



**Ethnic Minorities of Burma Advocacy
and Resource Center of Iowa**

Welcome to EMBARC



The Story of EMBARC

Refugees from Burma began arriving in Iowa in 2008. Leaders from the refugee community did all they could to help their peers, but many families were still struggling.

In 2011, seven community advocates from local ethnic organizations. Together they formed EMBARC: [Ethnic Minorities of Burma Advocacy and Resource Center](#).

An organization that would understand community strengths / challenges and with them, create solutions.



Founded by *and* for Refugees

2011 EMBARC founded by multi-ethnic community advocates and leaders in response to community need

2013 (January) 501 (C) 3 status Obtained and **(September)** awarded Ethnic Community Self-Help Grant from ORR

2014 Office opened in Polk County River Place

2022 Organizational split

2024 New 501 (C) 3 status

Iowa's First Refugee Founded ECBO

Based on the principle of mutual aid: **by and for refugees.**

- Linguistically and Culturally Appropriate Services
- Emotional Support
- Language and Cultural Preservation
- Leadership and Civic Engagement Opportunities
- Advocacy and Awareness



EMBARC is proud to be Iowa's first refugee-led social service provider.

Our Mission

“Empowering our community toward self-sufficiency through advocacy, education, and community development throughout Iowa.”



Our Model

In order to support a community, the individuals within must feel empowered. EMBARC trains small groups of “Community Navigators” on specific topics or themes. These Community Navigators then share knowledge with their peers via learning circles.



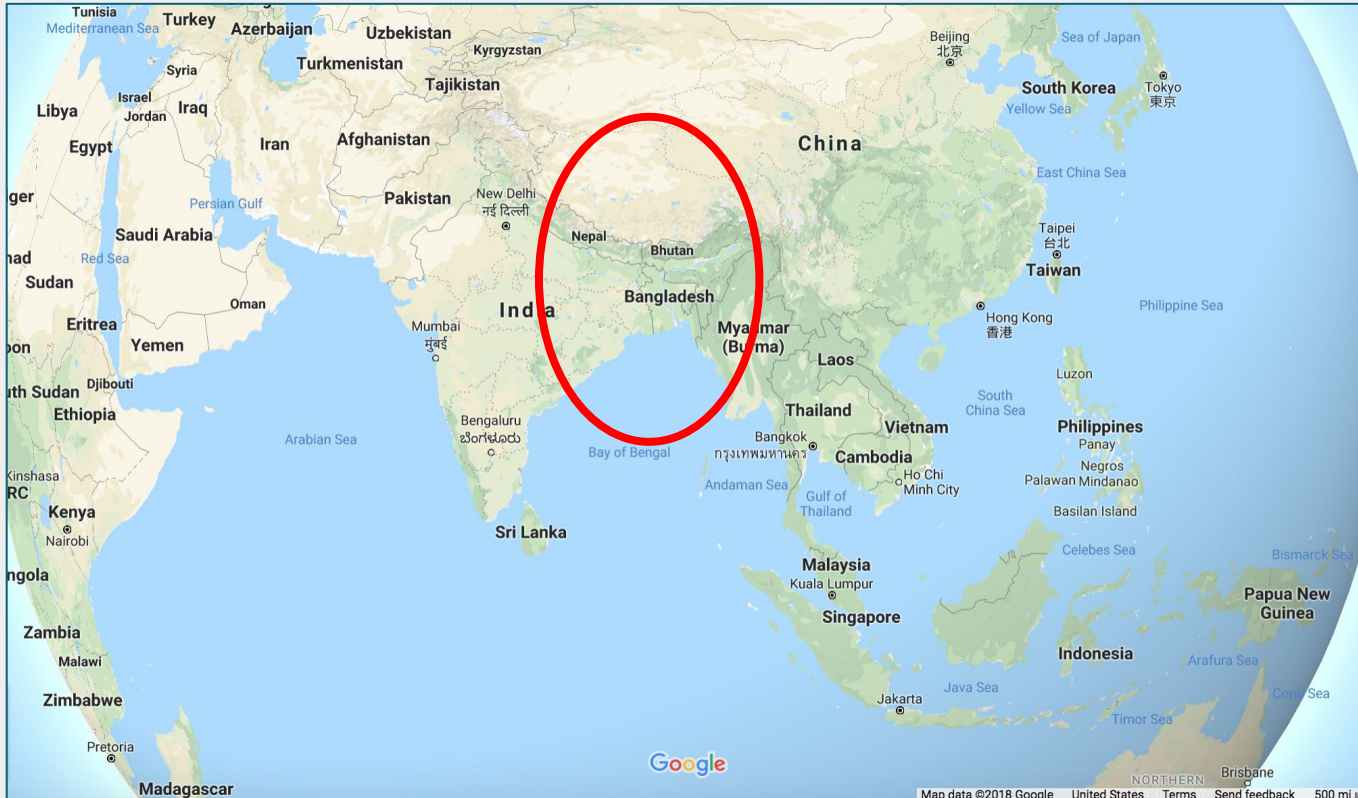
Who We Serve

EMBARC strives to serve as voice, friend, mentor, educator and leader for **all refugees as we make a new home here in Iowa.**

As an organization founded by refugees from Burma, our programs serve diverse ethnic groups from Burma.

EMBARC works primarily in “post-resettlement” - the space between individual’s third month, and up to, their 5th year in the United States. Though, many people continue to seek services into their first decade.

Where is Burma (Myanmar)?



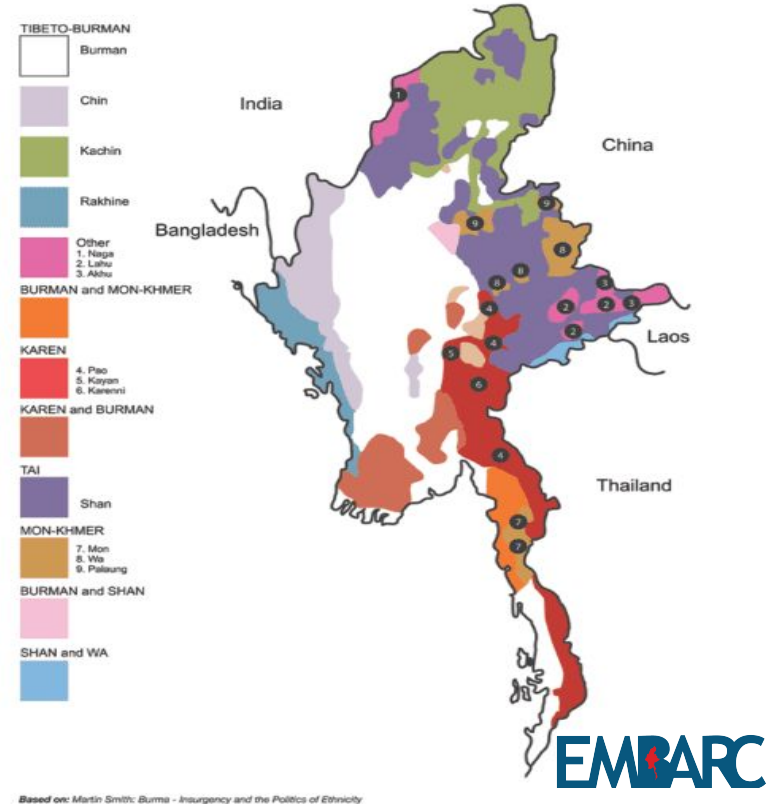
Ethnic Diversity

135 distinct ethnic groups recognized (8 'main groups'); classification was led by British Colonial Administrators and is very dated.

Ethnicities are central to identity, citizenship, basic rights, politics and armed conflict.

Significant differences among ethnic groups:

- Language
- Cultural practices
- Political history
- Cuisine
- Religions.



ETHNIC LANGUAGES AND DIALECTS OF BURMA

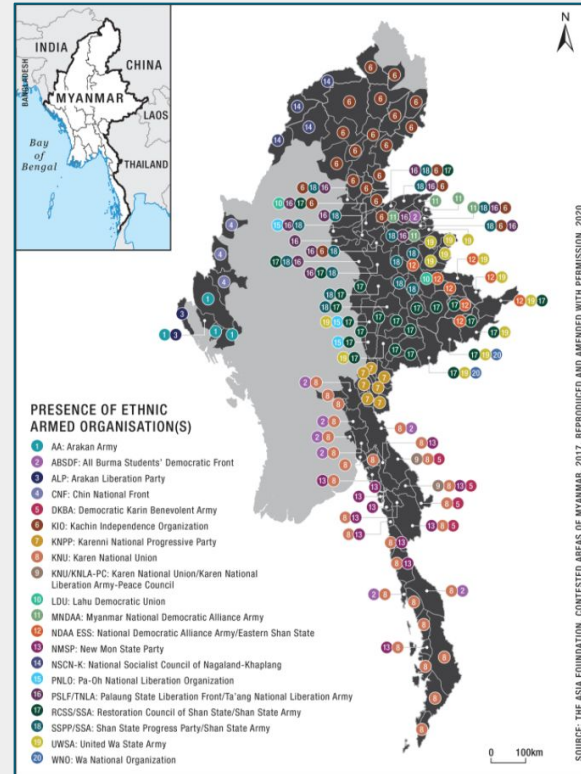
ETHNIC NAME	BURMA	KACHIN	KAREN/NI/ KAYAH	KAREN/KAYIN	MON	RAKHINE/ ARAKAN	SHAN
DIALECTS	Burmese	Jinghpaw Rawang Lisu Maru (Lachid) Lashi Zay Wa	Kayah (Ancient) Kayah (Modern) Kayan (Padaung) Kayah Mo Nu Yin Ta Lai Gay Kyo Kayaw (Pa Yai) Yin Baw Za Yein Gay Pah	Sgaw Pwo Pa'o	Mon	Arakan Rohinga	Shan Tai Shan
				STATES OF BURMA		DIVISIONS OF BURMA	
				Kachin Kayah Kayin Chin Mon Rakhine Shan		Thanin Thayir Yangon Ayeyawaddy Bago Magwe Mandalay Sagaing	
ETHNIC NAME	CHIN						
DIALECTS	Hakha Sub dialect- Hakha	Thlantlang Lautu Khualsim Sentshang Zokhua Mie Zotung	Falam Laizo Zahau Zanniat BualKhua Ngawn Tapong Parte Tlaisun Sim Khualsim Lente Lusai (Mizo)	Tedim Tedim (zomi) Sizang Teizang	Tuanzang Zo	Southern Chin Matu Mindat Kanpalet Dai Cho Acho Zotung	Mizo Mizo

Civil War

Since Independence Burma has struggled to achieve peace and unity.

Ethnic demands for sub-national autonomy has lead to 70+ years of civil war (**longest running in the world**).

Millions have been displaced; grave violations of humanitarian law and human rights abuses at the hands of the Tatmadaw, largely unpunished.

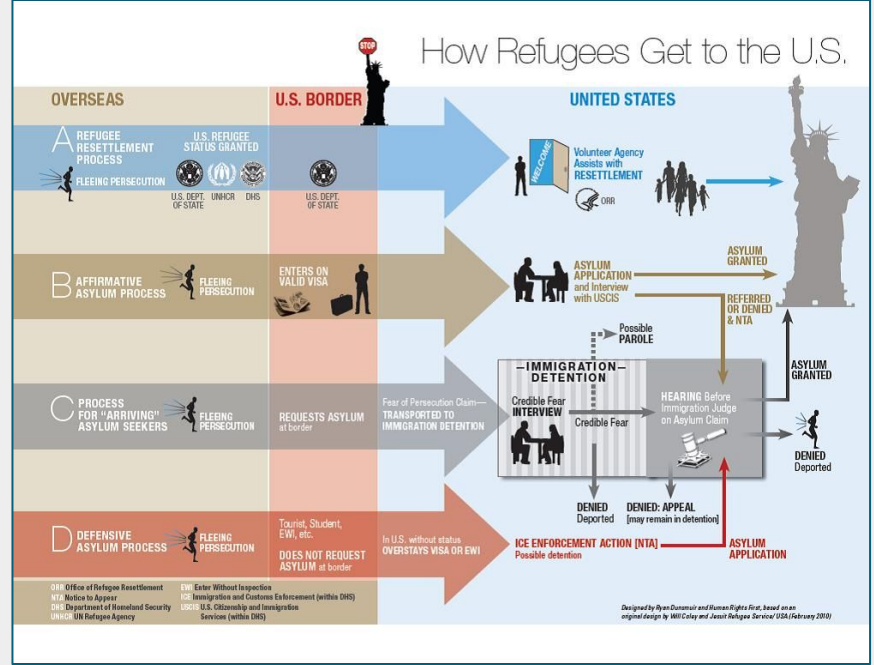
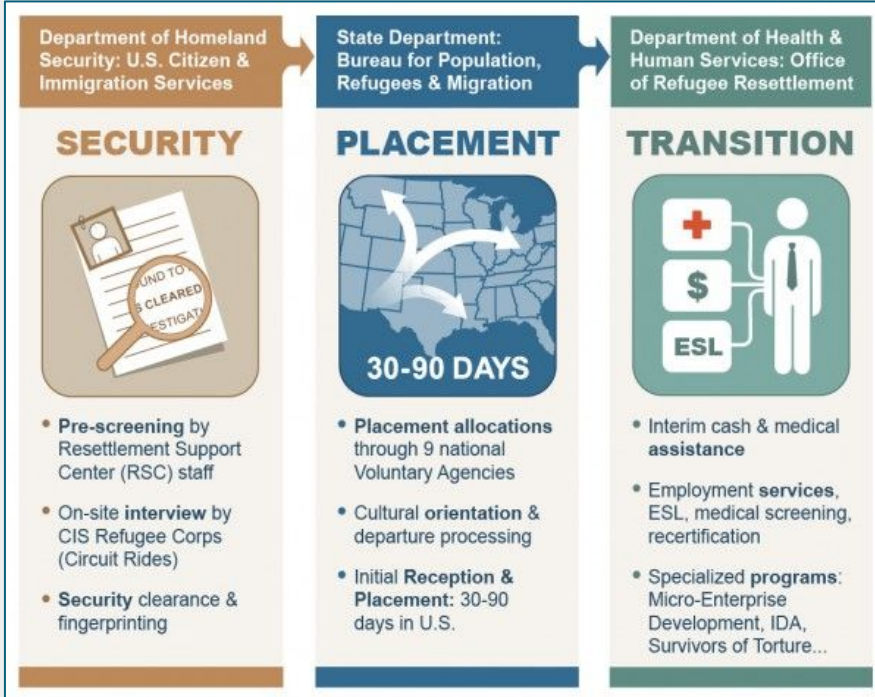


Life in a Refugee Camp

- Cannot Leave, Risk of Deportation and/or Detention
- No Path to Citizenship
- Over-Crowded
- Bare Minimum Healthcare
 - Mental Health, Malnutrition and Exposure to Disease
- Limited Education / Employment Opportunities
- Limited Hope for the Future
 - Crime, Substance Abuse
- Under-Supplied; Reduced Rations



Resettlement Process



Arrival



- **2-3 days pre-departure orientation**
- **Core services (30-90 days)**
 - Basic needs: apartment, furniture, clothing, food, rent assistance
 - Medical health care visit
 - Government assistance: Medicaid, Food Assistance
 - Connect to ESL classes/school
 - Assistance finding employment

Challenges

- Language and Interpretation
- Transportation
- Navigating Systems (Health, Education, Support Services)
- Unfamiliar with Western Culture or Urban Life
- Mistrust of Police / Unfamiliar with Laws
- Mental Health
- Health and Domestic Issues: Alcohol Abuse, Domestic Abuse, Divorce
- Difficulty Planning for the Future



EMBARC Programs *subject to change based on funding

- Early Childhood Parent Navigator
- Crisis & Advocacy
- Education (CBESL citizenship)
- Interpretation Fee for Service Social Enterprise
- Access Center
- Refugee Re-employment
- Community Events (flu clinic / LIHEAP / etc.)

EMBARCs Early Childhood Parent Navigator Program

EMBARCs oldest program!

Originally implemented for DHS diversion for multicultural families. Over ten years later, the program continues to grow, serving an average of over 400 families per year.

Scope of Services

Goal: Increased knowledge and confidence in U.S. parenting norms for refugee parents in Polk County. Focus on community assess parenting needs, education that support family functioning, communication, problem solving, develop family-informed, strength-based parenting goals that supporting services that encourage nurturing.

- Increased awareness and reduced barriers to accessing family self sufficiency support and services.
- Increased the developmental success of refugee children.
- Increased knowledge of child development and parenting skills.

Parent Navigators

- Rakhine
- Karen
- Karenni
- Chin



Program Activities

- Preschool Registration
- Learning Circle
- Training and Workshop
 - WIC monthly training
 - Story time
 - Workshop activities with Partner organizations
- Case management
- Fieldtrips



WIC sessions with EMBARC

- Health based educational sessions with Moms from Burma.
- Live translations with WIC specialists.
- Post education support with WIC access.



The Educational Road So Far

- Gestational Diabetes
- Picking Eating
- Snacking
- How to Find Food with the App
- Sweet Treat
- Healthy Snack for the Kids
- How do we get protein?
- Fruits and Vegetables
- Trusting Your Child's Appetite
- Healthy snack recipe with WIC-approved benefits
- Touring grocery stores to learn more about the right benefits



Questions?



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Thank You!

Get in touch!

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