



# Mae Sot Education Project

## Newsletter

### Summer 2021

<https://maesot.ubishops.ca>

For more information, contact us at [maesoteducationproject@gmail.com](mailto:maesoteducationproject@gmail.com)

## Our Partners are in Lockdown!

A message for us from one of our Mae Sot partners: “Cases of Covid-19 in Thailand are really getting out of control, and the MLCs really have no chance of opening right now. There is a big push for online learning and we are all doing our best to make something happen. Online support is definitely needed - youth and teens are dropping out and need engaging and meaningful learning opportunities.”



*Delivering materials to students so that learning can continue during the lockdown*

more volunteers, we could no doubt create more similar groups. Along with helping them to learn English, our hope is to encourage students who are at risk of dropping out to continue to see the importance of education in their lives even when it is so difficult to access.

In the midst of Covid lockdown, the rainy season has caused flooding in Mae Sot, leaving some people stuck without relief in mud soaked dwellings.

The river that separates Mae Sot from Myawaddy,  
Myanmar

THE IRRAWADDY 28 July 2021



## Giving a human face to our partners' situation

As migrant teachers and children experience the spread of Covid in Mae Sot, we receive bad news. Recently, one of our former volunteers wrote, with a heavy heart, to inform us of the passing of Kyi Aung, Parami Learning Centre's Thai language teacher and bus driver, from Covid. He was the driver who would often pick our volunteers up at the bus station and drive them wherever. His death from Covid was very sudden and left his wife and a step-child in isolation in Mae Sot and two more children living with their grandmother in Myanmar. All are extremely heart broken. Kyi Aung sent remittances into Myanmar to support his family, and they are now left without any income. The school staff is trying to arrange support for Kyi Aung's family during these difficult times. His passing is an immeasurable loss for the school.

*Kyi Aung and two of his children*



Meanwhile in Myanmar, demonstrations against the coup continue. Our friend, Mae Sot artist Maung Maung Tin, suffered from Covid this summer and has used some of his recovery time to document these terrible events with his paintbrush. Here is what he writes about them:

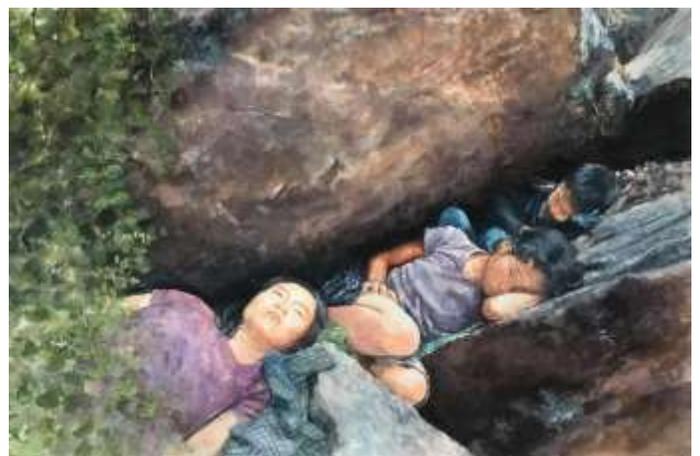


*They are from different homes.  
They are from different families.  
But now they are like same family members.  
If one gets hurts, every one is in pain.  
Evil made horrible things in the country.  
They try to fight against the evil however they can.  
Will they win or not? it does not matter; that is another issue.*

*To express own feelings is a basic right  
that has been with everyone since they were born.  
Because they are human, to express their feelings is not crime.  
Of course not..*

*But Burma...  
the Land where people are shot dead  
just because of peaceful protest.  
They are from Burma.*

*Dear guys,  
We do not know your names.  
We do not know your addresses.  
But good people will always remember how you sacrifice  
for the people.  
You – your courage – will be always in the universe.*



*“So exhausted. I want to sleep, I should sleep. but I can't”*

Maung Maung Tinn also writes that the Mae Tao Clinic, a medical facility outside Mae Sot created by Dr. Cynthia Maung for refugees and migrants from Myanmar, is now being used as one of the 12 centres for treatment of people who test positive there. It, the Shoklo Malaria Research Unit (SMRU) and the Mae Sot General Hospital have been collaborating. As Covid ravages Thailand, its virulence in Mae Sot has increased. Meanwhile, the clinic is unable to perform its normal internal medicine, child protection and outpatient healthcare functions.

We also receive news of initiatives and efforts to make the best of a difficult time.



Parami school staff mourns the loss of a colleague and friend and prepares to resume normal teaching,



and some tasks never end – even (especially) during Covid...



Boarding students at Hsa Thoo Ley school benefit from being restricted to school grounds...



Teachers carry on with trainings on pedagogy, child protection, etc.

**Morning exercise for Hsa Thoo Ley boarding students**



Meanwhile, in other schools, empty chairs and desks await students.

BHSOH is one learning centre among those schools that has undertaken a broader online learning initiative. Below, teachers delivering materials for online learning to students. As very few have access to computers, students log on to their classes using mobile phones.



A student training at BHSOH for World Environment Day (including tree planting) – before the lockdown set in



## MSEP - Still assisting and planning for the future



**Zooming-in-English project with students from BHSOH Learning Centre**



**Helping the students purchase necessary equipment**

Project Committee member Mary Purkey, and two community volunteers, Lee Sullivan-Lapp and Susan Renaud, are holding weekly classes for a group of older students. We are just now completing a 10-week course and will likely carry on through the fall with this activity.

**Remembering what we are all about: helping kids learn and get back to a more normal life...**

**Our team** (Photo by Kathryne Owen)



In July, during our first face-to-face meeting in over a year, Kathryne Owen kindly produced a very short video about MSEP for *The Record's* "Friday File". You can watch it on Youtube at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bCV1iu9mJYU>. At our meeting we decided to postpone volunteer departures for Thailand due to the Covid outbreak there. We are now looking at a late December departure so that they can dive in at the beginning of January. Fundraising activities are also on hold but we will let you know as soon as they resume!

## *Who we are and what we do*

The *Mae Sot Education Project (MSEP)* is a community project based on the campus of Bishop's University and Champlain College – Lennoxville in Sherbrooke, Quebec. Since 2004, we have provided assistance to six schools for migrant and refugee youth from Burma/Myanmar whose access to education depends on support from the international community. In recent years we have also worked with other schools. Each year we select a group of young people from our campus to go to Mae Sot for six months. While there, they provide practical assistance to teachers and enrichment activities for children in the schools. They learn about the situation of displacement experienced by the Burmese people in Thailand as well as about the challenges for the Thai community in coping with a large population of refugees and migrants. Finally, they share their experience with Canadians. Over the last 16 years, MSEP has delivered over \$161,000 in funding assistance (excluding two substantial grants given through specific donations) and as of June 2019, has sent 64 volunteers to assist the migrant education community in Mae Sot.

The Project Committee is made up of members of the community, former faculty from Bishop's and Champlain, and former youth volunteers with the project. Currently, members are: Felix Duplessis-Marcotte (2016 volunteer), Judy Keenan, Loic Mercier Arguin (2017 volunteer), Graham Moodie, Dania Paradis-Bouffard (2017 volunteer), Mary Purkey, Garry Retzleff, Barbara Rowell (2005 volunteer) and Calila Tardif (2016 volunteer)



***Contributions to the project are always welcome, and tax receipts are issued.*** To make a donation electronically, you may do so through the Bishop's University Foundation on our web site at: <https://maesot.ubishops.ca/donate-now/>. Remember to indicate that your donation is for the *Mae Sot Education Project*. Or, donate by cheque through *either* the Bishop's Foundation or the Champlain College Foundation at our project address: Box 67, Champlain College – Lennoxville, 2580 College St, Sherbrooke, QC J1M 2K3. **Be sure to include the name of the Foundation and MSEP on your cheque.**