



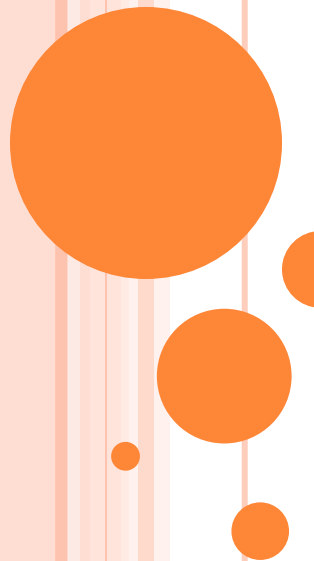
# **Burma/Myanmar's Burmese People, Culture, and History**

**AANHPI 'Ohana Center of Excellence**

**April 16, 2024**

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# Map of Burma/Myanmar





## Geography



|                         |                                 |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Population:             | 55 Million                      |
| Total Area:             | 676, 578 sq. km/261, 228 sq. mi |
| Nationality:            | Burmese                         |
| Official Language:      | Burmese                         |
| Capital City(Economic): | Rangoon/Yangon                  |
| Administrative Capital: | Naypyidaw (since 11/06/2005)    |

### **Burma is a Union of 7 States and 7 Divisions**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>1. Shan State</b></li><li><b>2. Kachin State</b></li><li><b>3. Karen/Kayin State</b></li><li><b>4. Kayah/Karenni State</b></li><li><b>5. Rakhine/Arakan State</b></li><li><b>6. Chin State</b></li><li><b>7. Mon State</b></li></ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>1. Rangoon/Yangon Division</b></li><li><b>2. Mandalay Division</b></li><li><b>3. Sagaing Division</b></li><li><b>4. Magway Division</b></li><li><b>5. Bago Division</b></li><li><b>6. Ayeyarwady Division</b></li><li><b>7. Taninthary Division</b></li></ol> |
|---|--|

# Number of Ethnicities and Languages

## Nationality: Burmese

- ❑ **Burma has 135 Ethnic groups;**
- ❑ **Eight major Ethnic groups are officially recognized with their Languages and Dialects.**

**1. Bamar**

comprises **9** Ethnic groups

**2. Shan**

comprises **33** Ethnic groups

**3. Mon**

comprises **1** Ethnic group

**4. Rakhine/Arakan**

comprises **7** Ethnic groups

**5. Chin**

comprises **53** Ethnic groups

**6. Kachin**

comprises **12** Ethnic groups

**7. Kayah/Karnni**

comprises **9** Ethnic groups

**8. Karen/Kayin**

comprises **11** Ethnic groups

# Name Change: Burma to Myanmar

- ❑ On January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1948, Burma became independent from the UK, as the “Union of Burma”
- ❑ March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1962, a Coup took place and
- ❑ September 18<sup>th</sup>, 1988, a second Coup took place  
After the Coup took place, the military government was named “State Peace and Development Council” (SPDC)
- ❑ **Since 1989 the ruling military government, officially recognized by the UN, changed Burma to Myanmar.**
- ❑ The current Constitution was drafted by the military dictatorship in 2008 to present the appearance of democracy while maintaining ultimate military control such as the police, security services, and much of the justice system. The military is still guaranteed 25% of the seats in parliament.
- ❑ Lastly, on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021, Coup took again. Arresting and killing the elected government officials, representatives, and innocent people by the military led by Gen. Min Aung Hlaing.
- ❑ **Burma has had one of the longest-running civil wars in world history (after independence from the UK, in 1948 until Today).**

# **Recent Military Coup**

## **Led by Gen. Min Aung Hlaing**

After Military Coup: 02/01/2021

- ❑ A total of 4,797 people have been killed by the junta.  
(as of 03/28/24. Source AAPP)
- ❑ A total of 26,458 people have been arrested.  
(as of 03/28/24. Source AAPP)
- ❑ A total of 123 post-coup death row prisoners.  
(as of 03/28/24. Source AAPP)
- ❑ A total of 162 people have been sentenced to death.  
(as of 03/28/24. Source AAPP)
- ❑ **The military used airstrikes and bombings on schools, hospitals, religious buildings, and civilian villages.**

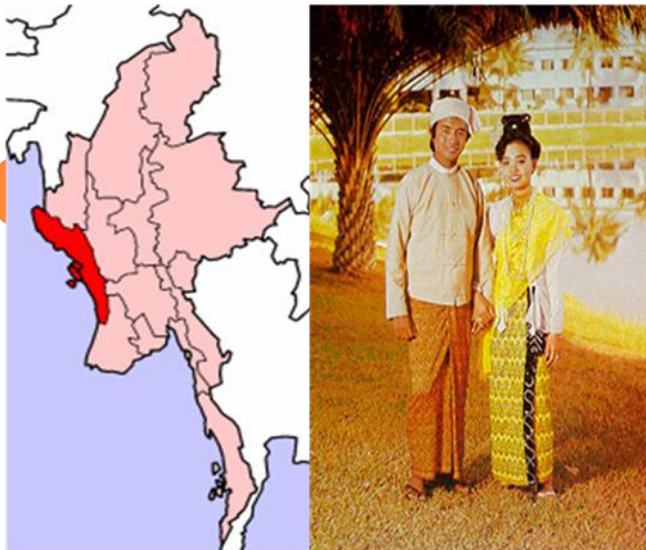
# Eight Major Ethnicities of Burmese



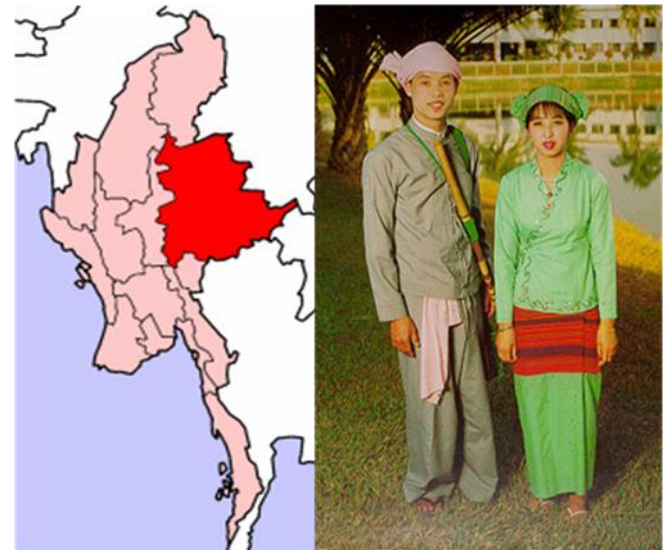
**Bamar**



**Mon**



**Rakhine**



**Shan**

# Eight Major Ethnicities of Burmese



**Kachin**



**Karenni**



**Karen**



**Chin**



# Personal Name

\* Burmese people do not have Family Names

\* Names are chosen by a naming system in which certain letters of the alphabet are assigned to each of the 7 days of the week.

**Simple!** Wednesday Born: might have a name formed by using the letters

Ya, La, Ra, Wa => Yangman, Linda, Roon, etc...

\* Using a name without a prefix sounds quite offensive to Burmese other than young children and close friends.

**Ko** (Mr.) to address younger men- Brother

**Maung** (Mr.) to address boy- younger Brother

**U** (Mr. = Uncle)

**Ma** (Mrs.) to address younger women- Sister

**Daw** (Mrs. = Auntie)

# Body Language, Cultural and Respect

- ❑ Generally, the Burmese people are very polite and modest
- ❑ Treat older people with respect by bending down halfway if you have to pass by close in front of people
- ❑ Do not point feet toward an older person and do not step over anything or anybody
- ❑ Do not touch people on the head which is considered the highest part of the body spiritually
- ❑ Public displays of affection are frowned upon even if married
- ❑ Couples also do not display signs of affection
- ❑ Do not touch a woman on any part of the body
- ❑ When speaking to a person in authority, do not make eye contact; lower you head
- ❑ Remove shoes before entering religious buildings and private homes
- ❑ Traditionally society was known for the relatively high status of women
- ❑ The husband is nominally the head of the household, but the wife has considerable authority
- ❑ Children live with their parents until they married

# Education-Crisis in Burma

- ❑ **Official Language is Burmese**
- ❑ One of the main reasons for the poor state of education in Burma is political.
- ❑ The ruling elite understands that education is dangerous to their maintenance of power and control.
- ❑ When people are educated, they question the government and demand their rights.
- ❑ After the military coup in 1962, students started organizing peaceful demonstrations and protests to express their dissatisfaction with the military government.
- ❑ Nationwide protests of the 8888 (08/08/88) uprising, the government closed down all the universities for 2 years.
- ❑ In 1990 they reopened and
- ❑ In 1996 another series of student strikes, they were closed again for Three years.
- ❑ **Many young students are in danger of becoming political prisoners and being subjected to torture.**

## Education-Crisis in Burma *Continue...*

- ❑ In 2000 after the reopening of universities and colleges the government relocated many Universities to different sites and moved Campuses far away from urban areas.
- ❑ Keeping students away from cities is one of the ways the regime hopes to control any civil strife.
- ❑ The major obstacles to the civilian children inside Burma are the lack of opportunities and the low quality of education.
- ❑ Poorly equipped, low number of schools and classes are overcrowded
- ❑ Rising formal and informal school fees.
- ❑ Low teachers' salaries and Private tuition fees are high.
- ❑ All syllabi for University courses must be approved by the military
- ❑ **Frequent student arrests due to political activities.**

# Background of Refugee

- ❑ Burma has had one of the longest-running civil wars in world history (after independence from the UK, in 1948 until Today)
- ❑ Thousands of people died in August 1988 during a democratic uprising in Burma (8/8/88).
- ❑ In September 2007, Buddhist monks peacefully walked on the street (known as the Saffron Revolution), which resulted in the military government crackdown.
- ❑ Many people crossed over the border into Thailand.
- ❑ 91,337 refugees still living in Nine Refugee Camps in Thailand: as of 11/29/23. (by UNHCR).
- ❑ 185,300 refugees in Malaysia: as of 12/31/23. (by UNHCR).
- ❑ 2,596,700 Internally Displaced Persons (IDP): as of 01/29/24. (by UNHCR)

# UNHCR Thailand – Fact Sheet

## Thailand

30 June 2023

Thailand hosts **91,337 Myanmar refugees** in nine temporary shelters on the Thai-Myanmar border while **4,799 urban refugees and asylum-seekers** reside in other areas.

In addition, the Royal Thai Government (RTG) registered **over half a million stateless people**, mostly living in highland border areas.

UNHCR works with the RTG, international agencies, NGOs and donors to address the **protection assistance and durable solutions needs** of these groups.

### FORCIBLY DISPLACED AND STATELESS PEOPLE

#### Figures

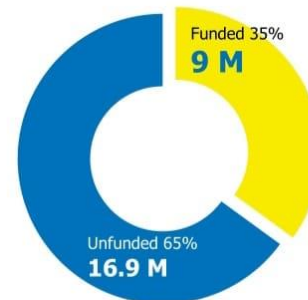


*\* Verification Exercise conducted from Jan-Apr 2015 and subsequent data changes to-date. Under reverification*

### FUNDING (AS OF 30 JUNE)

## USD 25.9 M

requested for the Thailand Operation



### UNHCR PRESENCE

#### Staff:

155 National Staff  
19 International Staff

#### Offices:

- 01 Multi-Country Office in Bangkok
- 02 Field Office in Mae Sot
- 03 Field Office in Mae Hong Son



# Burmese People in Buffalo

Sources: Community Leaders NOTE: The number is constantly changing

| Burmese Ethnic group | Languages spoken in Buffalo | Approximate Population |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| Karen                | Karen (Pwo & Sgaw)          | 6,000                  |
| Karenni              | Karenni (Kayah Li)          | 2,000                  |
| Chin                 | Chin                        | 700                    |
| Zomi                 | Zopau                       | 300                    |
| Mon                  | Mon                         | 300                    |
| Bamar                | Burmese                     | 800                    |
| Rakhine              | Rakhine                     | 200                    |
| Other                |                             | 300                    |

Most of the Karen, Karenni, and Bamar are resettled from refugee camps in Thailand and most of the Chin are resettled from Malaysia to the U.S.A.

**P.S. Most people (Especially adults) from Burma speak Burmese.**

# Social Issues and Problems in the U.S.

- Resettlement is a long process and complicated
- Lack of knowledge of U.S. Legal system and Laws
- Especially Language difficulties
- Can't read messages and letters that are received
- Can't open and listen to voicemail messages
- Difficulty to use Technology such as Email, Zoom, etc.,
- Changes in acceptable child discipline techniques
- Many refugees suffer from post-traumatic Stress
- Victims of domestic violence and Torture
- Mental health issues and Alcohol abuse
- Fear of the police is common due to former experiences
- Can't express their goals

**No government support such as the Embassy, Permanent Mission to the United Nations, and or Consulate Office. etc.,**





## **Burmese Community Services, Inc., (BCS)**

The Burmese Community Services, Inc. (BCS) is a 501(C)(3) first Burmese people to lead a nonprofit independent organization in Buffalo, New York, and Certificate of Incorporation with the Department of State in 2013.

The BCS was established to assist the growing Burmese people in providing services and resources. New arrival people are facing language barriers, a lack of knowledge of the U.S. Legal system and law.



### **Research & Projects with UB**

- Transportation Project
- Rethinking Resettlement Project
- Health Care Project (IE 585 Project)
- Food Systems Planning and Health Communities Lab
- Burmese Community Behavioral Health Project (BCBH)



## **Burmese Community Services, Inc., (BCS)**

### **Services, Training, Advocacy, and more...**

- Cultural Presentation (American and Burmese)
- Legal Rights to the community members
- Mental Health First Aid
- Defensive Driving Class
- Information on Traffic Accidents Education Video  
(What to do in car accidents):
  - Canisius College Video Institute,
  - City of Buffalo Office of New American
  - BCS, and
  - Buffalo Police Department
- Census Education (Video with different languages)
- Covid-19 Vaccine Education and Information



# **Burmese Community Services, Inc., (BCS)**

**Humanitarian assistance: International**

Health Network in Burma/Myanmar

Flood Victims in Burma/Myanmar

Victims of the Nepal Earthquake



**We assist Funeral Services in our Community**





# Burmese Community Services, Inc., (BCS)

## Training and Classes



American Cultural and Legal Rights to Community Members, and  
Defensive Driving Class, etc...





# **Burmese Community Services, Inc., (BCS)**

## **Results**

### **Language ID card for Non-English speakers**

This card is recognized by the Buffalo Police Department, the City of Buffalo and the Erie County.



### **Mayor Brown announced the Adoption of the Language Access**



# Burmese Community Services, Inc., (BCS)



# Research from the (BCBHS)

## Burmese Community Behavioral Health Study

The BCBHS project is collaborating with the Burmese Community Services BCS and the University at Buffalo, School of Social Work

March 2015 – October 2016 (N=256)

### Ethnic Background

|                         |       |
|-------------------------|-------|
| 1. Karen                | 39.2% |
| 2. Burman               | 32.9% |
| 3. Karenni              | 8.2%  |
| 4. Rakhine              | 7.1%  |
| 5. Mon                  | 3.5%  |
| 6. Chin                 | 3.1%  |
| 7. Other (Multi-Ethnic) | 5.9%  |



**UB**  
School of Social Work

University at Buffalo The State University of New York



# Research from the (BCBHS)

## Burmese Community Behavioral Health Study

### Native Language

|                   |       |
|-------------------|-------|
| 1. Burmese        | 37.9% |
| 2. Karen          | 32.4% |
| 3. Multi Language | 16%   |
| 4. Karenni        | 7%    |
| 5. Others         | 6.8%  |

### Employment Status

|                                 |       |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| 1. Employed                     | 46.6% |
| 2. Homemakers                   | 29.2% |
| 3. Unemployed, seeking work     | 13.4% |
| 4. Unemployed, not seeking work | 7.8%  |
| 5. FT/PT Students               | 3.6%  |

### Monthly Household Income

|                |       |
|----------------|-------|
| 1. < \$1500.00 | 28.4% |
| 2. < \$2000.00 | 25%   |
| 3. < \$1000.00 | 15.3% |
| 4. < \$2500.00 | 11.4% |
| 5. < \$3000.00 | 5.5%  |

Average household Size: 4.1 persons

Majority earn between: \$1000.00-\$2000.00 month

### Refugee Camp Stay: N= 184 (Thailand)

|                     |       |
|---------------------|-------|
| 1. 10-20 years      | 32.6% |
| 2. 5-10 years       | 25%   |
| 3. 1-5 years        | 25%   |
| 4. Less than a year | 10.3% |
| 5. 20 years or more | 7.1%  |

### N= 42 (Malaysia) Migrant Workers

16.4%



# Research from the (BCBHS)

## Burmese Community Behavioral Health Study

### Health & Mental Health Status

#### Self-reported Physical Health

|                |       |
|----------------|-------|
| Good/Excellent | 69.6% |
| Poor/Fair      | 30.4% |

#### Self-reported Mental Health

|                |       |
|----------------|-------|
| Good/Excellent | 73.7% |
| Poor/Fair      | 26.3% |

#### Anxiety and Depression

|                           |       |
|---------------------------|-------|
| Anxiety                   | 20.3% |
| Depression                | 21.2% |
| Both Anxiety & Depression | 16.1% |

|                      |     |
|----------------------|-----|
| Alcohol Use (N=256)  | 23% |
| Doctor Visit (N=256) | 87% |



School of Social Work  
University at Buffalo The State University of New York

**Thank You for your kind attention!**

**Questions  
or  
Comments?**

