Rights Beyond Border

POLICY BRIEF · CHILDREN ON THE MOVE FESTIVAL 2026

Improving the Quality of Life and Protecting the Rights of Children on the Move in Thailand

Recommendations from the Children on the Move (CoM) Network, Mae Sot

"Our future should not be limited by where we come from, but shaped by the opportunities we are given."

Child-led

Presented by young representatives of the CoM Network, who are themselves migrant students in Mae Sot.

From the border

Evidence from Migrant Learning Centers in Mae Sot, Mae Ramat, Phop Phra and Tha Song Yang.

Solution-focused

Each request answers a specific problem. We offer to share our experiences and work with government.

OUR THREE MESSAGES

1 Recognise our rights, regardless of where we come from or what documents we hold.

2 Ensure equal access to education, protection and healthcare so that every child can grow, learn and reach their full potential.

3 Listen to our voices and include us in decisions that affect our lives.

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01 Child protection: Children should be treated as children first

We welcome Thailand's withdrawal of its reservation to Article 22 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its Memorandum of Understanding on Alternatives to Detention (MoU-ATD). Our concern is how protection works in practice for children in Mae Sot.

WHAT WE SEE

- **Fear:** Recent arrests, detention and deportation of children under 18 in the Mae Sot communities create fear among students and families, especially those with limited documentation.
- **Out of reach:** Children may experience bullying, violence, physical or sexual harassment and other abuse, but lack safe, accessible and trusted channels to seek help or report.

PRINCIPLES

The best interests of the child come first. CRC General Comment No. 6 calls for special mechanisms for unaccompanied and separated children. General Comments Nos. 22 and 23 state that children must not be detained because of their or their parents' migration status, that detention is a last resort, and that any return must follow a best-interests assessment and respect non-refoulement.

> **We understand that authorities have responsibilities to enforce the law.**
> **However, children should be treated as children first.**

WHAT WE ASK

1	**Put children first.** Integrate child-first and best-interests principles into policies, laws and procedures on children on the move, in line with the CRC and General Comments 6, 22 and 23. **Responds to:** *no consistent child-first approach in procedures*
2	**No child under 18 arrested, detained or deported to Myanmar,** especially where this exposes them to rights violations, violence or threats to life. Use alternatives under the MoU-ATD. **Responds to:** *arrests, detention and deportation of children*
3	**Child-sensitive procedures.** Age-sensitive identification, presumption of childhood where age is uncertain, legal assistance, and children's views heard, with particular attention to children aged 15–17 who may be treated as adults. **Responds to:** *children aged 15–17 treated as adults*
4	**Safe protection in schools and communities.** Set up confidential, accessible reporting and referral so children facing bullying, violence, harassment or abuse receive timely protection, support and access to justice. **Responds to:** *no safe channel to report abuse*

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02 Education: Our future should not end after Grade 12

18,057	5,670	4,683
students enrolled in 60 Migrant Learning Centres (MLCs). Only 12 MLCs offer GED or similar programs, serving 987 students	Students in Grades 9–12 across 47 MLCs in Mae Sot, Mae Ramat, Phop Phra and Tha Song Yang	Students in Grades 9–12 with unclear pathways.

Source: MECC statistics, September 2026.

WHAT WE SEE

- **Gap between policy and practice:** Despite the Education for All policy, some refugee children are at risk of dropping out of school due to their status.
- **No recognised path to university:** Completing Grade 12 in an MLC does not mean children can continue. Many lack the identity documents needed for a Myanmar passport or university admission, and Myanmar's restrictive passport rules make this harder.
- **Cost:** GED fees, preparation courses and limited scholarships keep higher education out of reach for displaced and low-income families.

PROGRESS After the 2025 Children on the Move Festival dialogue, Rights Beyond Border (RBB) and Kamphaeng Phet Rajabhat University (KPRUMS) worked together to develop a 2.5-year education program for undocumented children completing Grade 12 from MLC. Expanding opportunities is not enough without affordable programs and financial support.

PRINCIPLES

- **CRC Articles 28, 29 and 2.** Every child has the right to education on the basis of equal opportunity. Primary education must be free and compulsory, and secondary and higher education available and accessible to all. These rights apply to every child without discrimination, including refugee children under Article 22, for which Thailand withdrew its reservation on 30 August 2024.
- **Education for All, Cabinet resolution of 5 July 2005.** Extends the right to 15 years of free basic education to all children in Thailand, regardless of nationality or legal status, including children without civil registration. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has welcomed it.
- **Cabinet Resolution, 28 October 2025.** Adopted on recommendations of the National Human Rights Commission, it opens education to five groups: children without civil registration or Thai nationality, migrant children, unaccompanied and separated children travelling for education, cross-border commuting students, and children in border refugee camps.
- **Ministry of Education announcement, 27 January 2026.** Allows all children, regardless of nationality or legal status, to enrol in Thai public schools nationwide, citing the CRC and the right to education.

WHAT WE ASK

1	**Apply Education for All consistently:** Require non-discriminatory admission regardless of nationality, documentation or displacement status, with monitoring and accountability so children are not excluded from Thai public schools. **Responds to:** *refused enrolment and dropouts*
2	**Temporary legal stay:** for undocumented children on the move who study in higher education, so migration status does not block university. This follows CRC principles of non-discrimination, education and protection of refugee children. **Responds to:** *lack of legal identity blocks university admission*
3	**Recognise MLCs:** as learning centres under Section 12 of the National Education Act, with mechanisms to recognise their programmes and learning outcomes. **Responds to:** *unrecognised learning and limited pathways*
4	**Expand financial support:** Scholarships, assistance and government subsidies for undocumented students, including those outside Ministry of Education schools, covering tuition, GED exam costs and other essentials. **Responds to:** *exam fees, tuition and few scholarships*

03 Well-being: Access to services without barriers

47%	**23%**	**20%**
severe to very severe anxiety	experienced depression	experienced stress

Source: RBB assessment, 2026, of 579 children and youth in MLCs.

WHAT WE SEE

- **Mental health:** Children link their distress to education pathways, safety concerns, homesickness, adapting to a new environment and poor living conditions.
- **Barriers to care:** Many families cannot afford medical fees or insurance. Others lack documents or fear being questioned or detained at hospitals. Language barriers limit communication with health providers.
- **Coverage gaps:** Many MLCs reportedly have no medical insurance for students. Some children reach Sub-district Health Promoting Hospitals, but many buy medicine from drugstores without a consultation.

PRINCIPLES

CRC Article 24 recognises every child's right to the highest attainable standard of health and access to healthcare services.

WHAT WE ASK

1	**Essential healthcare:** Provide treatment, regular health check-ups, vaccinations and mental health support. **Responds to:** *untreated health needs and self-medication*
2	**Reduce barriers:** Provide interpretation and language assistance at hospitals, and strengthen cooperation among hospitals, public health authorities, schools and civil society. **Responds to:** *language barriers and fear at health facilities*
3	**Universal Health Coverage (UHC):** Expand UHC and other appropriate health insurance so children can afford essential care regardless of nationality or documentation. **Responds to:** *costs and no insurance*
4	**Mental health in schools:** Train teachers and school staff to recognise stress, anxiety and other concerns and refer children to psychosocial and mental health services. **Responds to:** *high anxiety, depression and stress*

WE ARE PART OF THE SOLUTION

Children on the move are not only people who need help. We are students, young people and members of the communities where we live. We are not asking for special treatment. We are asking for equal opportunities, appropriate protection, access to essential services and a chance to take part in decisions that affect our lives.

Please listen to our voices and help us build a safer, fairer and more inclusive future for every child in Thailand.

Sources: CRC and General Comments Nos. 6, 22 and 23; Thailand's Education for All policy and National Education Act; MECC statistics (September 2026); RBB mental health assessment (2026). Prepared for the policy dialogue, Children on the Move Festival 2026.