

Burma Educational Scholarship Trust (BEST) is an Edinburgh-based charity registered in Scotland working collaboratively and creatively with other organisations.



BEST seeks to improve access to quality Tertiary Education for students and adult learners from inside Burma or those forced to live in exile as refugees by:

- promoting active learning and critical thinking through supplementary scholarship in public service sector related fields, such as health/social education undergraduate and graduate programmes at University.
- providing 10% of a student's total costs at University; thus allowing them to secure "substantive funding" of 90% from other scholarship programmes, which require a "matched" element as an essential criterion for any funding they offer – something our students, with no resources of their own, could not possibly meet themselves.
- supporting development of educational policy and practice through the Teacher Training for Burmese Teachers/Migrant Workers' and Refugee Learning Centre programmes in Chang Mai.

BEST has also pioneered a unique DfID (UK Government Department for International Development) funded Global Schools Partnership and Mutual Capacity Building Programme, between Forthview Primary in Pilton - one of Edinburgh's poorest communities - and Hle Bee 'stateless' Primary on the Thai-Burma border.

This work and its equity based methodology is unique anywhere in the world and we are very keen to share and grow this BEST practice further.

Work currently being developed, is based on mutual learning in both schools' communities, involving teachers, pupils and parents, through 'whole school' arts and culture based education, covering: reading and writing for critical thinking; emotional literacy; active global citizenship; and health and hygiene education through a shared hand-washing programme.

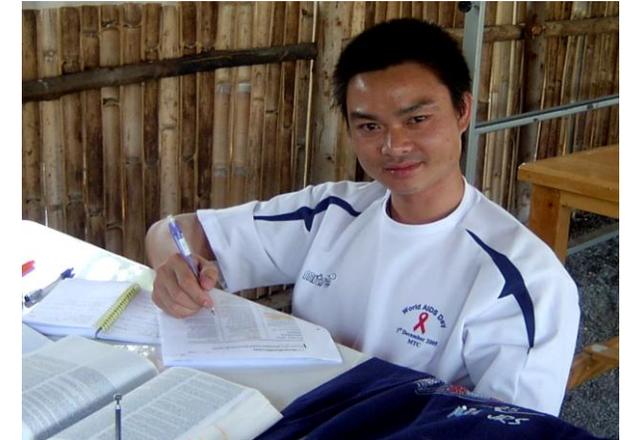


Communication is a twin-track approach of reciprocal visits; email through third parties; mutual letter writing and etchings using recycled plastic water bottles as etching plates, describing "Our lives" in an accessible and low-tech way; and the development of tri-lingual teaching resources and awareness raising materials.

See: www.forthview.blogspot.com

BEST has initiated and developed an innovative partnership with Newbattle Abbey College's Residential Access Course to University programme, with two Burmese refugee students having benefitted thus far. One student, a former political prisoner won the National Award of "Scottish Adult Learner of the Year 2007" having previously been incarcerated for ten years for peaceful protest in the notorious Insein jail and is - a testimony to all our students' focused determination.

In 2008, BEST is planning to pioneer accredited ESOL for the Burmese Migrant Workers Learning Centre with Newbattle, as well as a Post Graduate Fellowship at St Andrews University in Theology and Politics.



Since 2004, BEST has supported 36 students studying at University in Thailand and 4 students studying in Tertiary education in the UK - and we now have 8 graduates in fields as diverse as Public Health; Economics and Politics; Environmental Science; and Computer Science. All are currently working for their communities, both inside Burma and in exile.

BEST, helps support 14 nursing students studying at Thai universities - all from inside Burma who are struggling to keep up with their course work because their Thai Teachers' English language skills are poor.

They have to compete with 2000 'ordinary students', who vie for the time-limited use of the 20 computers in the University Library that they need for their studies. They have difficulty accessing the internet safely after long hours study and professional practice at the teaching hospital – which is an hour-long bus journey from where they stay. Their days start at 04.00 in the morning and finish sometimes as late as midnight!

One thing BEST and our students identified that would really help them to study safely and better manage their time, would be an individual computer and printer each. Their peers, from middle-class Thai backgrounds, have unthinking access to money and resources, whereas our Burmese students 'get by', living on less than £100 per month, after basic university costs are paid!

A good basic computer/printer in Thailand costs £325.

These students have sacrificed so much already to study. They have the complexities of securing visas to study as Burmese in Thailand -, as well as the separation and loss of contact from their families back home.

They have all chosen to become nurses because the Burmese junta chooses to spend most of its money on guns - not books and medicine - so poor people cannot get help when they are ill, or have to hide in the jungle and nurses cannot get proper qualifications inside Burma.

With no external enemies, the Burmese military spends 40% of its GDP on its army - the world's largest - but less than 50p per year, per person, on health and education combined. Whereas investing in these brave young people is the BEST hope for Burma's future!



BEST now wants to expand these curriculum and equity based programmes: working in UNISON with likeminded individuals and groups, developing further, sustainable and mutual links between Edinburgh, Scottish, and UK citizens, schools and institutions across the primary, secondary, tertiary and community sectors.

DONATION FORM

Please copy this form to give to others. Send it with your donation to: BEST, 19b Merchiston Avenue, Edinburgh, Scotland, EH10 4 PJ

Full name & title					
Address & post code					
Email address					
Make my donation payable to:		Student Scholarships	School Twinning	Trustees Discretion	
£10	£20	£50	£100	£200	Other

To: (Your Bank Name).....

Bank Address.....

I request that you pay Burma Educational Scholarship Trust:
Halifax/Bank of Scotland, Sort Code 11-46-37, Ac: 00001908
Roll No: D/94574265 the amount above until further notice.

Gift Aid Declaration: Signing this allows BEST to add 28% to your donation at no cost to you:

I am a UK taxpayer and wish BEST to reclaim tax on my donation:

Signature..... Date.....



“Lut laht kwint: Education as a means to both personal, cultural and community development, liberating the mind through freedom of thought and choice”

www.burma-trust.org

Burma is ruled by one of the most brutal military regimes in the world; a dictatorship charged by the United Nations with a “crime against humanity” for its systematic abuses of human rights. It is condemned internationally for refusing to transfer power to the legally elected Government of the country – the party led by imprisoned Nobel Peace Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, who was awarded “Freedom of the City of Edinburgh” and honorary life membership of UNISON in 2004, after BEST’s active campaigning. She remains detained by the junta under house arrest to this day.



“Please use your liberty to promote ours...”
Aung San Suu Kyi

