Burma’s Diversity
- There are more than 135 different ethnic groups in Burma
- The majority Burman (Bamar) ethnic group makes up about two-thirds of the population
- The minority ethnic nationalities mainly in the
- Due to conflict and resource exploitation, millions of people from these minority groups have become internally displaced people (IDPs) within Burma, or refugees in neighboring countries
- The main religion of Burma is Theravada Buddhism (87.9%). There are also Christian, Islam, Hindu, and other religious populations.

Kachin War
- The Kachin conflict or Kachin War is one of multiple conflicts collectively referred to as the Internal conflict in Myanmar. Fighting between the Kachin Independence Army and government soldiers resumed in June 2011, after a 17-year-old ceasefire collapsed.
- The violence has resulted in the deaths of thousands of people, and the displacement of over 100,000 civilians. Widespread use of landmines, child soldiers, systematic rape and torture have been reported by both sides.

Religious Violence in Rakhine State
- In Rakhine State, the Rohingya, a highly persecuted Muslim group numbering over one million, face discrimination as they are not officially considered citizens by Myanmar’s government.
- Since 2012, more than one hundred thousand Muslim Rohingyas have been made homeless and hundreds have been killed, after two waves of attacks in June and October of 2012.
- A report released in February 2017 detailed mass gang rape, killings, brutal beatings, the torching of homes and people and disappearances in what the UN says ‘very likely’ amounts to crimes against humanity.

Peace Trainings in Kachin & Rakhine State, Myanmar
I conducted two 5-day peace and conflict workshop trainings with local civil society in Kachin and Rakhine State.
- In Kachin State, 22 participants from 4 civil society organizations (CSOs) and 3 IDP camps were represented.
- In Rakhine State, 18 participants from 4 youth networks and local community organizations primarily from Rathedaung, Maungdaw, and Sittwe township were represented.
- The topics covered were a basic overview of peace and conflict, with curriculum developed by Mote Oo Education. I also included my own materials to supplement the workshops.

Kachin Trainings: Findings
Massive education disparities between IDPs and non-IDPs: I encountered a difficult reality working in a region marked by conflict: the disparity of education levels between internally displaced people (IDPs) and the non-IDP Kachin population.
- IDP participants they could not read or write well
- Those working or living in Kachin IDP camps seldom come out to the city and generally feel disengaged from regular society

Rakhine Trainings
Rakhine State is full of political sensitivity and vulnerable to religious violence and conflict. Because of this, it was challenging to create open dialogue and a feeling of mutual respect between the trainers and the participants.

Fear of Speaking Out
During a drawing activity, one of the participants drew a picture of a Christian, Muslim, and Buddhist man holding hands to represent peace. He later disclosed that “he felt scared once his drawing was posted among the participants” due to strong feelings regarding religious identity.

Impact & Personal Significance
These trainings led me to discover massive education disparities between IDPs and non-IDPs and thus to explore ways to reach marginalized populations that are unable to receive education. Combining this idea with the experience of ECD specialists, I have since been starting an education venture, Two Rabbits, that provides early childhood education via low-cost mp3 tech and local community facilitators. In December 2016, I pre-piloted this project in the IDP camps in the KIA controlled regions of Kachin State.

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