

Quantitative Evidence from Karen Schooling

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Abstract

This paper presents quantitative findings from the first wave of our Karen study, conducted between August and September 2025. We sampled 35 schools, with five from each of the seven administrative districts of the KNU, and collected survey data from 333 teachers and 1,827 learners in Grade 6 ($n = 757$) and Grade 9 ($n = 1,070$). While the sample is not statistically representative of all KECD schools, it intentionally captures variation in exposure to conflict and crisis conditions: 22 schools were directly affected by armed conflict and 26 by seasonal flooding, with many of these schools experiencing both conflict-related disruption and extreme weather events.

We use descriptive and inferential statistics to examine patterns in holistic student outcomes - grade-relevant literacy and numeracy, social and emotional learning, and wellbeing - and to assess how these outcomes are associated with reported conflict and crisis conditions. Given the sample's substantial exposure to both conflict and extreme weather events, we also examine whether outcomes and schooling experiences differ across schools affected by conflict only, weather events only, or both. In doing so, the paper contributes novel quantitative evidence on the experiences of adolescents and youth in Karen secondary education. Beyond reporting outcome patterns, we also speak to what it means to access and progress through - and to teach within - Karen schooling amid protracted insecurity and disruption. In whole, the paper considers how schooling provided by the KECD functions as a pathway through which communities pursue their right to education.