come true. I want all children to have the same opportunities, and be allowed to work according to their education, skills, and knowledge. We need to advocate for this change on a policy level,” Ning explains.





The MAP Foundation works to bridge the gap between education policy and practice in Thailand. Here are the stories of some of the migrant children that MAP supports. Their stories show the challenges migrant children and their families face, the obstacles they have had to overcome and their dreams for the future.





## A Poor Family with 11 Children Struggles to Survive

Kuang is a 15-year-old boy living in Mea Tao Mai, in Mae Sot District, Thailand. His family moved to Thailand in 2016 in hope of a better life. The way of life in Myanmar was difficult. The family struggled to find work and when work was available it only paid 1500 kyats per day (1 USD).

After a difficult journey to Mae Sot, a town bordering Myanmar that holds a large number of Burmese migrants, Kuang's family is still very poor and struggles to survive. The family is big, but Kuang is only the fifth child among eleven children. His father passed away a few months ago

due to his alcohol addiction, and his mother has been unable to work because of her own poor health. Therefore, the family has to rely on the oldest siblings to work and provide for the family. However, they do not have steady jobs and a stable income, as most of the work in Mae Sot is in agriculture, which is a seasonal job.

“Ko my older brother has to take responsibility for the whole family now,” Kuang says. “He takes whatever work available, sometimes he gets work in construction sites even though it is physically hard, he has to make a living for us.” The daily payment for this

kind of work is about 200 baht (6 USD). “Ko sometimes goes with his friend to Popat where he works the whole night setting up posts. Together, they get paid about 900 baht, my brother saves his share of the money and pays debts,” Kuang explains. In a good month, the family's income is around 5000-6000 baht (160-190 USD). However, a large part of their income is often used to pay back money borrowed to buy rice and other essentials at times when work was unavailable.





Kuang helps with the chores around the house. “I wash plates, bowls, sweep and look after my youngest siblings. Sometimes on weekends, I go with my friends to the jungle to collect food. I bring the food to my mom and she cooks it for us,” he says.

Since the family is very poor, the children go to school most of the time without any pocket money to buy snacks. “We only get pocket money once every 4-5 days. I know my family is in a difficult situation, so I never ask. We have no money and we have to be able to cope with that. Sometimes, our friends share their snacks and buy food for us.”

Kuang attends Mae Tao Mai School with two of his younger brothers and one of his younger sisters. Since the family does not live within walking distance from the school, the kids ride bicycles to school that were gifts from their teachers. Kuang and his siblings receive a scholarship from The MAP Foundation.



Before MAP had heard about the family, the children did not attend school. None of the siblings had received any education in Myanmar or Thailand. MAP provided support for the younger children to go the nearest school and provided them with bikes so they could get there. This is a common problem among many migrant families. When they arrive in Thailand they often do not know about the EFA

Policy. They are often unaware of it because they do not know the language and are afraid to ask for assistance from government services because of their lack of documents and legal status.

“After meeting with the MAP foundation, our situation has become much better because they have helped us in many ways. Without the scholarship, we would have to rely on ourselves and might not be able to go to school.”

Kuang’s favorite subject is the Thai language, but he also loves painting and has competed in drawing competitions. “Sometimes, I’ve won the first prize, second, and third too. I also like sports. Tomorrow, we are going to have a running competition. I am so tall so the teachers tell me to play other sports too,” he says.

When Kuang was asked what he wants to be when he grows up, he replied “my dream is to one day become an artist.”



## A Young, Hard-working, and Ambitious Student Who Wants to Make Her Dreams Come True to Help Her Family and Community.

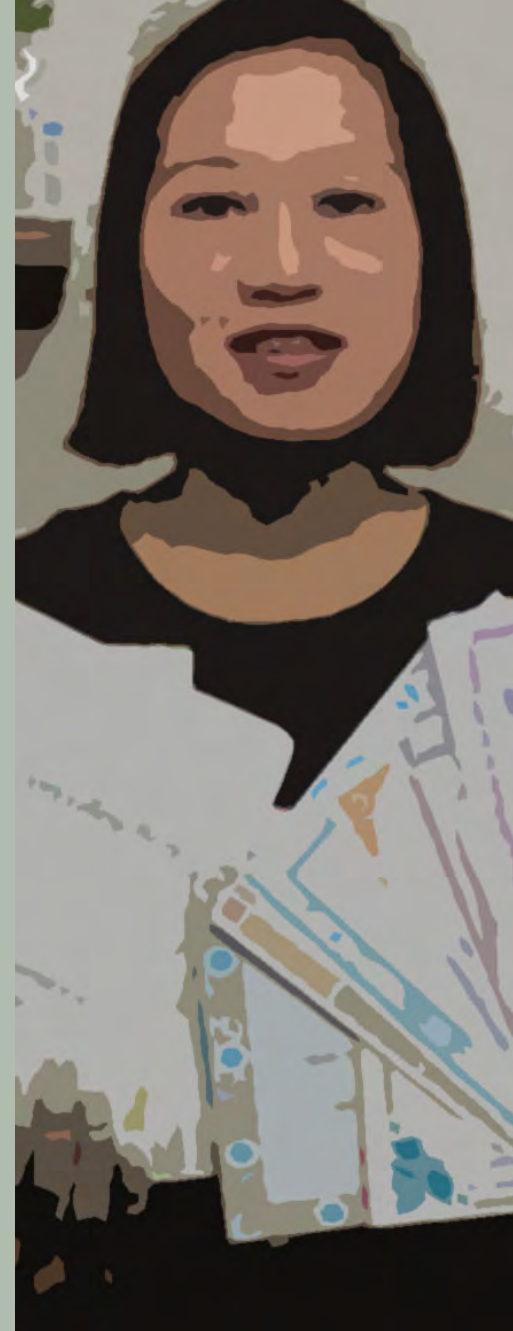
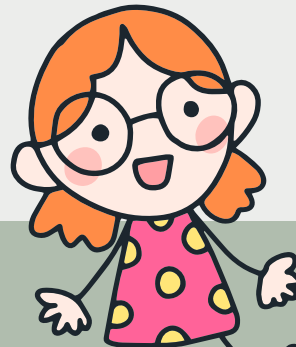
Don is 16 years old. She lives with her 13-year-old sister and her mother in Mae Sot. She was born in Thailand and has lived in Thailand her entire life. Don's parents are both from Myanmar. Her mother came to Thailand 20 years ago for work, so she could send her older brother and younger sister to school in Myanmar. "My parents met at a factory in Thailand where they both worked. Soon

after, they got married and had me. When I was about seven or eight my dad stopped working. He drank a lot, had poor health, and a lot of pain in his body. After that, only my mom worked and my dad just took care of me and my younger sister at home," Don says.

Don's dad passed away three years ago, so now her mother works and takes care of the family by herself. Her mother currently needs to work three part-time jobs in order to make ends meet. In total, her monthly income varies between

4000-5000 baht. Although the budget is tight, Don's mom is still able to pay rent, buy food, and pay the water and electricity bills. Don even gets 40 baht a day to buy snacks. However, not much money is left to spare to spend on other things.

Don received a scholarship from The MAP Foundation that covered the cost of her education for three years since her father passed when she started seventh grade. "It helps my family a lot. Now my mom only has to pay school fees for my sister. Before seventh grade I did not have to pay for anything, because almost everything is free at school from grade 1-6. I only had to pay for the books, but now I have to pay for the food at school too," Don explains.



Don explains that after she finishes this term, she will have a grade nine certificate that will allow her to get a part-time job. “I am thinking of working at Tesco Lotus as a part-time worker. I can work there after school. Then I will be able to save money to continue my studies and I don’t need to bother my mom anymore. Besides, my mom still has to look after my sister,” she says.

Don is now in ninth grade at a school in Mae Sot. She is a very promising and ambitious student with excellent grades. She is a student representative who presents the school vision and activities

at public events and participates in competitions on the behalf of the school. Don has won many awards for her educational performances. “This term I have not had any awards yet. Last term, I won the handwriting, painting and Burmese language competition. I was also identified as being talented in math and science. I also won second place in a math competition against four other schools. That was my favorite competition, I love it so much. I am proud of all my awards because they make me feel like I can do well, so I am happy with them all,” Don explains.

Math is Don’s favorite subject in school. “I like it because it helps me release stress. Sometimes I re-do the math tests that I found difficult in order to understand them and other times my friends and I will come together to do the math tests. We help each other when we do not understand the questions,” Don says.

Don’s dream is to go to Chiang Mai University to study medicine and become a doctor. “I think if I was a doctor then I might have been able to save my dad. I also love to help people, so that is why I want to be a doctor,” she says.



## The Story of a Brave Youth Leader Who Shares Her Knowledge About Health Issues on the Radio and with Her Community



Pan is 16-year-old and the oldest of her four siblings. Her family moved to Thailand about ten years ago to find work. Today, her mom works as a housemaid, but her dad is still struggling to find work. Sometimes he gets work at the cornfields or in construction, but it is often the case that there is no work available for him. Therefore, the family mostly relies on her mother's income which is around 3000 baht a month (95 USD). Pan helps her parents by working and helping with chores around the

house. "After school I go home. After that, I cook, clean, bathe my youngest sister, and help my other sibling with their homework. On weekends, I work on a peanut farm. I get paid 150 baht a day. Some of the money I spend; some of the money I save for school fees and gas for the school car. Most of it I give to my mom. I only work during the summer when there is no school," she says.

Pan is in seventh grade in Boonyawat School. The MAP Foundation has sup-

ported Pan and her family for seven years. "I receive almost everything from MAP. They give me clothes, school materials, and money to go to school. Before I met with MAP, I did not attend school. Even when I was in Myanmar, I was not able to attend school. During the first two years in Thailand I did not attend school. I was stayed at home or went with mom to pick bananas to sell at the market. I was nine years old when I started first grade," Pan explains.





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In addition to being a promising student, Pan is also a youth leader in her community. She completed a youth leadership training with MAP where she learned about health issues and hygiene. Pan became a youth leader so she could help her community by sharing her knowledge.

Pan broadcasts on the MAP Radio station once a month along with one other youth leader. “On the radio, we talk

about HIV, STDs, and family planning. We also discuss other things that might affect the health of teenagers,” she says.

The audience are mostly Burmese migrants. Most of the people living in the Thar community listen to the radio show. “At first, I felt a bit nervous talking on the radio, but then I got used to it and now I get excited to do it. I have learned a lot and feel confident talking about these issues. Sometimes, people from my community even come and ask me about things that they did not understand on the radio show. I am happy that I can explain it to them better,” she says.

When Pan was asked about her future plans and dreams she replied, “I want to complete my studies and go to high school, but I don’t think I can study further because I feel sorry for my mom. She is very tired.”

Pan’s dream is to become a doctor. “My mom always feels happy when she sees doctors in the hospital. She also wants



me to be a doctor. If I become a doctor I can help my parents and other people too,” Pan explains.

However, Pan is not optimistic that her dream will come true. “It will be very challenging for me to study more. The higher the level you study at, the more expensive it becomes. I have been told that it costs around 10,000 baht to study at university, but I am not really sure about the tuition fees. It makes me so worried to think about it,” she says.

Pan’s mother says that education is important, but the family is in a very difficult situation since they cannot afford to send their children to school without financial assistance. “Education will allow them to stand on their own feet,” she says.

Pan’s mother is a housemaid at a doctor’s house. “I see the way they can eat and drink. I wish my child could become doctor and have this kind of life. But it is only a dream. I know our situation well, and I am not sure if I can sup-

port her dream,” Pan’s mother explains.

Many children in Thailand have dreams similar to Pan’s, but, sadly, they are often unable to make them come true due to a lack of financial support. MAP tries its best to support these children in achieving their goals.



## A Boy Who Helps His Parents Make a Living

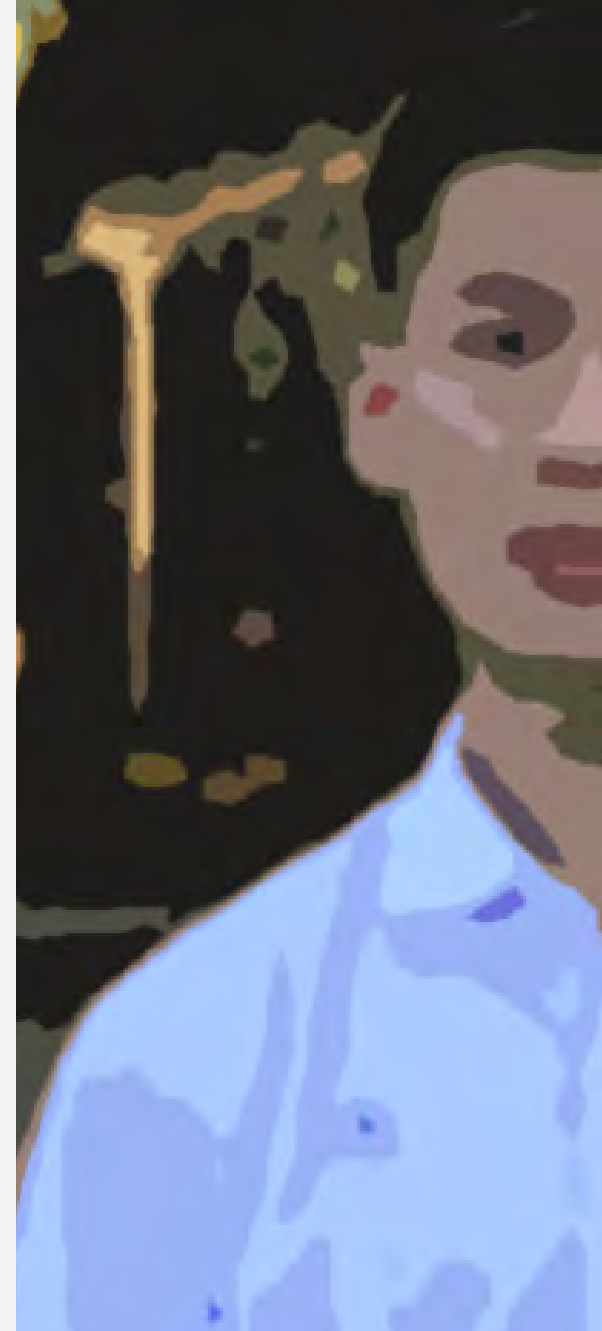
Kyaw is 17 –years- old. He has two younger sisters and one older. His father worked as a taxi driver in Myanmar. Kyaw’s family moved to Thailand after his father had a motorcycle accident and was unable to work and provide for the family. Kyaw’s father and his younger sister are both in seventh grade. Kyaw started first grade when he was 10 years old. His

family has been living in Thailand since 2011. “After we came to Thailand, my younger sisters and I registered at a Thai School. My father wanted us to attend Thai schools because, although knowing Burmese is good for reading and writing, learning Thai is good for doing business,” Kyaw explains.

Kyaw and his family all live and work at a carrot farm. “My mom, my sisters and I wash and pack the carrots, but my dad works in the office because his right hand got permanently injured after an accident,” he says. Kyaw only works on weekends for all of Saturday and half

of Sunday. “I only work half the day on Sunday because I have to wash my clothes and do my homework. However, working does not affect my studies. It is not very difficult since I work in the shade and I only need to work one and a half days a week,” he explains.

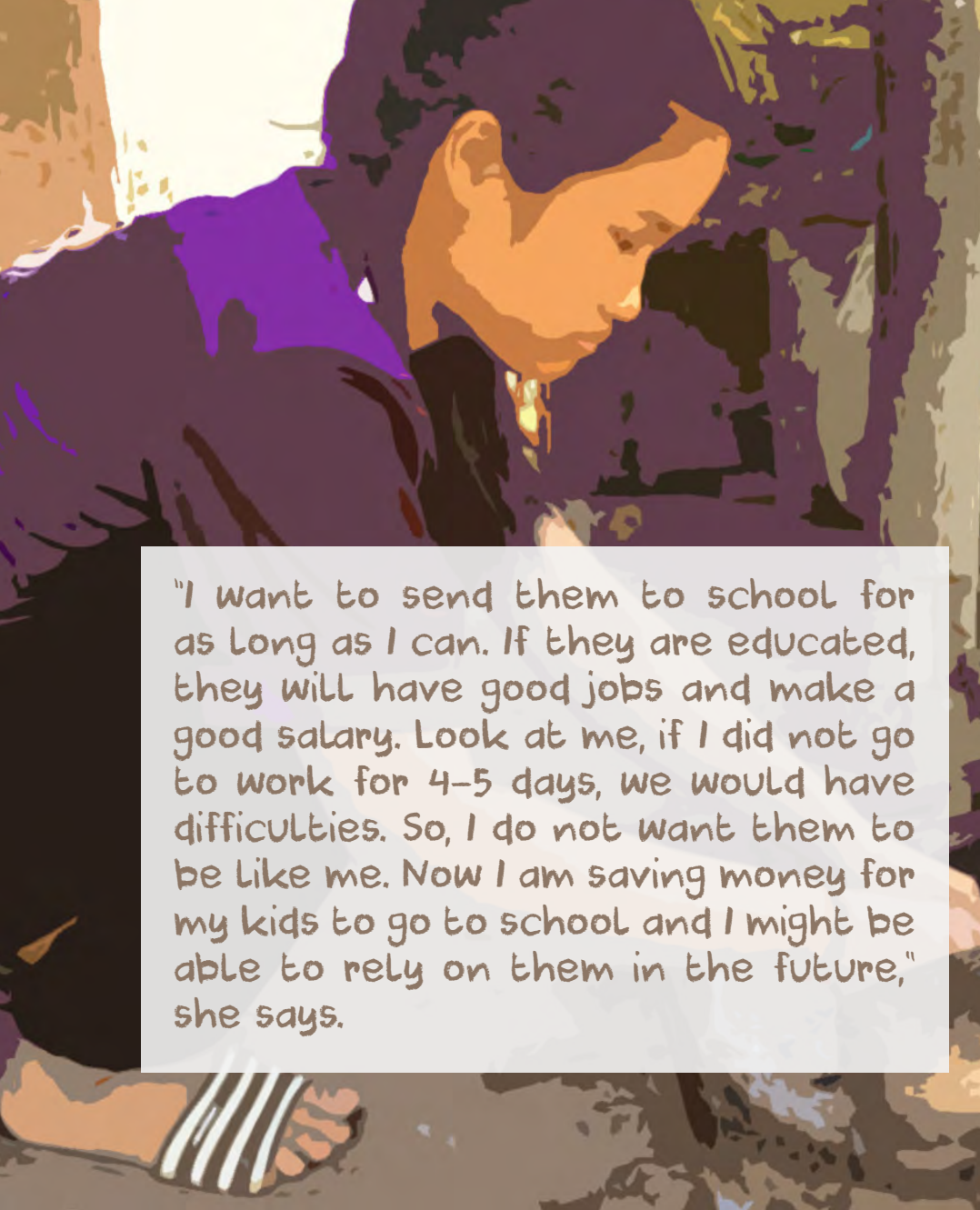
Kyaw and his younger sisters have been receiving support from MAP for four years. “The MAP Foundation started supporting me when I was in third grade. They gave me school uniforms, shoes, and a school bag. The support helps with our family expenses. As a family with three children, we need the buy two new pairs of shoes every year. One pair is between 300 and 400 baht. When MAP helps us, we can save our money rather than spending it on those things. Also, without the support, we could not send money back to our family in Myanmar,” Kyaw says.



Kyaw's favorite subjects in school are math, computer technology, and gym. After he completes secondary school, he wants to go to vocational school and study mechanics. "With that education, I can get good work at factories and make a good income," Kyaw says.

Kyaw's mother believes that education is important because it can help her children get good jobs and be independent. "My son says he is interested in vocational school. If he wants to continue his education after ninth grade, we have to support him, but there needs to be a program available that Kyaw is really interested in and that matches the family's skills and situation," his mother explains.





"I want to send them to school for as long as I can. If they are educated, they will have good jobs and make a good salary. Look at me, if I did not go to work for 4-5 days, we would have difficulties. So, I do not want them to be like me. Now I am saving money for my kids to go to school and I might be able to rely on them in the future," she says.

## A Mother Trying to Keep her Children in School so that They Can Have a Better Life

Jing is 15 years old and lives in Fang, a large agricultural town in the north of Thailand. She has two older brothers and one younger sister. Her oldest brother is 24 and lives and works in Chiang Mai. Her other brother is 18 and in ninth grade like Jing. Her younger sister is 8.

Jing is from Shan State, Myanmar. The family moved to Thailand in 2012 to look for work. Now her parents both work at a construction site for minimum wage. Their oldest son also sends money to the family so they can send the children to school. During the summer, when school is out, Jing works at the silver factory to help earn money for the family.

Jing says that the scholarship from MAP has helped the family a lot. "My parents' income is only enough to cover daily expenses and nothing else. Because of the scholarship we were able to fix our roof, which was leaking. The money we saved from not having to pay the school fees allowed us to buy the building materials we needed," she says.





This is Jing's last semester in secondary school. When asked what she wanted to do after she finishes, Jing burst into tears and said, "If we have enough money I want to continue my studies, but the fees are around 3000-5000 baht. I am good at math, so I want to study accounting. However, as migrants we do not have the same rights as other people. To be an accountant I have to be a Thai citizen," Jing explains.

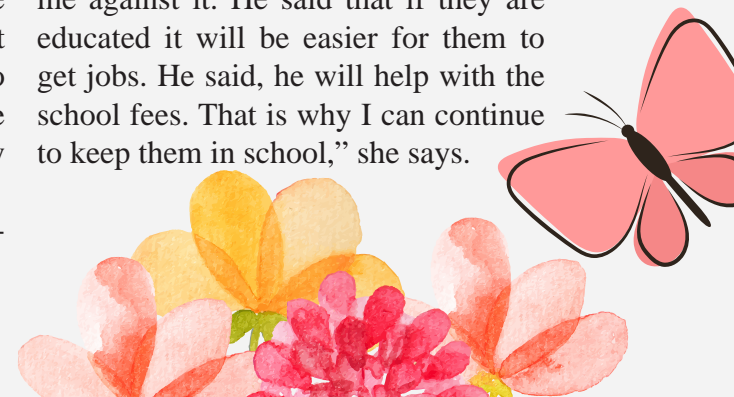
Not having a Thai citizen card affects Jing's life in other ways as well. "Besides studying accounting, I am also interested in sports. But whenever the school goes to sports competitions, you need to show a Thai citizen card to get in. I do not have one and it is very com-

plicated to get one. I only have the pink card, so I cannot travel freely and I need to ask for permission every time I want to leave my district. I also can't open a bank account. I want to have the same rights as the other students," she says.

Despite all these obstacles, Jing wants to continue her studies. "Education is important because if we are not educated, we will face the same problems as my mom did. She has to work every day from early in the morning to late in the evening. This makes me so sad. I want to educate myself and get a good job so I can help my mom have a better life and build her a new house. I want my family to have a happy life," she says.

Jing's mother agrees with her. "Is it im-

portant for me that my children get an education so they can read and write. Without an education they will become farmers like me. They could not read, or travel and they would have to stay in one place. I want them to go as far in their education as possible so that they can have good jobs and a good income, but the school fees are very high. I thought about not sending them to school after 9th grade, but my oldest son advised me against it. He said that if they are educated it will be easier for them to get jobs. He said, he will help with the school fees. That is why I can continue to keep them in school," she says.

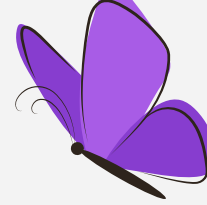




## A Teenage Boy Who Dreams of Becoming an Engineer

Pong is 17 years old and lives with his parents and his two siblings in Chiang Mai. He was born in Thailand shortly after his parents arrived here from Myanmar. His parents came in search of work and a better life. His mom works as a housemaid, but his dad is handicapped and cannot work. His family has to rely solely on his mother's income. Pong and his younger sister go to school in Chiang Mai. He is studying electronics in a vocational school and wants to become an engineer one day. "I want to become an engineer because it is hard work and very challenging. After I finish my vocational training, I want to continue my studies at a university," he says.

Pong does not have Thai citizenship and therefore he cannot work as an engineer. "We need a Thai citizen card to apply for good jobs," he says.



## A University Student with a Promising Future

Suwaree is 22 years old and lives with her parents in Chiang Mai. Her parents are from Shan State, Myanmar and moved to Thailand 23 years ago because they could not find work. Suwaree and her 1-year-old brother were both born in Thailand. Her mother is not healthy, so she is not able to work so Suwaree's dad is the breadwinner for the family. He is a contract worker at construction sites. However, work is not stable, and some months his income does not cover the cost of living for the family.

Suwaree studies psychology at Rachaprat University in Chiang Mai. MAP gave her a scholarship that pays for her school fees for two years. "Without the

scholarship, I would not be able to go to University," she says.

"After I graduate, I want to work at a company or at the Central Festival. I could work in the Human Resource department because it is related to what I have studied. I could give advice to companies on how to manage their staff in a better way," Suwaree explains.

However, Suwaree thinks she might have some difficulties getting a job after she graduates because it is competitive, and jobs require many qualifications. Additionally, the companies only hire people with Thai citizenship cards. At the moment, Suwaree does not have

Thai Citizenship, but because she was born in Thailand and has a Thai birth certificate she can apply for it. However, it is not certain that she will obtain citizenship because the application process can take up to six years.

"Education is very important to me. If I get a Thai citizenship card, my university certificate/diploma will allow me to apply for better jobs with higher salaries. That is very important to me because then I can take care of my parents. My mom got cancer last year and is not healthy. She needs to get an operation to remove the cancer. My family needs my help," Suwaree explains.







## A Determined Young Woman Who Graduated University and Established Her Own Business Despite Numerous Obstacles

"The Thai migrant policy restricts my right to travel, receive social welfare, and even think. Even though you are smart, if you apply for a good job, you will not get it. As a migrant you will only get hard labor-work in cleaning or construction. You cannot even have your own business," she says.





Nang is 28 years old and she has one younger brother who is 22. She moved to Thailand from Shan State, Myanmar, when she was 5, but her brother was born in Thailand and has a Thai citizenship.

“In Shan State we lived in a very remote area. There was no work available in our village. Political tension was high and military recruitment was becoming inevitable. Because my family and other villagers did not receive an education, they could not go into town to get work. My family had no livelihood opportuni-


ties in the village so all of us, including my grandparents, moved to Thailand,” says Nang.

In Thailand, her parents both work in labor. Nang’s dad works in construction and her mom sews clothes at home. Her brother finished his studies in electronics and was able to get a job at a technology company. “My parents don’t always earn enough money to cover their monthly living cost. But even though they don’t make enough we make sure it is enough for them. Now that my younger brother and I have jobs, we can

help them out,” Nang says.

Nang studied Management at Ratchapart University. Her family lives in Mea Taeng, so when she started university in Chiang Mai, she had to rent a room for herself in the city. She began receiving scholarship money in her second term of college. “Before I got the scholarship, I had to work day and night while studying, so that I could pay my rent, buy food, and pay school fees for me and my brother. Now, with the scholarship, I only have pay for my brother. It helped me a lot,” says Nang.





Nang finished her studies in 2017. Shortly after graduation, Nang began planning her own business. She started selling handmade jewelry made from mango trees at the Night Bazar in Chiang Mai. Today, she also runs small shops in the Airport Plaza and a shopping mall in Chiang Mai. She also sells a lot of her products online. “My studies have been very helpful. I use the skills I learned for my business. My education has given me the information I need to be able to do the accounting calculations for my business and to create packages for the products I sell. It also helps me know how to promote, market and export the products I create,” she says.


Despite Nang’s hard work, she still does not make a lot of profit from her business. Some months during high season are good, but in the low season can be difficult. Her dream is to expand her business online, both on Amazon and eBay, in order to have a more stable income. However, she faces numerous problems because she does not have a

citizenship. Nang is stateless and because of that she cannot have a credit card, take out a loan from the bank, or start a business in her name. After graduation she applied for a Thai citizenship card using the certificate she received from her university but the attempt was unsuccessful. For these reasons, Nang has to keep her business small and use her brother’s name to rent the spaces where she sells her products.

“Higher education is beneficial for migrants living in Thailand. The knowledge that we get from university is very important. Even so, there is no system that helps migrant workers who have completed their studies at university. For me, I have tried my best at university, but now I cannot get a job that allows me to use what I have learned. Education is important, but we have no use for what we have learned. Yes, you may have graduated with a certificate, but nothing else,” Nang explains with tears in her eyes.

During her university studies Nang did a few internships at various companies, but because of the fact that she does not have Thai citizenship she could never be hired by these companies after the internship was over. That is why after her studies she decided to establish her own business. Without the help of her brother, who has Thai Citizenship, she wouldn’t have been able to even do that.

“The right to access education is important, but migrants also need to have the right to access good jobs. Kids that have studied in universities should be able to have more job opportunities. For example, if you allow a kid to study accounting, you should also give them the chance to become an accountant. If not, the education goes to waste. There also needs to be a right to equal payment. We don’t get the same wages as Thai citizens, not even for the same work. It is not fair to us,” Nang, explains further.





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