

Education and life course aspirations among Karen refugees in Thailand

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Research question

What is the role of education in shaping the life course aspirations of Karen refugees in Thailand?

Research methods

- Participant observation
- Informal interviews with refugees and villagers
- Participatory research methods with a group of 18 Karen refugees from Myanmar aged 19-25 years currently participating to a programme of local integration in a Karen village in Chiang Mai province

Displacement of the Karen people



• The situation of displacement at the Thailand-Burma border is one of the longest protracted refugee situations in the world: Camps along the border exist since more than 20 years

• In August 2014, a total camp population of 120,174 persons, 78% of whom are ethnic Karen.

• Between 2005 and 2014 an estimated number of 92,000 refugees, most of them Karen, resettled in third countries, such as the USA and the UK

Sources: The Border Consortium Monthly Population Report, August 2014, UN High Commissioner for Refugees 29 Jan 2014

Research findings

- Research participants aspire
 - to locally integrate
 - To continue their education and work as medical and political professionals
 - To marry and to have children
 - To pursue a religious vocation
 - maybe to return to Karen State in Burma at a later moment in life
- They plan to postpone child bearing until after they have attained their educational aspirations
- They plan to have smaller families than their parents' generation
- Young peoples' aspirations are shaped within a particular historical moment by their own experiences and the experiences of their peers, family and community members

