



2022-2023

End-of-year Impact Report



**KARING
FRONTIERS**

Empowering Refugee and Migrant Youth through Their Education.

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About Us

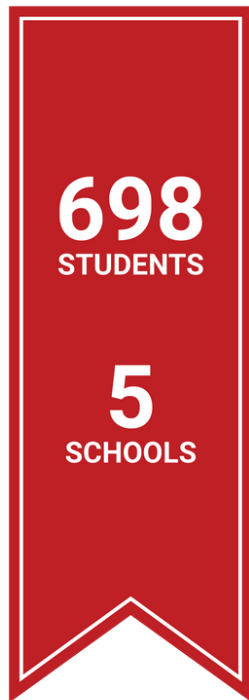
Karing Frontiers works in collaboration with the Karen Education Culture Department (KECD) and the Karen Refugee Committee Education Entity (KRCEE) to provide higher education on the Thai-Myanmar border. Diminished funding of institutions within the refugee camps on the border have threatened access to higher education.

Currently, all of the post-secondary schools rely on charging a tuition fee among all their students, but many refugee and migrant youth are unable to pay this fee as there are very limited income opportunities in the Thai refugee camps. In the last couple years, some higher education institutions have had to shut down as they are unable to raise enough funding among the students and their families to stay open.



**In partnership
with the Karen
Education
Culture
Department and
Karen Refugee
Committee
Education Entity**

About Us



Northern Karen Junior College
115 Students & 14 Teachers



Mae Ra Moe Junior College
140 Students & 13 Teachers



Pu Taw Memorial Junior College
320 Students & 20 Teachers



Kaw Lah Junior College
94 Students & 8 Teachers



Tanawthari Junior College
29 Students & 11 Teachers

Our role is to provide material resources and financial support, enabling schools to lower their school fees and to remain open despite political unrest.

Karing Frontiers is officially supporting five post-secondary schools that were established by the KECD. These schools are located among five different refugee camps:

- Northern Karen Junior College (NKJC)
- Pu Taw Memorial Junior College (PTMJC)
- Kaw Lah Junior College (KLJC)
- Tanawthari Junior College (TJC)
- Mae Ra Moe Junior College (MRMJC)

Starting in 2024, Karing Frontiers will also be supporting a new specialized program in the Northern region of the Karen State with the help of the Hawk Rock Foundation.

Our Goals



Mission

Empowering higher education institutions on the Thai-Burma border with financial and material resources to continue refugee and migrant youth access to higher education



Vision

Post-secondary institutions on the Thai-Burma border have adequate resources to provide opportunities of higher education for refugee and migrant youth



Objectives

To provide some operational costs for all five of the higher education institutions established by the KECD (classroom and school supplies, other material resources, and teaching stipends)

To provide financial and material support to enable higher education institutions on the border to lower their school fees for students

Long Term Goals

Through our partnership with the Karen Refugee Committee Education (KRCEE) Entity and the Karen Education and Culture Department (KECD), we hope to scale several projects together.



01 — Increase the number of students sponsored

As the opportunities for pursuing higher education in Myanmar continues to diminish with the ongoing political crisis, we plan to increase the student capacity of post-secondary schools along the border.

Many students are internally displaced within Myanmar and are unable to seek refuge on the Thai border. For these students, it would be much easier to access a school within the Karen state rather than attempting to risk crossing the border. Upcoming plans involve building an entirely new upper division campus in a remote region North of the Karen state. The target completion of this new program's establishment is around 2024. For the first academic year, there will be around 30 to 40 students. By 2025, the goal is to be supporting 900 students among all colleges that we're sponsoring.

Long Term Goals



02 — Increasing the number of fields of study available to refugee and migrant students

The junior colleges in the refugee camp only currently offer education, public health, and leadership management programs. In order to meet the rising demands of local communities in the Karen state or on the Thai border, a wider range of graduate programs must be established to prepare students to proficiently tackle the needs of their people. By 2024, a newly established upper division campus in the Karen state will offer specialized streams such as community development, environmental studies, international relations, agriculture as well as education and public health.



03 — Strengthening the fundraising capacity of the KECD

Obtaining a government recognized status in either Thailand or Myanmar is difficult for many community based organizations (CBO) on the border, making fundraising a continuous challenge for many Karen CBOs. Karing Frontiers will work on connecting the KECD to the resources that they need to sustain their own fundraising efforts. One way to achieve this is by building up the network of the KECD, expanding their recognition among international organizations and donors.

Current Programs

Financial Support of the Junior Colleges

Since the KRCEE and KECD do not have a government recognized status in Thailand or Myanmar, fundraising poses a major challenge for their organizations. Karing Frontiers serves as a middle ground between these governing bodies and donation sources worldwide. Our role is to connect the KRCEE and KECD to more global opportunities to advocate for the students and teachers that they serve on the borders. Donations go towards classroom and school supplies, teaching stipends, utilities/electricity, transportation, construction, and other maintenance costs.



Funding the financial operational costs of the junior colleges is a shared responsibility between us and the schools themselves. Each college still charges students an entrance fee, but our fundraising efforts reduce the entrance fee enough for students in the community to still be able to afford higher education in these impoverished settings. This model encourages the development of self-sustaining efforts of the schools, however, complete financial independence is impossible in the remote nature of the refugee camps. A majority of the funds do go towards teaching stipends, which is vital in maintaining the teaching quality of staff.

Current Programs

Material Support

While the financial support covers basic operational costs, additional resources are required to properly deliver the agendas and curriculums of the colleges. As a middleman, Karing Frontiers connects with organizations or individuals worldwide with the opportunities to meet material resources the schools are in need of. In the past, items have been hand delivered by our team through annual trips to the border. This involved collecting books and textbooks from international schools in Hong Kong to replace older materials in libraries, gathering healthcare products, leisure and entertainment items like guitars, replacing printers, etc.



Empowerment Curriculum

Prior to the pandemic, Karing Frontiers team had traveled to the refugee camps. Working with the teachers of the schools, an empowerment curriculum had been developed and tailored to the setting of the schools. The central question of the curriculum is “what does empowerment look and feel like?” These lessons were designed to have the Karing Frontiers team and junior college students personalize their own meanings of empowerment. This involved discussions in developing effective speech skills in a way that centers one’s authentic voice, goal setting methods with an emphasis on creating a system for measurable progress, maintaining a healthy well-being, and practicing grounding activities to stabilize mental health. This program paused at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic but our team is continuing to strengthen the curriculum for its future implementation, expected in the summer of 2023.

An Overview

Refugee Crisis on the Thai-Myanmar Border

Introduction

Myanmar, also known as Burma, is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in Southeast Asia, containing over 135 ethnic groups and 100 languages spoken across 'eight major national ethnic races', according to official government census in 2014. A country comprised of 58 million, the majority ethnic group in Myanmar is the Burman (68%), followed by the minority population of Shan (9%), the Karen (7%), the Arakanese (Rakhine) 4% and the Mon (2%). This vast cultural and ethnic diversity is attributed to the country's geographical location situated on a strategic crossroads between India, China, and Thailand. Over the last two millennia, migration and intermixing between cultures has led to the development of diverse ethnic settlements and communities across the country.

It is pertinent to note the points of contention: The demographic categorization by the state, termed 'eight major national ethnic races', is an umbrella term and does not capture the full diversity of the ethnic minorities around the country. The government has strategically refused to recognize many ethnic groups' existence, including the Rohingya.

Ongoing Conflict in Myanmar

Despite Myanmar's rich cultural heritage, its history is imbued with tensions between the Burmese military, and the minority ethnic groups, such as Karen and Shan; religious discrimination and persecution, and violent conflicts arising from clashes between ethnic groups fighting for the right to self-determination. In the past, inter-ethnic harmony has been undermined by British colonial rule separating the Burman group from other minority ethnic groups. Since Myanmar's independence from British rule in 1948, the country has been in a civil war and has this been cited to be the longest ongoing civil war in the world.

During 1948, an offensive by the Tatmadaw (The official Burmese military) drove 10,000 ethnically Karen refugees from the Karen (Also known as Kayin) State into Thailand's Tak Province. This marked the beginning of what would be a seemingly unending, refugee outflow from Myanmar into Thailand with each military attack on ethnic civilians, freedom fighters, and armed opposition by the Tatmadaw. After decades of struggle for political reform and civic engagement, the hope for democratic reform in 2020, because of the landslide election victory of the National League for Democracy (NLD), was dismissed after a military coup d'état by the Tatmadaw in February 2021.

Ongoing Conflict in Myanmar

Correspondingly, the brutality and violence worsened between the Tatmadaw and civilians engaging in peaceful and militia-based resistance. The Tatmadaw continues to brutally suppress widespread opposition and in the two years following the coup, 3,000 people have been killed and an additional 13,000 are detained in inhumane conditions. In total, there are now more than ninety-thousand refugees living in camps along the borders of the five different countries that Myanmar shares a border with, in addition to an estimated one million internally displaced peoples. It is acknowledged by scholars and activists alike that democratic society building is difficult on vast ethnic diversity and these various identities play an important role in the protracted civil war.

Higher Education in Refugee Camps

Higher Education

Education is the most important tool any person could have to access opportunities for independence from difficult circumstances. On a societal level, education is the fundamental building block for a successful state-building process. The long-term stability and development of a country, especially countries' histories embedded with long term instability and violence.

As ethnic minority groups fled to neighboring countries after repeated offensives from the Tatmadaw, refugee camps have been set up along the borders and have slowly populated the borders in the last 60+ years. Community leaders within the refugee settlements set up schools to provide educational opportunities for children living in the camps. The educational establishments within the refugee camps have become a symbol of hope.

One such beacon of hope stretches along the Thai-Myanmar border, southeast of Myanmar, where the Karen State is found. The Karen State is governed by a de facto government and is the longest ethnic armed resistance group to exist in Myanmar against the Burmese military – The Karen National Union (KNU). The KNU provide social services that the population refuses from the Tatmadaw, including education. Karen Refugee Committee Education Entity (KRCEE) is a refugee community-based organization set up in 2009 by the KNU, based in Tak Province, Thailand. The KRCEE seeks to strengthen and ensure the sustainability of camp education. In tandem with the Karen Education and Culture Department, the KRCEE seeks to provide education in both the Thai-Myanmar border refugee camps and the Karen State in Myanmar.

Higher Education

Operating under the KRCEE is the Department of Higher Education, which directly implements the Institute of Higher Education (IHE) programs in junior colleges along the Thai-Myanmar border. The Department of Higher Education is responsible for coordinating financial, logistical, operational, academic compliance and curriculum-related work all directed towards the aim of sustaining and developing the IHE program along the Thai-Myanmar border (See Figure 2).

In the IHE program, students have common core subjects taught for two years in the lower division and subsequently students are offered two-year specialized programs they can choose from (See Figure 1).



Figure 1: Curriculum in Junior Colleges

Administrative Structure

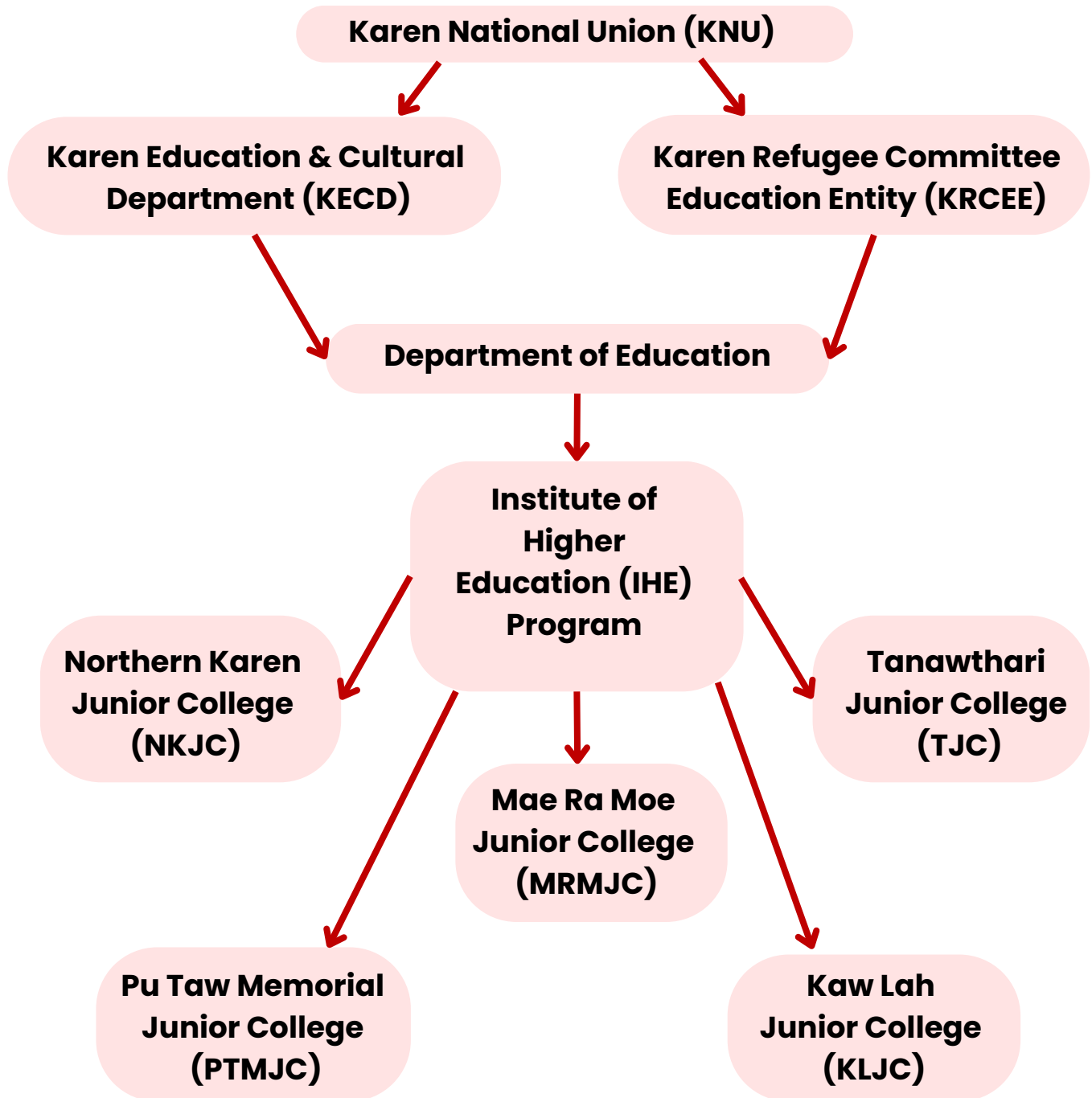


Figure 2: KECD, KRCEE, and IHE Relationship

Higher Education

Since the formation of the Department of Higher Education 15 years ago, more than 2,000 students have graduated.

Out of these, 30% became teachers, 20% healthcare workers, 10% became community leaders, 15% became social and human rights workers, 10% as development workers, and 10% for further studies (See figure 3). Looking forward, the KRCEE will establish schools for greater specialization in subject areas such as education, public health, community development, environment, international relations, and agriculture in the Karen State.

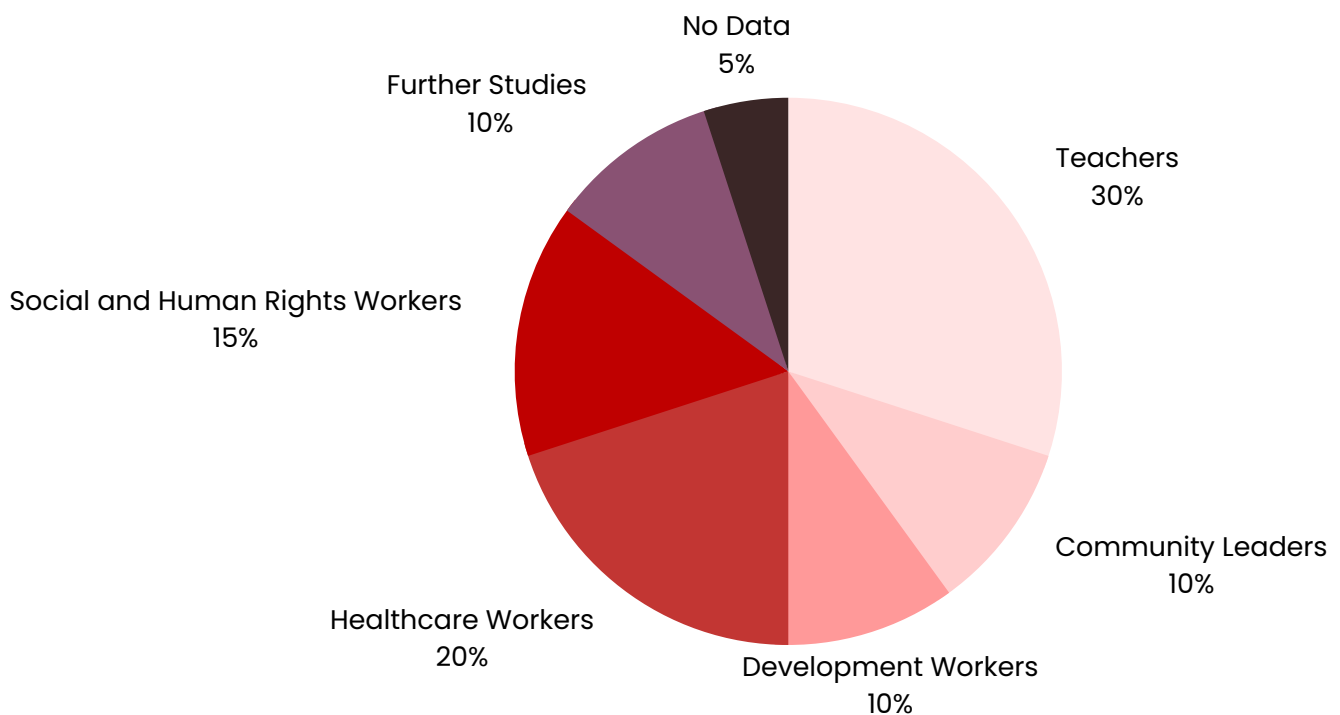


Figure 3: Student Outcomes after Graduation

The Junior Colleges

Five junior colleges offering higher education have been established in various refugee camps along the border.

Below is an overview of the history and current programs at each school.



NKJC

Northern Karen Junior College

The Northern Karen Junior College (NKJC) was founded in Mae La Oo refugee camp in Mae Hong Son province, located in the northeast of Thailand. Originally called the Karen Northern Further Education Program (KNFEP), the school became a part of the IHE program in 2008, providing a two-year lower division education program for secondary graduates in the camp. Additionally, the NKJC operates another program called the Karen Youth Leadership and Management Training Program (KYLMTTC) to train students for management positions.

PTMJC

Pu Taw Memorial Junior College

The Pu Taw Memorial Junior College (PTMJC) is in the Mae La refugee camp and is the oldest school among other post-secondary schools in the refugee camps along the Thai-Myanmar border. The first batch of IHE graduates was produced in April 2010. The college was formerly known as the Further Studies Program (FSP) as the two main educational programs under the PTMJC are the Teacher Certification Program (TCP) and the complete IHE program.

The Junior Colleges

KLJC

Kaw Lah Junior College

The Kaw Lah Junior College (KLJC) is in the Umphiem refugee camp in the Prop Prap district, Tak province. The school provides two educational programs: the lower division IHE program and a specialized career trajectory in public health. The public health specialization is supported through the collaboration and assistance of community health organizations such as the Mae Tao Clinic, Burma Medical Association, Backpack Health Worker Team and Karen Department of Health and Welfare.

TJC

Tanawthari Junior College

The Tanawthari Junior College (TJC) is established more recently compared to other schools near the Karen State around the Thai-Myanmar border. The school offers IHE lower division to high school leavers in Tham Hin camp. The school is formerly known as Further Studies Program (FSP) and Further Education Course (FEC) before it was institutionalized as IHE School in 2010.

MRMJC

Mae Ra Moe Junior College

The Mae Ra Moe Junior College (MRMJC) is situated in the Mae Ra Moe Karen Refugee Camp in the Mae Hong Son Province. It was formerly known as the Agriculture Studies Programme (ASP), established in 1998. At its inception, the program's main emphasis was on the teaching of agriculture and animal husbandry. In 2008, the school adopted the IHE education system, and the name changed to the Mae Ra Moe Junior College (MRMJC). The MRMJC offers the two-year lower division program.

Sponsored School Demographics

2022 - 2023

School	Students	Teachers	Graduates
Northern Karen Junior College	115	14	39
Pu Taw Memorial Junior College	320	20	87
Kaw Lah Junior College	94	8	45
Tanawthari Junior College	29	11	5
Mae Rae Moe Junior College	140	13	49
Total	698	60	225

As of 2023, we have continued our commitment to supporting the 5 schools along the Thai-Myanmar border by providing educational resources to students and capacity building for teachers. Current students across the 5 schools are totalled at 698.

Student and Staff Stories



Naw May Tar Gay

Second Year Student at the Northern Karen Junior College

“My dream is to be of assistance for my community and to help and strengthen my people in Karen state. I want to improve my Karen educational system - higher the standard of my people. There are many several things that I can learn more...to improve myself and my people. I’m seeing the suffering of my people...education brings me hope to unite us all in this conflict. Because my hope is to help my people.”

Second Year Student at the Northern Karen Junior College

“The biggest challenge when I was a student is I have to stay far from my family. And I always have unpleasant news from them. They always have to flee away and hide from enemy because of civil war. This is my biggest challenge in my study but I can overcome it. Last year I am shy to speak English. Whenever my friends talk to me in English and even I understood I never reply them in English. But in this year I make more self-confidence to speak English. And I’m trying to speak English with my friends.”



Saw Boo Blut Soe

Student and Staff Stories



Naw Abigail

Principal Mae Ra Moe Junior College

"My family move to the United States. I told them I will follow them later. But when I came back to the refugee camp... I remember all my teachers from primary to high school. They commit themselves for [us] to be able to go to school...I look back to the young people in the camp here...If they don't have a teacher maybe they can not go to school...At the time, the principal of the MRMJC call me to teach...I said 'yes, I can do'...We don't know how many years we'll be in the camp here...but as long as we are here we are going to participate with our community in this school..."

Class of 2023 graduate at the Mae Ra Moe Junior College

"My dream is to become a good nurse. I have dreamed to be a nurse since I was a child. I like to look after patients and especially I want to look after my mother...After graduating from the MRMJC, I will continue my study in Umpiem refugee camp - the Kaw Lah Junior College. I hope to be able to take care of my mother and feed my family well."



Saw Roller

Budget Allocation (In USD unless otherwise stated)

Schools Category	NKJC	PTMJC	KLJC	TJC	MRMJC	Specialized Program	Total
Teacher Salary	5 066.82	3 377.88	4 222.35	3 377.88	5 066.82		21 111.74
Stationeries	1 407.45	844.47	562.98	675.58	1 407.45		4 897.92
Printing cost	1 407.45	281.49	844.47	703.72	1 407.45		4 644.58
Utilities (Fuel, electricity)	562.98	281.49	562.98	562.98	562.98	844.47	3 940.86
Transportation	562.98	562.98	281.49	168.89	562.98		1 857.83
Construction / Repair	844.47	562.98	562.98		844.47	8 444.7	11 259.59
Reserved Scholarship Funds						562.98	562.98
Total (USD)	9852.15	5,911.29	7,037.25	5,489.05	9,852.15	9,289.17	47,712.52

Growth Year by Year

A glimpse of how we have grown over the years. Starting with just the Mae Ra Moe Junior College in 2019, we have expanded to five junior colleges and in the process of supporting a new masters program in Myanmar. If your organization is also interested in contributing to the future of Myanmar and the access of education on the border, feel free to contact contact@karingfrontiers.com

Year	Students	Teachers	Graduates	Funds Raised (USD)
2019	85	13	20	11,221
2020	65	13	23	10,966
2021	773	60	401	39,178
2022	698	60	225	48,344

Events Hosted in 2022

This past year has been filled with kindness, community building, and hope. We've received support from all over the world and people from all walks of life have come together to listen and give back. In these spaces, it has been most heartening providing a means of creative expression in the advocacy for higher education for refugee and migrant students.

June

Dare to Kare

Each of our members took part in our organizations's annual Dare to Kare social media campaign. In exchange for donations, our team publicly performed socially embarrassing dares. All funds raised were double matched, summing up to a total of \$4,011 USD.

Sept

Open Mic Event

In collaboration with Nomadic Voices, our team held a night of music, poetry, and laughter at The Burren in the United States. All funds raised at the event were then double matched, summing up to a total of \$2,730 USD.

July - Aug

2022 Fundraising Raffle

For every student that was sponsored, our donors were entered into our raffle giveaway. 30 prizes including award-winning artworks and gift vouchers had been kindly donated by our sponsors. Supporters across the world helped us raise a total of \$30,682 USD.



Acknowledgements

Hawk Rock Foundation

We would like to thank the Hawk Rock Foundation for their tremendous support this year. They have generously provided a grant of 350,000 THB or approximately 9,905 USD in support of the upcoming specialized program in the Kayin State (Karen State). This will serve as one of the only opportunities for higher education in Kaw Thoo Lei itself (the Karen State).

Located in Hong Kong, the Hawk Rock Foundation is a private foundation for charitable and educational purposes.

Club Rangoon

Ground Floor, 33 Aberdeen Street, Central, Hong Kong

For Club Rangoon's second anniversary, we partnered with Hong Kong's only Burmese restaurant. During Karing Frontiers' annual fundraising raffle, customers were able to support refugee and migrant students when they dined in at Club Rangoon. The restaurant also kindly donated a noodles at noon lunch set for two as a prize for the raffle.

Acknowledgements

The annual fundraising raffle would not have been possible without the support of the following companies and organizations:

- **Blacksmith Books**
- **Chipotle**
- **Club Rangoon**
- **Conceptu**
- **Crossroads**
- **Hinitan Plantation**
- **Leung Yick Company Ltd**
- **Magpie**
- **Oolaa**
- **Philippa Flow Yoga**

The following artists also kindly donated their work for the raffle

- **Ali G Studios**
- **Gaz Jones**
- **Jayne Russell**
- **Jo Farrell**
- **Romain Jaquet-Lagrèze**
- **Simon Fuller**

Acknowledgements

The following individuals have sponsored at least one student (\$31 USD) for a semester within the past year

Ricky Andrews	Claire Ji	Andres Sanchez
Chris Beck	Richard Kliger	Justina Tan
Bernard Berkenkotter	Amanda Kwan	Terence Tsai
Kathleen Berkenkotter	Myo Thet Kyaw	Michael Turner
Diana Berkenkotter	Jay Lagman	Nathan Wang
Jannie Van Den Bos	David Lat	Jason Weber
Gary Brightman	Mercedes Lat	Kaitlyn Wells
Antonia Caig	Andrew Laurent	Norman Wen
Chen Chen	Alexander Lea	Alex Williams
Anicia Cheng	Caleb Ledi	Sharon Williams
Domingo Cheng	Josephine Loo	Justin Wu
Etso Cheng	Vivek Mathur	Mindy Xu
James Cheng	Alister Moss	Jenny Zhong
Wai Chi Cheung	Soyoung Nam	Ulrike Zobel-Gillmair
Kathy Christenson	Yuk Ng	
Khin-Shwe Eu	Angela Noll	
Moritz Gillmair	Tori Pontikes	
Judy Hanson	Chris Pu	
Wendy Henley	Irina Quiambao	
Meikei leong	Anna Rees	