



Capital: Naypyidaw

Languages: Burmese, Chin, Karen, Karenni, many others

Religion: 89% Buddhism; 4% Christianity; 4% Islam; 3% other

Population: 53,414,374

Refugees: 184,413

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs): 67,290

The Southeast Asian country of Burma, also known as Myanmar, is slightly smaller than the state of Texas and is bordered by China, Thailand and Laos to the east and India

and Bangladesh to the west. Its population exceeds fifty million. Burma consists of more than one hundred and thirty ethnic groups with the main groups including Chin, Karen and Karenni. They also speak an equally large number of languages and dialects such as Burmese, Chin, Karen and Kayah. Democratic rule ended in 1962 when a coup took place and a military regime was established that continues to be in power. Significant human rights abuses have been inflicted upon the Burmese people including human trafficking, forced labor and child labor; while basic tenets of democracy such as freedom of speech and assembly have been altogether eliminated. This situation has created an enormous refugee crisis well into its third decade. Thousands of Burmese have fled into Thailand and Malaysia and are housed in many refugee camps along the borders of these countries. Neither repatriation nor integration in these host countries is a durable solution; therefore resettlement of the Burmese continues to be one of the largest refugee populations currently arriving in the United States.

Many Burmese refugee students were born in refugee camps and had a limited amount of schooling. They are unfamiliar with a structured, formal school setting prior to arriving in the United States. Parents are from agricultural backgrounds and have had little education, but they value and are supportive of what is available to their children in the United States. Generally Burmese students are well-behaved and show respect to teachers and other authority figures. They have a strong desire for education, while also indulging in playfulness and imagination. Assisting them with acculturation and ESL will be priorities.