

Refugees from Burma: Questions about Education

During a cultural orientation session delivered by IRC/RSC East Asia in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, the participants, all adult refugees from Burma, listed the questions they had about education in the United States. This list was generated to allow the trainer to determine what areas of education were of most interest and concern to the participants. (Note that this list was generated with regard to education in general; the trainer did not specify whether participants should raise questions about education for children or adults).

While only one of many activities during IRC/RSC East Asia's four-day cultural orientation session, the questions shared in this exercise may be of interest to service providers working with refugees from Burma.

What are your questions about education?

1. Can we learn English part-time?
2. Will children be assigned their grade by their age?
3. If we are interested in studying, will the government take this into account?
4. Can we attend education freely?
5. If my child is an outstanding student, what will happen? Can my child represent the United States on a government scholarship to another country?
6. Is there discrimination against refugees in education?
7. I'm nearly 24: If I want to study in a technical school, is there an age limit?
8. Do I need to take an entrance test, or have a high school diploma, to study for a degree in a technical school?
9. If I want to enter a technical school, will the resettlement agency assist me with the school fees, or will I have to pay the school fees?
10. Can we use a diploma from Myanmar?
11. Which grade do we enter?
12. If our skills are professional, what can we do?
13. How can we learn English in class if we don't know any already?