Strength in Diversity: Towards Universal Education in Myanmar's Ethnic Areas

Kim Jolliffe and
Emily Speers Mears

October 2016

The Asia Foundation
Improving Lives, Expanding Opportunities

Strength in Diversity: Towards Universal Education in Myanmar's Ethnic Areas

Kim Jolliffe and Emily Speers Mears

October 2016

Acknowledgements

About the Authors

Having worked in Southeast Asia for over eight years, Kim Jolliffe is an independent researcher, writer, analyst and trainer, specializing in security, aid policy, and ethnic politics in Myanmar/Burma. He is the lead researcher on the Social Services in Contested Areas (SSCA) research project. Emily Speers Mears is a researcher and policy adviser specializing in education and conflict in fragile states. She has worked on Myanmar since 2010, and speaks Burmese.

About The Asia Foundation

The Asia Foundation is a nonprofit international development organization committed to improving lives across a dynamic and developing Asia. Informed by six decades of experience and deep local expertise, our programs address critical issues affecting Asia in the 21st century—governance and law, economic development, women's empowerment, environment, and regional cooperation. In addition, our Books for Asia and professional exchanges are among the ways we encourage Asia's continued development as a peaceful, just, and thriving region of the world. Headquartered in San Francisco, The Asia Foundation works through a network of offices in 18 Asian countries and in Washington, DC. Working with public and private partners, the Foundation receives funding from a diverse group of bilateral and multilateral development agencies, foundations, corporations, and individuals.

The Asia Foundation

Improving Lives, Expanding Opportunities

Preface

With many of the decades-long conflicts affecting areas of Myanmar still ongoing, parallel governance systems have been developed by ethnic armed groups and their affiliated organizations to provide vital services to impacted communities. The delivery of basic education by ethnic groups is one such critical social service reaching an underserved and vulnerable population of children and youths. While still small compared to other countries in the region, government spending on education has significantly risen in recent years and with new ceasefires in place, the Ministry of Education has been able to expand its provisions to previously inaccessible areas. However, the growth and expansion of government services into the conflict-affected areas also generates political and administrative concerns from ethnic groups. The reality is that parallel systems will remain for the foreseeable future, and there is a need to recognize the diversity in the delivery of education and complementarity with the parallel systems of government and ethnic groups. This paper is a part of the research project "Social Services in Contested Areas" which undertakes the study of governance structures of non-state disputed territories and its interaction with parallel state structures and services.

The Asia Foundation is pleased to present this research on basic education in eastern Myanmar. This study details the role and operations of non-state education providers in ethnic areas, specifically Mon, Shan and Karen States, and the interface with state education. This paper terms education providers connected to ethnic armed groups, and other community-based providers, as ethnic basic education providers (EBEPs), which have been providing vital pre-tertiary education services to conflict-affected communities. Given the political grievances arising out of the Burmanization of government education in the past, as well as the inaccessibility of state services in some of these areas, EBEPs have filled a significant gap and have been educating youths that live daily with conflicts and are at risk of hindered educational development. Valuing a diverse education sector and recognizing existing providers as important partners, will not only contribute to universal education goals and ensure access for all, but is a durable component of a successful peace process. We hope that this report will contribute to ongoing discussions of critical governance and reform issues that are cornerstone to Myanmar's transition and peace process.

Dr. Kim N.B. Ninh
Country Representative
The Asia Foundation Myanmar

Table of Contents

Glossary

AY	Academic Year
BGF	Border Guard Force
CAPS	Continuous Assessment and Progression System
CESR	Comprehensive Education Sector Reform
CPB	Communist Party of Burma
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade [Australian Government]
DKBA	Democratic Karen Buddhist Army
DPWC	Development Partners Working Committee
EAO	Ethnic Armed Organization
EAO-ED	Ethnic Armed Organization Education Departments
EBCS	Eastern Burma Community Schools
EBEP	Ethnic Basic Education Provider
EFA	Education For All
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
FERD	Foreign Economic Relations Department
HURFOM	Human Rights Foundation of Monland
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IRC	International Rescue Committee
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KED	Karen Education Department
KG	Kindergarten
KHRG	Karen Human Rights Group
KIO	Kachin Independence Organization
KKO/DKBA	Khohtoobaw Karen Organization/Democratic Karen Buddhist Army
KNPP	Karenni National Progressive Party
KNPLF	Karen Nationalities People's Liberation Front
KNLA	Karen National Liberation Army
KNU	Karen National Union
KRCEE	Karen Refugee Committee – Education Entity
KPC	Karen Peace Council
KSEAG	Karen State Education Assistance Group
KTWG	Karen Teacher Working Group
LMIC	Lower-to-Middle Income Countries
MDEF	Multi-Donor Education Fund
MEC	Myanmar Education Consortium
MNEC	Mon National Education Committee
MNED	Mon National Education Department
MoBAS	Ministry of Border Affairs and Security
MoE	Ministry of Education
MORA	Ministry of Religious Affairs
MP	Member of Parliament
MTA	Mong Tai Army
MTB	Mother Tongue-Based
MTB-MLE	Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education
MTT	Mobile Teacher Training
NCA	Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement
NDAA	National Democratic Alliance Army
NEL	National Education Law
NESP	National Education Strategic Plan

NLD	National League for Democracy
NMSP	New Mon State Party
ODA	Overseas Development Aid [non-standard usage]
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PBEA	Peacebuilding, Education, and Advocacy
PSLF	Palaung State Liberation Front
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
QBEP	Quality Basic Education Programme
RCSS	Restoration Council of Shan State
RDFSS	Rural Development Foundation of Shan State
SDC	Swiss Development Corporation [non-standard usage]
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SSDF	Shan State Development Foundation
SSPP	Shan State Progress Party
TBBC	Thai-Burma Border Consortium
TEO	Township Education Officers
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education for Training
UNFC	United Nationalities Federal Council
UWSP	United Wa State Party
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Map 1: Karen National Union Districts and Townships

Map 2: KSEAG-supported school distribution by KNU township

KSEAG-supported school distribution by KNU township

Schools

- No Data
- 20 – 50
- 51 – 75
- 76 – 100
- 101 – 150
- 150+

Source data: Karen Human Rights Group, Karen State Education Assistance Group, Myanmar Information Management Unit.

Disclaimer: The names shown and the boundaries used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by The Asia Foundation.

The Asia Foundation

Map 3: "East Daw Na region", KNU Kaw T'Ree Township

T'Nay Msah (Nabu) Twp.

Myawaddy

Moei River

Kawkareik

Kaw T'ree Twp. (East of Daw Na)

Kaw T'ree Twp. (West of Daw Na)

Haungthayaw Chaung River

KKO / DKBA headquarters

Thay Baw Bo

Son See Myaing (Maw Ka Ta)

Waw Lay Myaing (Waw Lay)

Su Ka Li (Choogali)

THAILAND

Kyaikdon

10 km

Disclaimer: The names shown and the boundaries used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by The Asia Foundation.

Map of Kaw T'ree Township (East Daw Na Area)

- ● Township Capital
- ● Sub-Township Town
- — Rivers

Roads
- — Existing Major Road
- — Existing Secondary Road
- — Proposed or Ongoing Road Construction
- — Proposed or Ongoing Road Improvements

☐ KNU Township Border
- – KNU Informal Township Border

The Asia Foundation

Source data: Karen Human Rights Group, Myanmar Information Management Unit.

v

Map 4: Southeast Myanmar
(government administrative states/regions and townships)

Myanmar Information Management Unit

South East Region - Myanmar

Government of Canada / Gouvernement du Canada

KAYAH STATE

BAGO REGION (EAST)

KAYIN STATE

MON STATE

THAILAND

TANINTHARYI REGION

Andaman Sea

INDIA · CHINA · LAOS · THAILAND

Pinlaung Township, Mawkmai Township, Langkho Township, Township, Mon Township, Ye Township, Hpayarthonesu, Khawzar, Yebyu Township, Kaleinaung, Myitta, Yebyu, Dawei, Dawei Township, Launglon, Launglon Township, Thayetchaung, Thayetchaung Township, Palauk, Palaw Township, Palaw, Kyunsu, Myeik, Myeik Township, Tanintharyi Township, Kyunsu Township, Tanintharyi, Pyigyimandaing, Bokpyin, Bokpyin Township, Karathuri, Kawthoung Township, Khamaukgyi, Kawthoung

Pyinmana Township, Pekon Township, Lewe Township, Loikaw Township, Loikaw, Shadaw, Demoso Township, Demoso, Shadaw Township, Hpruso, Yedashe Township, Leik Tho, Kaytumati, Taungoo Township, Thandaunggyi, Thandaung, Hpruso Township, Bawlakhe, Ywarthit, Taungoo, Baw Ga Li, Thandaunggyi Township, Bawlakhe Township, Oktwin, Htantabin, Oktwin Township, Htantabin Township, Hpasawng Township, Hpasawng, Mese Township, Mese, Phyu, Phyu Township, Kyaukkyi Township, Kyaukkyi, Kyauktaga Township, Kyauktaga, Nyaunglebin, Shwegyin, Madauk, Pyuntasa, Daik-U Township, Daik-U, Shwegyin Township, Hpapun Township, Hpapun, Bago Township, Waw, Waw Township, Kyaikto Township, Kyaikto, Bilin Township, Bilin, Kamarmaung, Shan Ywar Thit, Hlaingbwe Township, Hlaingbwe, Thanatpin, Thanatpin Township, Bago, Thaton Township, Thaton, Paingkyon, Hpa-An, Hpa-An Township, Myawaddy Township, Kawa, Kawa Township, Kayan Township, Thongwa Township, Kyauktan Township, Paung Township, Paung, Mawlamyine, Chaungzon Township, Chaungzon, Kyaikmaraw, Myawaddy, Kyondoe, Kawkareik, Kawkareik Township, Mudon, Mudon Township, Kyaikmaraw Township, aikkhami, Thanbyuzayat, Thanbyuzayat Township, Kyainseikgyi, Kyaikdon, Kyainseikgyi Township, Waw Lay Myaing (Waw Lay), Su Ka Li, Lamaing, Ye Township, Ye, Khawzar, Hpayarthonesu

Legend

- State Capital
- Township Capital
- Sub-Township Town
- Coast Line
- Township Boundary; District Boundary
- State/Region Boundary
- International Boundary
- Major Road
- Secondary Road
- Railway

Map ID: MIMU1281v01
Completion Date: 19 May 2015.A4
Projection/Datum: Geographic/WGS84

Data Sources :MIMU
Base Map : MIMU
Boundaries : MIMU/WFP
Place Name : Ministry of Home Affairs (GAD) translated by MIMU

Map produced by the MIMU -
info.mimu@undp.org
www.themimu.info

Kilometers
0   15   30   60

Kilometers
50   25   0   50

Disclaimer: The names shown and the boundaries used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Map 5: North Shan State (see Hsipaw Township)

Map 6: Main spoken languages of Myanmar

Map 7: Monastic Education in Myanmar (2014)

MIMU

Myanmar Information Management Unit

Monastic Education in Myanmar
2014

Type of School	Schools	Novices	Boys	Nuns	Girls	Total Students
Primary	972	12,111	115,658	5,571	85,767	219,107
Middle	557	10,458	29,879	5,844	23,454	69,635
High	2	-	3,455	-	2,025	5,480
Grand Total	**1,531**	**22,569**	**148,992**	**11,415**	**111,246**	**294,222**

CHINA

INDIA

KACHIN

Total Schools =26
Total Students=3,924

Myitkyina

SAGAING

Total Schools =196
Total Students=18,801

Hakha

CHIN

Total Schools =18
Total Students=998

MAGWAY

Total Schools =119
Total Students=14,306

Sagaing

Mandalay City

MANDALAY

Total Schools =351
Total Students=72,238

SHAN

Total Schools =78
Total Students=18,163

LAOS

VIETNAM

Taunggyi

Sittwe

RAKHINE

Total Schools =78
Total Students=14,752

Magway

Nay Pyi
Taw City

Loikaw

KAYAH

Total Schools =8
Total Students=921

BAGO WEST

Total Schools =142
Total Students=27,655

THAILAND

KAYIN

Total Schools =35
Total Students=6,913

Pathein

AYEYARWADY

Total Schools =167
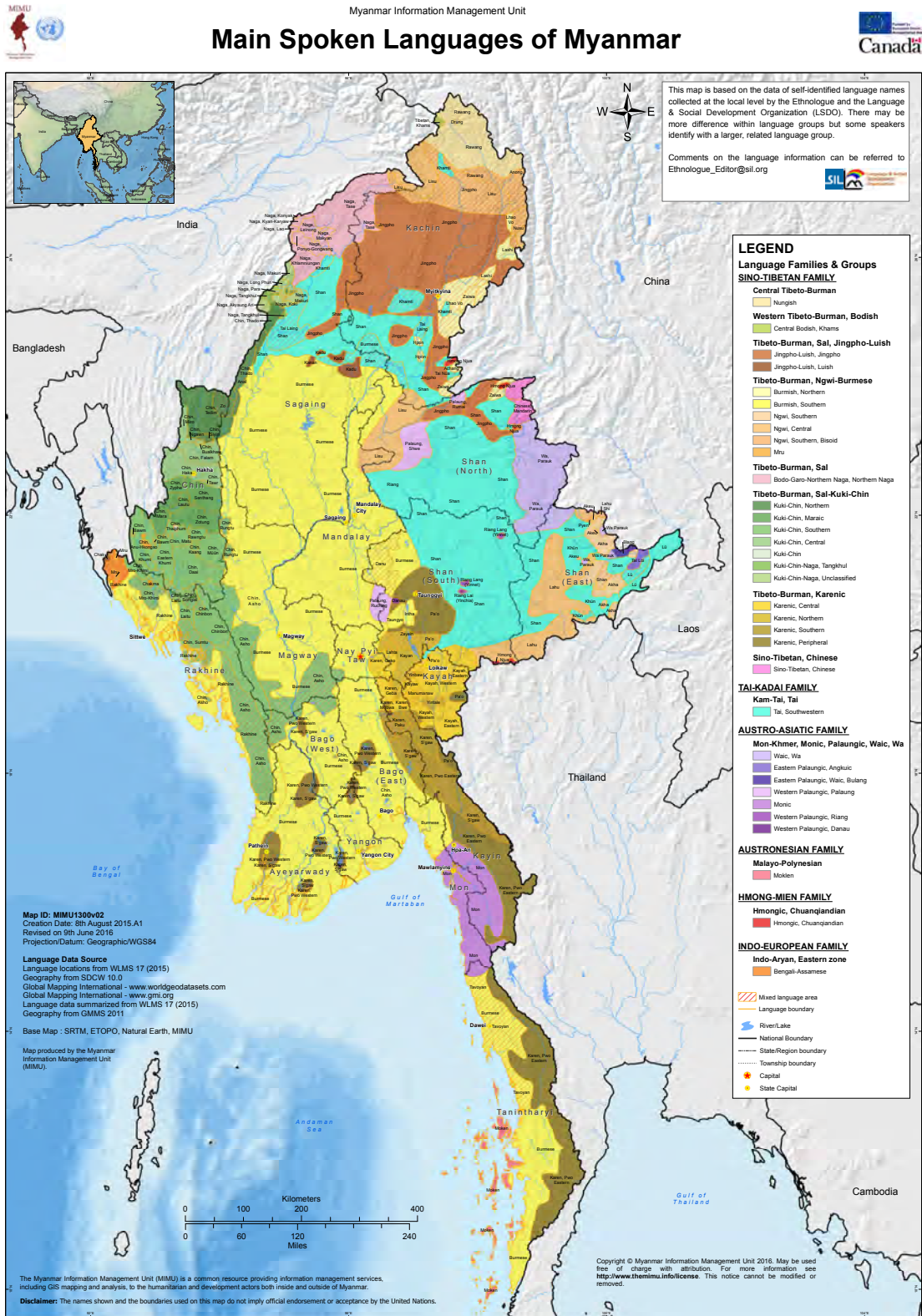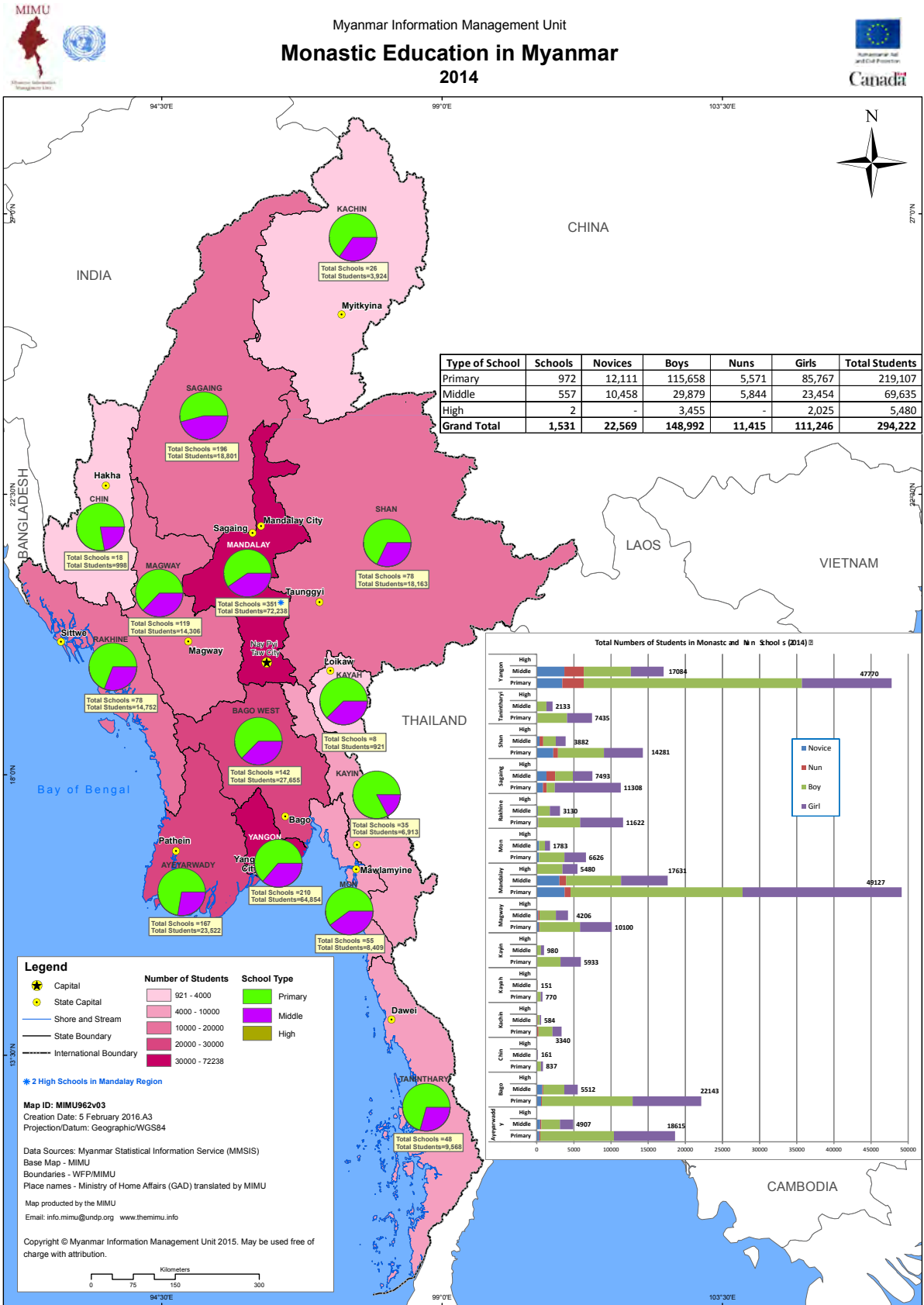Total Students=23,522

YANGON

Yang
City

Total Schools =210
Total Students=64,854

Bago

MON

Total Schools =55
Total Students=8,409

Mawlamyine

Bay of Bengal

BANGLADESH

Total Numbers of Students in Monastic and Nun Schools (2014)

Yangon — High / Middle 17084 / Primary 47770
Tanintharyi — Middle 2133 / Primary 7435
Shan — Middle 3882 / Primary 14281
Sagaing — Middle 7493 / Primary 11308
Rakhine — Middle 3130 / Primary 11622
Mon — Middle 1783 / Primary 6626
Mandalay — High 5480 / Middle 17631 / Primary 49127
Magway — Middle 4206 / Primary 10100
Kayin — Middle 980 / Primary 5933
Kayah — Middle 151 / Primary 770
Kachin — Middle 584 / Primary 3340
Chin — Middle 161 / Primary 837
Bago — Middle 5512 / Primary 22143
Ayeyarwady — Middle 4907 / Primary 18615

Legend:
- Novice
- Nun
- Boy
- Girl

Dawei

Legend

- ★ Capital
- ⊙ State Capital
- — Shore and Stream
- — State Boundary
- ---- International Boundary

Number of Students
- 921 - 4000
- 4000 - 10000
- 10000 - 20000
- 20000 - 30000
- 30000 - 72238

School Type
- Primary
- Middle
- High

✳ 2 High Schools in Mandalay Region

TARINTHARYI

Total Schools =48
Total Students=9,568

CAMBODIA

Map ID: MIMU962v03
Creation Date: 5 February 2016.A3
Projection/Datum: Geographic/WGS84

Data Sources: Myanmar Statistical Information Service (MMSIS)
Base Map - MIMU
Boundaries - WFP/MIMU
Place names - Ministry of Home Affairs (GAD) translated by MIMU

Map produced by the MIMU

Email: info.mimu@undp.org   www.themimu.info

Kilometers
0   75   150   300

Part 1　Background and Introduction

SECTION ONE: Introduction
- Methodology
- Organization of the report

SECTION TWO: A short history of education and conflict in Myanmar
- The pre-independence era
- Post-independence and the construction of a national system (1948-1962)
- Ne Win's socialist era (1962-1988)
- New regime, new policies (1988-2011)
- The reform era (2011-2016)

SECTION THREE: Ethnic basic education providers: who they are and how they work
- The term: ethnic basic education provider
- The political geography
- Basic education through "community schools"
- Support provided by EBEPs
- Support provided by MoE
- Whose schools are those?

SECTION FOUR: Introducing the case studies
- The Karen case study
- The Mon case study
- The Shan case study

SECTION ONE: Introduction

Throughout many of Myanmar's non-Bamar regions, basic education has long been provided by local ethnic actors, including the education departments of ethnic armed organizations (EAOs), community-based organizations, and religious organizations. These "ethnic basic education providers" (EBEPs) usually work by providing services to community schools that are further funded, managed, and maintained by communities under the guidance of school committees.

In 2014, The Asia Foundation released a report called "Ethnic Conflict and Social Services in Myanmar's Contested Regions," which looked at social service providers connected to ethnic armed organizations and their relations with the government.[1] It looked particularly at the need to make aid to social services in these areas conflict sensitive, especially as oversees development aid to Myanmar increases.

This report takes that work deeper, looking specifically at education services. It draws primarily on case studies conducted in ethnic Mon, Karen, and Shan areas of eastern Myanmar, along with some less extensive data from other regions. The report provides a detailed rationale for the importance of EBEPs to Myanmar's education sector. It also gives comprehensive, actionable recommendations for government, EAOs, and EBEPs, as well as the international aid community, for further enabling EBEPs to help the country reach its education targets.

Due to poor financing and lack of access to EAO territories, the Ministry of Education (MoE) has struggled to reach all populations in Myanmar, and EBEPs have often formed to fill the large gaps in government education services. Additionally, EBEPs have often sought to provide mother tongue-based (MTB) education for their communities, as the MoE system has remained largely Bamar-centric and has only recently introduced meager MTB services, for the first time since the first military coup in 1962. Furthermore, EBEPs have often been created due to the desires of EAOs and other ethnic organizations to become autonomous from state control and serve their own communities. There are numerous territories in Myanmar that have never been under centralized state control, including some where the same EAO has represented an alternative government for 40, 50, or 60 years.[2] Meanwhile, government education has been perceived by many ethnic elites as a tool for ethnic assimilation or "Bamanization" of non-Bamar people, making it a particularly sensitive area of governance.

EBEPs have long depended on relatively small amounts of international aid, while the schools they support remain largely reliant on time and resources committed by influential people and members of their communities. The United States, in particular, has been a mainstay of support to many EBEPs, along with Norway, the United Kingdom (UK), Australia, the European Union, and other Western countries. In recent years, however, these donors have all faced difficult choices as they have normalized relations with the Myanmar government and gained greater space to support the MoE, on which the majority of the population depends.

Meanwhile, Myanmar government spending on education has more than quadrupled in recent years, and new ceasefires have allowed the MoE to reach new populations. While offering communities many potential benefits, however, MoE expansion has often been poorly managed, leading to a range of political and administrative challenges, sometimes wasting resources and damaging confidence in the ceasefires. All of these challenges are surmountable if cooperation between the MoE and EBEPs can increase and more efficient ways of working can be developed.

This report argues that EBEPs have many benefits to offer Myanmar's education sector, and that they should be viewed by the government and international development actors as crucial partners in

---

[1] Jolliffe (2014).
[2] For a short history of how different territories have been governed at different periods of Myanmar's armed conflicts, and a detailed overview of how and where various ethnic armed actors govern today, see Jolliffe (2015).

achieving the country's education goals. Indeed, it is not uncommon in either developing or developed countries for there to be multiple providers of education; there is probably no country in the world whose education sector was developed solely by a central government actor and then rolled out unilaterally. Furthermore, EBEPs in Myanmar are of particular importance for four main reasons: (1) their unique access to territory, (2) their experience in providing mother tongue-based and multilingual education (MTB-MLE), (3) their value in the eyes of communities, and (4) their potential to contribute to building peace and reconciliation.

While the MoE is – and will remain – the main provider of education throughout the country, it is not – and need not be – the only one. Achieving quality education for all in Myanmar, by reaching even the most remote and marginalized populations and by implementing MTB-MLE, will not be possible by just expanding and improving MoE's own initiatives and programs. Given the diversity that already exists within the education sector, much can also be achieved through government reforms that enable, facilitate, and allow space for the contributions of other education actors to a common process based on common aims. In addition to the educational benefits, ensuring that EBEPs have a future as valued institutions within the Union will be crucial to achieving peace and national reconciliation, and will help lay the foundations for the government's aim to establish "a genuine, federal, democratic union."[3]

This will require a range of reforms to increase the complementarity of MoE and EBEP systems, to ensure that students can transfer between systems smoothly, that all qualifications are recognized, that the quality of education of all providers is assured, and ultimately, that all services are financed in-country.

In the long term, the ultimate aim of all education providers in the country should be to establish a diverse but cohesive education sector that is under the guidance of the state, but that makes the most of multiple providers and is able to function through times of war and peace. Building up the state to assume this kind of role, however, will require far more than technical solutions and the development of the right capacities, and it will take a long time. For most ethnic elites, this will probably only be deemed possible after a political settlement has been reached and there is a sustainable agreement on the country's constitution and the structure of the Union.

Some EBEPs might envision integrating into the state system following a political settlement between EAOs and the government/Tatmadaw, either by individuals taking key roles in the MoE at the central or state/region levels, or by systematically reforming the state system to include their existing structures. Alternatively, as in many other countries, it would be perfectly natural for other education organizations to continue providing the full range of education services from outside the MoE, but to still be considered important education stakeholders at the local and national levels.

In the near term, the MoE and EBEPs should work to enhance complementarity between their systems through increased coordination, cooperation, and trust building. Indeed, as children get older each year, these reforms cannot wait until all conflicts are resolved; rather, the education sector must become better adapted to uncertain political and security situations and to functioning in times of both war and peace.

For the National League for Democracy (NLD) led government, EBEPs should be seen as valued partners in reaching the country's education goals, and policies should be developed to support EBEPs through active cooperation, and to avoid undermining their activities. Ensuring that EBEPs have a future as valued institutions within the Union should be seen as a crucial element of peace and national reconciliation.

---

[3] "State Counsellor offers New Year Message," *Global New Light of Myanmar*, April 17, 2016. Available at: http://globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/amendment-essential/.

At the same time, EBEPs should recognize that the MoE is the largest education provider in the country, and that the government has a responsibility to its electorate to improve the education sector. Therefore, EBEPs should work to align their agendas and strategies with those of the government, as long as such efforts do not contradict their central aims and mandates or obstruct their operations.

As long as conflicts continue, international aid commitments to both the MoE and EBEPs will be crucial to helping the country meet its education goals. EBEPs should be seen as particularly valuable partners in reaching some of the country's hardest-to-reach and most vulnerable communities, and in improving access to MTB-MLE.

Methodology

The bulk of the research for this report consisted of three case studies, in different parts of Myanmar, examining the work and political environment of three networks of EBEPs, serving Mon, Karen and Shan populations respectively. The methodologies for each of these studies is covered in section 4. In addition to these case studies, interviews, informal discussions, and focus group discussions were held with MoE officials and teachers, community-based organizations, civil society representatives, international and Myanmar education consultants, aid donors, UN agencies, international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs), and other researchers. Additionally, both authors attended a range of talks at the International Conference on Language Policy in Multicultural and Multilingual Settings, held at the University of Mandalay in February 2016, and held discussions with participants between sessions.

A wide range of secondary sources were drawn on, including a number of important Myanmar-focused studies that are listed in the bibliography, as well as some key international academic and policy documents.

Initial findings were presented for comment to the Education Thematic Working Group, Australia's Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), and the Myanmar Education Consortium (MEC). A presentation on the administration of schools in areas of mixed control, which drew on the case studies, was presented at the International Conference on Language Policy in Multicultural and Multilingual Settings, and feedback and questions were incorporated into this report, as were comments on the report from the management staff of two major international partners of EBEPs, and one international and two national education consultants.

Organization of the report

This report is divided into twelve sections, which are then organized into three parts, each of which is divided into three or four subsections. Part I includes this introduction, and provides necessary background information to help contextualize the report. Section 2 offers a short and illustrative history of the conflict in Myanmar, and demonstrates how EBEPs evolved. This includes a subsection at the end on recent developments in the peace process that is particularly relevant to understanding the present political context. Section 3 introduces the term "ethnic basic education provider" (EBEP), and provides a basis for understanding what kinds of services they provide and how they operate in their political environments. Section 4 is particularly important, as it provides an introduction to the three case studies on which the findings and recommendations in this report are based. This section includes an overview of the subject, EBEPs, and the particular contexts in which they operate. The remainder of the report then frequently draws on other data from these studies, so readers may wish to refer back to Section 4, as necessary, for information on the particular contexts.

Part II explores how Myanmar's education sector has been reformed in recent years, and demonstrates why EBEPs are crucial to the ongoing reform agenda. Section 5 gives an overview of key areas of

government education reform since 2011, highlighting how increased spending, a range of new policies, and heightened support from the international community have given a huge boost to the MoE. Section 6 then looks at the importance of improving access to MTB-MLE in Myanmar, outlining progress made by the government so far, and framing the challenges ahead. Section 7 provides a basis for understanding where EBEPs can fit into this process of reform, demonstrating that education sectors in other countries often include multiple providers, and that EBEPs in Myanmar offer a range of particularly important strengths and benefits.

Part III looks at the opportunities and challenges involved in developing effective and sustainable arrangements to maximize the potential of EBEPs and to ensure complementarity with the MoE. It provides detailed analysis of the main areas where reforms will be useful, and offers actionable recommendations for the Myanmar government, EAOs and EBEPs, and the international aid community. Section 8 frames the basic policy problem that this report attempts to address, and provides analysis and recommendations for next steps by major stakeholders. Section 9 explores one of the major challenges identified in this study: patterns of rapid MoE expansion into ceasefire areas where territories remain contested by EAOs and where EBEPs are already providing services. Section 10 examines the challenges and opportunities in the administration of mixed MoE-EBEP schools, first in the context of recent MoE expansions and then at mixed schools in general. Section 11 looks at opportunities and challenges related to student assessment and qualification, which are crucial to ensuring complementarity and equity of services among multiple providers. Section 12 considers issues of quality and financing of EBEPs, looking at short-term measures that will probably depend on continued international aid, and long-term opportunities for public financing and official accreditation and regulation of EBEPs.

SECTION TWO: A short history of education and conflict in Myanmar[4]

Myanmar's political development has long been affected by conflicts between successive centers of power in the mostly ethnic Bamar regions of the lower Ayeyarwady River and surrounding plains, and elite actors representing the multitude of other ethnic groups in the periphery. In the present era, armed conflicts have been fueled, in part, by issues related to the policy and practice of education, as the government's heavy focus on Myanmar language, literacy, and culture has been among a wide range of political grievances held by non-Bamar ("ethnic") elites towards the Bamar-centric state. In turn, these conflicts have catalysed the emergence of a wide range of alternative basic education providers, including the education departments of ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) and various religious, civil society, and community actors working in ethnic areas.

The pre-independence era

At least since the sixteenth century, education in Myanmar has been provided by multiple actors working in parallel through different channels. Traditionally, monasteries were principally responsible for teaching literacy, primarily in Pali, but also in Myanmar, Mon, Shan, Rakhine, and possibly other languages.[5] The Myanmar royal state and other major kingdoms in the region do not appear to have had significant roles in education. However, Buddhist proselytism was certainly used to expand the purview of these states to surrounding animist communities, and education may have played a role in this expansion.[6] From the sixteenth century onwards, Catholic missionaries began establishing missionary schools in central and southern Myanmar. These schools taught local languages, such as Myanmar and Mon, in addition to European languages and other subjects, such as geography and mathematics.[7]

Following the second Anglo-Burmese War in 1852, the space for Christian missionaries to provide education in what was then called Burma increased significantly, leading to a particularly sharp rise in American Baptist schools.[8] The missions, with centers in Mawlamyine and Yangon, became particularly active in mountainous areas populated by Karen, Kachin, Chin, Zomi, and other, mostly hill-dwelling, non-Bamar groups. These schools taught local and European languages, while missionaries generated original writing systems for a large number of ethnic languages, such as numerous Karen dialects, Jinghpaw, Hakha Chin, Lisu, Wa, and Lahu among many others.

At the same time, the British colonial state began directly developing a state education system. Some English-language schools were set up to educate an elite; for the rest of the population the colonial administrators initially attempted to graft Western subjects and concepts onto the existing monastic education system. After this proved unsuccessful, the British supported the development of networks of secular, vernacular schools with some help from missionaries, and later also established universities. Monastic schools continued to provide education in many areas, but they received less support from the colonial administration than secular schools did.[9]

Educational developments in the colonial era played a key role in the rise of ethnic nationalism, as they produced educated (often English-speaking), ethnically identified elites that often rose into key jobs within the colonial system, or held tranditional leadership roles. Indeed, it was literate, Christian

---

[4] Dedicated research was not conducted into the history of education for this study, so the analysis here remains limited in scope.

[5] The main available literature on monastic education focuses on areas under the Konbaung Dynasty and previous Myanmar dynasties, rather than those of Shan, Mon, Rakhine, Karenni, or others. See for example Tipton (1981), Khammai Dhammasami (2004), Jones (1988), Cheesman (2003), Schober (2007), and Turner (2014). There is very little literature that focuses specifically on monastic education in other parts of the country. Less comprehensive sources on monastic education in other areas include: Shan Culture and Education Central Committee, *History of education in Shan State, Burma* (December 18, 2011), https://shancultureandeducation.wordpress.com/2011/12/18/hello-world/ [accessed December 29, 2015]; Karen Buddhist Dhamma Dhutta Foundation, *The Karen People: Culture, Faith, and History* (2010), http://www.karen.org.au/docs/Karen_people_booklet.pdf, and Pon Nya Mon (2010).

[6] See Cheesman (2003).

[7] Jolliffe, P. (2016), chapter 3.

[8] See Jolliffe, P. (2016), chapter 3, pp. 53-74.

[9] Cheesman (2003), pp. 50-53.

leaders who gave rise to Karen, Chin, and Kachin national movements. Meanwhile, there were fewer new education opportunities for Buddhists such as the Bamar,[10] and Mon.[11] It was probably these dynamics, too, that inspired Bamar nationalist movements, from the 1930s onwards, to place Myanmar language and culture at the heart of their campaigns for independence.[12]

Post-independence and the construction of a national system (1948-1962)

Immediately following independence in 1948, armed conflicts broke out between the state of Myanmar (then still called Burma in English) and separate ethno-nationalist and communist movements. In the 1950s, the security situation was made worse as Kuomintang Nationalist forces from China retreated into Myanmar. This led the Bamar-dominated, national armed forces (the Tatmadaw) to significantly expand their presence into non-Bamar, rural areas for the first time.[13]

Meanwhile, the new government, led by Prime Minister U Nu, attempted to establish a national education system that would provide at least primary education to all children across the country, with a school in every village.[14] At the same time, the government began promoting Myanmar as the majority language, motivated by the desire to diminish the authority of Chinese- and Hindi-speaking minorities who had worked with the colonial government,[15] and also to promote unity.[16]

However, for people in non-Bamar areas, particularly elites with their own nationalist aspirations, this was often interpreted as part of a process of ethnic assimilation, or "Bamanization," albeit perhaps unbeknownst to the Bamar elite.[17] This was likely exacerbated significantly by the fact that Bamar teachers and Bamar soldiers were jointly arriving for the first time in many areas, particularly in former "frontier areas" that had been administered separately under colonialism, leading to what has been described as a feeling of "internal colonialism."[18] Nonetheless, there were also some initial efforts to produce history textbooks that promoted a national history that would support inter-ethnic unity and reduce conflict.[19]

Literacy education of non-Bamar languages was continued by monastic, Christian, and other schools, while ethnic societies in some areas were able to continue teaching their own languages through the government system. For example, the Shan State government's education committee began to develop Shan writing systems in the 1940s. By 1958, Shan was included as a subject in the school curriculum in Shan areas, with textbooks available up to the fifth grade.[20] Mon government schools also were given permission during this period to recruit Mon teachers and to teach the Mon language.[21]

Meanwhile, as large areas came under the control of EAOs, some promoted education through their

---

[10] J. S. Furnivall observed that "to the extent that the new schools were available to previously unschooled people, the effect was also highly provocative, as these were predominantly non-Burman, non-Buddhist peoples who had either been excluded or remained voluntarily outside of the earlier schools." Furnivall (1943), cited in Cheesman (2003), p. 52.
[11] Lall and South (2011), p. 11.
[12] Callahan (2003b), p. 151.
[13] As almost 50 percent of the Tatmadaw's original forces had defected to various insurgencies, rapid and extensive recruitment drives were undertaken, leading the force to become predominantly Bamar.
[14] Government of the Union of Burma (1954), p. 114.
[15] Callahan (2003b), p. 144. As Furnivall points out, until the 1930s you had to speak Hindustani to use the telegraph system in Burma. See Furnivall (1948), p. 121.
[16] Kyaw Yin Hlaing (2007), p. 154. This is a key argument throughout this work.
[17] Mary Callahan (2003b), p. 144. Kyaw Yin Hlaing argues that this feeling of alienation came later, and that ethnic leaders involved in discussions during the constitutional drafting process about what should be the national language agreed that one unifying language was needed, and that Myanmar was better than English. He also argues that the literacy program "did not cause any major resentment among minority communities." Kyaw Yin Hlaing (2007), p. 156.
[18] Callahan (2003b), p. 158, referring to Seargent (1994).
[19] Salem-Gervais and Metro (2012), p. 34. Salem-Gervais and Metro indicate that this effort included a foreword written by a serving colonel. The authors seem to view this effort, which ended in 1962, in a positive light, though they do not say exactly how it was conducted. It should be noted that similar efforts in many eras have often gone so far in emphasizing unity as to represent the people of Myanmar as a homogeneous cultural entity, with the effect of further marginalizing minority cultures.
[20] Shan Culture and Education Central Committee (2011).
[21] Lall and South (2011), pp. 11-12.

own systems. Education was particularly important to the most powerful EAO at that time, the Karen National Union (KNU), whose mother organization, the Karen National Association, had been founded in 1881 to promote Karen culture, literacy, and education. Accordingly, as the KNU established a parallel governance structure in areas under its control, the preexisting Karen Education Department (KED) was incorporated as a KNU line department.[22]

Ne Win's socialist era (1962-1988)

In 1962, negotiations got underway between Prime Minister U Nu and a coalition of ethnic politicians calling for a more federal political system. These were cut short on the second day, however, when the commander-in-chief of the Tatmadaw, General Ne Win, staged a coup d'état and arrested all those involved in the talks. He then instigated a broad program of centralization, aimed at achieving "the Burmese way to socialism," and paved the way for nearly five decades of explicit military rule.

It is often said by ethnic politicians, activists, and education leaders that the military banned the teaching of ethnic languages soon after the coup. Exactly how and to what extent this happened is difficult to determine and will require further research. What is certain is that the state began nationalizing all religious and private schools in 1964 and 1965, instituting a national curriculum and subjecting them to centralized administration. At the very least, this made it much harder for local teachers to continue teaching ethnic languages as official subjects.

In some areas, ethnic literacy apparently continued to be taught in schools, while in others it was ended or heavily suppressed.[23] Additionally, as Shan, Kachin, Kayah, and Kayin States and the Chin Special Division saw their local governments dissolved and replaced by military councils, it is possible that any support local schools had received from these local governments was reduced or stopped. In many cases, religious organizations and other actors were able to continue teaching ethnic languages in summer or evening schools, but they may also have struggled to get permissions or faced unexpected hindrances from authorities.

It is also unclear what impact this nationalization drive had on community schools. In recent decades at least, communities in rural areas have often had the burden of organizing their own schools, with inconsistent support from the government or other actors. While the government certainly nationalized at least 137 large and prominent schools in 1964-65, it probably also began to incorporate many rural community schools into its system. However, as it banned private schools, it may also have cracked down on those that it was unable to subsume.

During the 1960s and 1970s, armed conflicts became more intense as the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) stepped up its insurgency and numerous Shan armed movements got underway.[24] In 1972, the New Mon State Party (NMSP; which had formed in 1958) established its Central Education Department, and the KIO Education Department was established in 1978. From 1968, the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) took control of extensive territory along the China border and built alliances with a range of EAOs in other areas. It is not clear, however, if it provided any education services.[25]

In the 1970s, the KNU was successfully pushed out of the delta region by the Tatmadaw, but consolidated

---

[22] According to the KNU website, the Karen Education Department predated the KNU, but It is not clear what form it took in the pre-KNU period. See http://www.knuhq.org/about/education-cultural-department/. It is also not clear exactly when it became known as the Karen Education *and Cultural* Department as it is today.

[23] According to the Shan Culture and Education Central Committee, Shan literacy continued as a subject in Shan State schools. See Shan Culture and Education Central Committee (2011). However, local languages were reportedly banned for some time, in at least parts of Mon State (interviews with MNEC leaders, December 2015) and in Ayeyarwady Region (International Conference on Language Policy in Multicultural and Multilingual Settings, University of Mandalay, February 2016).

[24] The first Shan armed revolts began in 1958, leading to the existence of at least four main EAOs by the mid-1960s. The KIO was formed in 1961.

[25] In Bertil Lintner's seminal work on the CPB, there is no mention of their education system. See Lintner (1990).

its control over much of the southeast. It then established its current administration system, including the Karen Education Department as one of 14 ministry-like line departments. In 1976, the KNU, the KIO, the NMSP, the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), and six other non-communist EAOs formed an alliance called the National Democratic Front and took up an official position in favor of a federal, democratic Union of Myanmar, which has remained their central aim to this day.

New regime, new policies (1988-2011)

Following the country's second military coup, in 1988, and the subsequent collapse of the CPB, the new military government pursued ceasefires with a number of EAOs that had formed from the CPB's ranks. This period also saw the NLD form and win a landslide election under the leadership of the national hero, Aung San Suu Kyi. After the election results were annulled, many would-be members of parliament fled into exile. In following years, the NLD adopted an official position favoring a federal, democratic system of government in the interest of building peace.[26] In the early 1990s, other ceasefires were then reached with ethno-nationalist groups, including the KIO and NMSP, bringing the number of major ceasefire groups to seventeen. In 1995, a large splinter faction of the KNU formed the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), and entered a 16-year conflict against the KNU, alongside the Tatmadaw.

During the 1990s, some ceasefire EAOs were able to establish more stable administration systems in their areas and began cooperating with the military government on some aspects of governance. Among other benefits, this cooperation allowed the education departments of the NMSP and KIO to put students through government exams and to more openly support community schools in government-controlled areas.

Meanwhile, in southeast Myanmar, the Tatmadaw undertook joint offensives alongside three other ceasefire EAOs,[27] allowing it to make significant gains against the KNU, the KNPP, and a Shan EAO called the Mong Tai Army (MTA). These campaigns substantially reduced the military and governance capacity of the KNU and the KNPP, and damaged their education systems. After the MTA surrendered in 1996, a large faction formed a new army that later became the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS), which has now become the most powerful Shan EAO.

Tatmadaw offensives in this period and into the 2000s displaced hundreds of thousands of people, mostly to internally displaced person (IDP) sites in KNU, KNPP, and RCSS territories, or across the border to EAO-established refugee camps in Thailand. In Karen and Karenni refugee camps, which were administered by refugee councils under the KNPP and the KNU, respectively, school networks were established by the Karenni National Education Department and the Karen Education Department (KED). The KED later transformed its refugee-focused wing into the Karen Refugee Committee – Education Entity (KRCEE). Furthermore, networks linked to the RCSS established schools in each of five IDP camps in the organization's territory.

These refugee-camp schools came to serve not just the children of displaced families, but also thousands of young people who moved to the camps to live in safety and to get an education. In the late 1990s, a community-based organization called the Karen Teacher Working Group (KTWG) was established to promote a resurgence of the Karen national education system by providing training, teacher stipends, and other support to community and KED-run schools across Karen areas of the southeast.

---

[26] See a report by an NLD-led committee representing 251 disavowed members of Parliament, which discussed federalism as a central issue at the heart of the armed conflicts and concluded that such a form of government would be necessary to achieve peace. Committee Representing the People's Parliament (1999), pp. 88-89.

[27] During this period, the Tatmadaw fought with the DKBA against the KNU, with the United Wa State Party against the MTA, and – to a lesser extent – with the Karen Nationalities People's Liberation Front (KNLPF) against the KNPP. The DKBA and KNPLF were both also used in cross-border attacks on refugee camps in Thailand.

The 1990s also saw an increase in government-provided education in many parts of the country. Extensive school construction and teacher training programs were undertaken, including in ethnic areas.[28] However, the state faced a range of challenges to effective education in conflict-affected areas, which are discussed in Part II. One study has claimed that, by the year 2000, there was one school per 25 villages in "border regions," though these regions were not clearly defined.[29]

Government education policy and programs during this period remained opaque and subject to the inefficient, top-down approach that characterized most of the military government's planning.[30] However, the regime also relaxed some of the restrictions on non-government schools that had been imposed during the socialist era. Monastic schools were allowed to re-open in 1992 if they registered with the Ministry of Religious Affairs and taught the government curriculum. This may have been part of a less explicit shift to allow community schools in government-controlled areas to organize more openly, as many do today.

During this period, as Myanmar became subject to international sanctions, most international donor support for education shifted to non-state education providers,[31] particularly to the monastic education sector and cross-border support networks linked to EAOs.[32]

The reform era (2011-2016)

In 2011, a semi-democratic government was instated, led by a former general, President Thein Sein, who began a much-lauded process of political reform. In March 2016, in a major breakthrough for democracy in Myanmar, this government ceded power to a new government led by the party of Aung San Suu Kyi. Since 2011, government education spending has increased enormously, and new policies have been introduced to move toward free and compulsory education for all. These key education developments are discussed in detail in Section 5.

Meanwhile, although levels of armed conflict have increased overall during this period, a new peace process made a breakthrough in 2015 when it reached a consensus among all major political stakeholders on the need to form a federal system of government. This has been the primary aim of the majority of EAOs and other ethnic leaders for decades, and is a long-stated priority of Aung San Suu Kyi.[33] Until 2015, however, the Tatmadaw had ardently resisted even using the term "federalism," fearing that it was tantamount to allowing ethnic states to secede.

In 2011 and 2012, the conflict environment changed dramatically. Ceasefires with the KIO, the Shan State Progress Party (SSPP), and other groups broke down, shortly before seven EAOs, including the KNU, the RCSS, and the KNPP, signed unprecedented new ceasefire agreements.[34] These events caused levels of armed violence to decrease significantly in southern Shan State and southeast Myanmar, but

---

[28] According to the Myanmar Ministry of Education (n.d. – early 1990s), "The greatest gains made in basic education were in the border areas. The children of these 'remote areas' were, for various reasons, more disadvantaged than their peers. Since academic year (AY) 1989-90, however, concerted efforts have been made to bring development to these areas. Primary education was an action area, and in AY 1989-90, twenty-eight primary schools and one middle school were opened; in AY 1990-91, thirty-seven primary schools were opened; and in AY 1991-92, forty-nine primary schools and two middle schools were opened."

[29] Khin Maung Kyi, et al. (2000), p. 145.

[30] Mutebi (2005), p. 2.

[31] Lorch (2007).

[32] Sandee Pyne, "Migrating Knowledge: Schooling, Statelessness and Safety at the Thailand-Burma Border"
(PhD dissertation, University of Maryland, 2007). http://drum.lib.umd.edu/bitstream/handle/1903/7370/umi-umd-4781.pdf;jsessionid=CECD5E44A685BE9AEA3415ED2F624E00?sequence=1.

[33] See Committee Representing the People's Parliament (1999), pp. 88-89. Additionally, in its 2015 manifesto, the NLD stated that it "has always stood firmly" for a federal union, that this was necessary to achieve peace, and that it would thus be a central aim of their government. See National League for Democracy, *Manifesto* (2015), pp. 2, 5, 6.

[34] See Annex 2 for a full list of ceasefires signed in this period, which includes these seven deals and six representing the reaffirmation or renegotiation of previous ceasefires annulled in 2010. A ceasefire was also signed in 2012 with a non-ethnic armed organization, the All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF).

to rapidly increase in Kachin State and northern Shan State.[35]

Despite an overall escalation of armed violence, peace negotiations got a significant boost in late 2013 when multilateral negotiations began for the first time between the government and a bloc of pro-democracy, pro-federal EAOs that included both ceasefire EAOs and non-ceasefire EAOs. The aim of these talks was to negotiate a nationwide ceasefire agreement (NCA) that would consolidate the provisions of existing bilateral agreements – few of which had been adhered to – into a more binding deal, and pave the way for political dialogue.

Following nine rounds of tense negotiations, the parties adopted an NCA text in March 2015 that even its critics agreed, "encapsulates virtually every issue important to minority communities in war zones" (though it lacked binding commitments on these points).[36] Most crucially, the text committed all signatories to establish "a union based on the principles of democracy and federalism, in accordance with the outcomes of the political dialogue and in the spirit of Panglong, that fully guarantees political equality, the right to self-determination, and democratic practices based on the universal principles of liberty, equality, and justice."

However, talks quickly deteriorated in July 2015, as the government stated that six ethnic organizations would not be allowed to sign,[37] five of which were part of a KIO-led alliance called the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC). Then, in September 2015, the Tatmadaw launched heavy air and ground offensives on positions of the RCSS, and told the United Wa State Party (UWSP), as well as the NMSP, that they could not join the political dialogue unless they signed the ceasefire, contradicting its previously flexible position. By the end of September, levels of trust in the NCA were desperately low, as most EAOs looked ahead to the coming election and assessed their chances of securing a better deal with the new government.

As a result, at an elaborate ceremony on October 15, 2015, only eight EAOs were willing to stand alongside the president, the commander-in-chief, and other government officials to sign the NCA. These included the KNU, the RCSS, and six smaller EAOs, including four that are closely tied to the KNU. The NLD did not sign the NCA, seemingly due to the controversy surrounding its lack of inclusivity, and uncertainty over the party's election prospects. On January 12-16, 2016, the first round of political dialogue, called the Union Peace Conference, was held in Nay Pyi Taw, attended by the eight EAOs, Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD, the Tatmadaw, and officials from the government and Parliament, among others. However, other EAOs were not permitted to attend and the process was marred in criticism for its lack of inclusion.

The political climate in 2016 promises great opportunities to build peace and to reform the education sector. Aung San Suu Kyi, campaigning in ethnic areas, has called for a federal system of government, using the term no less than 31 times in one speech in Shan State.[38] In her New Year address as the government's first "state counsellor," she pledged constitutional change to "give birth to a genuine, federal democratic union."[39] This mirrored statements in President Htin Kyaw's short inaugural address, in which he declared "national reconciliation, internal peace, [and] pursuing a constitution toward a federal union" to be three of his government's main priorities.[40]

---

[35] In addition to the KIO and the SSPP, armed conflicts are ongoing in Kachin and Shan States with the Palaung State Liberation Front (PSLF), the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), and the Arakan Army (AA).

[36] Maung Zarni and Saw Kapi, "Divisive ceasefire won't bring peace," *BurmaNet News,* September 8, 2015. Available at: http://www.burmanet.org/news/2015/09/08/democratic-voice-of-burma-opinion-divisive-ceasefire-wont-bring-peace-maung-zarni-and-saw-kapi/.

[37] These included three armed groups allied with the KIO that had only become credible opponents since negotiations began – the AA, the PSLF, and the MNDAA – as well as three smaller groups that have no or very minor armed forces.

[38] Kyaw Phone Kyaw, "Daw Suu Woos Ethnic Voters in Pa-O," *Myanmar Times*, September 7, 2015. Available at: http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/16344-daw-suu-woos-ethnic-voters-in-pao-zone.html.

[39] "Amendment Essential: State Counsellor offers New Year Message," *Global New Light of Myanmar,* April 17, 2016. Available at: http://globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/amendment-essential/.

[40] "Transcript: President U Htin Kyaw's inaugural address," *Myanmar Times*, March 30, 2016. Available at: http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/19730-transcript-president-u-htin-kyaw-s-inaugural-address.html.

At the time of writing, plans are being finalized for a "Twenty-First Century Panglong Conference," modeled on the historic 1947 agreement between Aung San Suu Kyi's father, the independence hero General Aung San, and Kachin, Shan, and Chin leaders, which led to the founding of the modern state of Myanmar. While there are many hurdles yet to overcome, the country has an unprecedented opportunity to lay the foundations for lasting peace. In the words of lead EAO negotiator and constitutional specialist Hkun Okker, "Chances of success in the peace process are more likely under the new government, because they won the popular vote.… In spite of the legacy it received from the previous government…, we hope that now is the time to rebuild the nation."[41] This will depend on a broad effort from government to ensure that the reform process addresses grievances driving conflict, and is inclusive of non-Bamar leaders and societies.

---

[41] "We hope that now is the time to rebuild the nation," *Frontier Myanmar*, July 15, 2016. Available at: http://frontiermyanmar.net/en/we-hope-that-now-is-the-time-to-rebuild-the-nation.

SECTION THREE: Ethnic basic education providers: who they are and how they work

This section provides a basis for understanding what ethnic based education providers (EBEPs) are, how EBEPs work, how they are structured, and how this relates to their unique political contexts. It also includes a description of how MoE services overlap with those of EBEPs.

The term: ethnic basic education provider

This report uses the term "ethnic basic education provider" (EBEP) to refer to any organization that defines itself in relation to ethnicity and that provides basic education services – kindergarten, primary school, middle school, and high school. This term includes the education departments of ethnic armed organizations, as well as independent civil society, religious, or community-based providers. While the report places a particular emphasis on providers in conflict-affected areas, EBEPs also play important roles in other areas of Myanmar, including both urban and rural settlements.

The accuracy of the term is admittedly complicated in the case of religious education providers, who, at the local level, often focus on serving particular ethnic nationalities, but don't always explicitly define themselves by their ethnicity. Nonetheless, the findings and lessons expressed in this report would typically apply to them too, and in many cases would also apply to other local, nongovernmental education providers.

The political geography

Understanding how EBEPs are organized and how they work depends firstly on understanding the political geography in the areas where they operate, particularly the territorial arrangements that have resulted from decades of armed conflict. In most conflict-affected townships, the government and the Tatmadaw maintain control of towns and major roads, while EAOs are most active in peripheral rural areas. Large areas tend to be under mixed authority, as clear territorial boundaries are not established or defended by either side.

During conflict periods, the majority of EAOs are focused on defense, either of territories they have held for many years, or of new territories where they have filled power vacuums. They typically rely on guerilla tactics, using ambushes and landmines to thwart the Tatmadaw from establishing a stable presence. EAO military units typically remain ready to flee their own fixed positions, at least temporarily, if the Tatmadaw decides to strike in their location. At the same time, EAOs tend to maintain deep relations with local communities through their civilian administration wings and social service departments, even in areas where they don't have firm military control. Accordingly, even where the Tatmadaw has undertaken successful counterinsurgency campaigns to clear an area of EAOs, it has often failed to consolidate permanent control, except in cases where it has been able to coerce factions of EAOs to form state-backed paramilitary forces, such as border guard forces or people's militia forces.

From the late 1980s until around 2007, EAOs that signed ceasefires were typically provided with autonomous or semi-autonomous territories, which the Tatmadaw would only enter after receiving permission from EAO liaison offices. Some of these territories are still intact, such as those held by the New Mon State Party, the United Wa State Party, and the Karen Peace Council (KPC), among others. Ceasefires signed since 2011, however, have not afforded EAOs these kinds of territories, meaning that state and EAO authorities continue to overlap significantly, and local arrangements are often required to establish who governs where. In many cases, communities are subject to multiple authorities, and burdened with multiple tax regimes and rule sets. Accordingly, the catchment areas of different

education providers also overlap significantly.

Basic education through "community schools"

In most areas affected by armed conflict, the majority of schools can be best understood as "community schools," which are managed and maintained by a management committee or parent-teacher association made up of local residents. There are also ethnic community schools in some fully stable government-controlled villages and towns where government schools are also available, but where some families prefer their child to attend an ethnic school.

Community schools often rely first and foremost on funds provided by the communities themselves, through donations and student fees paid by parents. Fundraising is usually organized by members of the school committee, sometimes with help from religious or other influential figures who encourage the community to donate and organize fetes. Student fees, while typically not mandatory, are expected.

Community schools have often received various forms of external support, including teachers, training, materials, and funds, from various actors at various times. It is not uncommon for these schools to receive support from several sources at the same time. Community schools may have, for example, multiple teachers from multiple education providers. Figure 1 displays the forms of support that a community school in a conflict-affected area might commonly receive.

Figure 1: Typical forms of support received by community schools

Community-based schooling
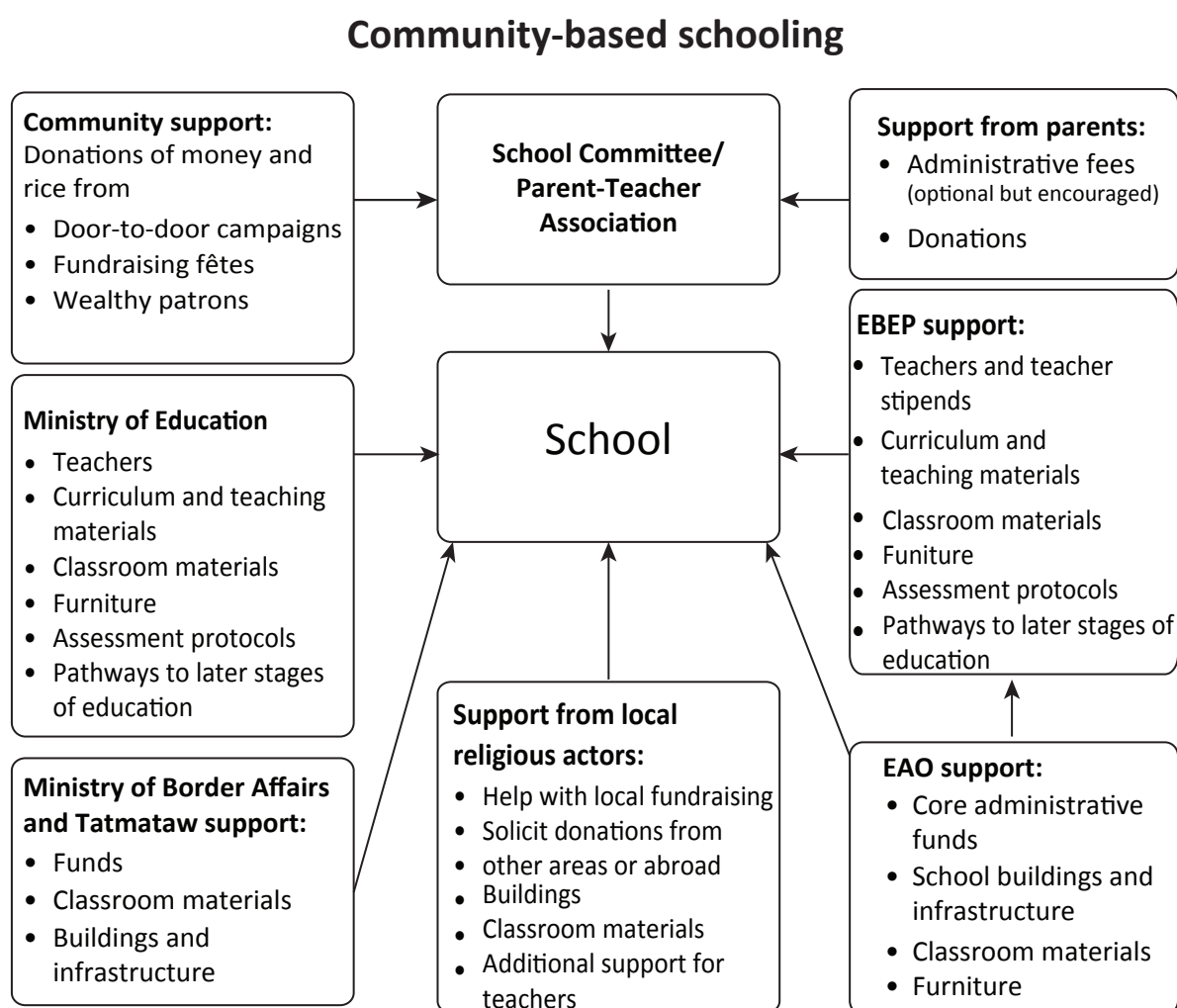
In many remote areas, particularly during times of conflict, community schools may go for long periods of time with little or no external assistance. During these periods, they tend to operate by hiring literate members of the community to be teachers in return for daily rice and basic necessities donated by other villagers. For a school venue, they may construct a basic bamboo and wooden structure, or they may have access to a school building abandoned by the government or another actor. In some areas, IDP communities in hiding have maintained basic education in this way for years at a time.

Support provided by EBEPs

EBEPs, including EAO education departments, civil society actors, and religious providers, vary greatly in the forms of support they provide to community schools. Common forms of EBEP support include teacher stipends, pre-service or in-service teacher training, administrative oversight, quality control and assessment, organizing teachers for communities that lack them, textbooks and other teaching materials (their own, the MoE's, or from other textbook developers), stationery and other classroom materials, and furniture. EBEPs also play an important role in connecting community schools (which are often just primary schools) with pathways to further education. Many do this by establishing relations with the MoE or government-affiliated monastic schools; others have their own middle and high schools in EAO territories or across international borders in migrant communities or refugee camps.

EAO local authorities may also help community schools by securing materials, funds, or labor for new school buildings. In some cases, EAO authorities will establish a school for the first time and tell the village leader to establish a school committee for it. Some schools in EAO areas are organized by the local EAO and fully administered by the EAO's education department, and become known more as public schools than community schools. Even when communities take the initiative to build their own schools, they often need permission from local EAO authorities to acquire materials. The KNU, for example, has specific rules in its handbooks for forestry officials establishing the number of trees a village can cut down for various types of public buildings.

Support provided by MoE

While government support is often meager overall, the MoE is typically one of the most active government bodies in conflict-affected areas, both in periods of fighting and during ceasefires. The MoE is typically most active in communities close to Tatmadaw battalions or in areas where state-backed paramilitary actors are dominant, where EBEPs may or may not also be supporting local schools. As in other remote areas, MoE-supported community schools are often attached to a "host school" in a town or more secure village, where students can take government exams. If teachers are dispatched, then the school is known as a "branch school"; if not, it is known as an "affiliate school," though the latter are rare.

In both types, the MoE usually also provides textbooks and other basic materials. The schools may also get funds or materials for upgrading or constructing school buildings (usually with community labor) from the MoE, or sometimes from the Ministry of Border Affairs and Security (MoBAS) or the Tatmadaw. The Tatmadaw has also been known to provide uniforms, furniture, and other material support, usually after taking control of a new area.

In many remote areas, MoE support has ebbed and flowed over the years, and MoE teachers have been prone to high rates of absenteeism and dropping out, seemingly because the majority are from towns and are often Bamar, and so find it difficult to adjust to rural ethnic environments. An increase in hardship salaries and a daily-wage teacher program were initiated under Thein Sein's term of office as an attempt to manage these problems, as discussed in Section 5.

Whose schools are those?

Given the fluctuating support coming from various sources, it is sometimes hard to decide whether schools should be considered MoE schools, EBEP schools, or simply community schools. Some EAO education departments, and other large and relatively centralized EBEPs, have administered many of their schools for decades and have bound them to specific administrative and monitoring protocols. In these cases, EBEPs typically consider them their schools. However, some EBEPs recognize schools that are also receiving support from the MoE as "mixed schools", such as the NMSP's Mon National Education Department.

The MoE does not appear to formally recognize when schools are receiving support from other actors, which means that MoE officials are unlikely to consult or cooperate with existing providers when they enter a new area. The MoE appears to simply recognize "community schools" as either branch or affiliate schools, or to register them as full MoE schools, even in cases where MoE support has been patchy or where EBEPs are also active.

Even when community schools receive regular funding and administrative support from EBEPs or the MoE, the community often retains multiple responsibilities, which may range from subsidizing teacher salaries to maintaining and cleaning toilet facilities. Furthermore, school committees play a central role in coordinating with external providers to determine what forms of support the community would like to receive from each actor, which subjects are prioritized, what tests are taken, and so on. In this way, they play a role similar to school management committees in other countries where decentralization has been introduced to increase local control of education. For this reason, it is often useful to view these schools as community schools first and foremost, even when they receive sustained support from other sources.

SECTION FOUR: Introducing the case studies

The findings and recommendations presented in this report are based primarily on three case studies, looking at the work of Karen, Mon, and Shan EBEPs and the related political contexts. This section provides an introduction to each of these case studies, including an overview of how these EBEPs work and what education services they provide, as well as conflict and other political dynamics that surround them. The remainder of the report then frequently draws on other data that were collected in these studies. Readers can then refer back to this section, as necessary, for information on the particular contexts.

The first case study looks at the work of the Karen National Union's (KNU) Karen Education and Cultural Department (KED), which works with a collective called the Karen State Education Assistance Group in territories influenced by numerous EAOs. The second case study examines the role of the New Mon State Party's Mon National Education Committee and Mon National Education Department, both in the EAO's ceasefire areas and in fully government-controlled areas. The final case study looks at Shan communities in five village tracts in Hsipaw Township, which are subject to multiple overlapping armed actors and receive education services primarily from a local network of monastic schools, with support from the Rural Development Foundation of Shan State.

The Karen case study

The governance environment in Karen areas of southeast Myanmar is deeply fractured, following more than 65 years of armed conflict between the KNU and the Myanmar state, which began shortly after the country's independence in 1948. At the heart of the conflict are each side's competing nationalist visions and governance systems. These dynamics are reflected in the education sector, as each side has its own education system associated with its own national vision. These systems overlap considerably throughout the conflict-affected region.

In 2011 and 2012, the Myanmar government signed ceasefires with the KNU and two of its allies, the Khohtoobaw Karen Organization/Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (KKO/DKBA) and the Karen Peace Council.[42] In 2015, the KNU, the KKO/DKBA, and the KPC all signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement.

Map 1 provides an overview of the KNU's seven administrative districts, which correspond to the government's Kayin State, much of Mon State, parts of eastern Bago Region, and much of Tanintharyi Region. The KNU does not control all of this territory, however, and the actual territorial dynamics are extremely fluid, due to the overlapping claims of multiple EAOs, the state, and various state-backed paramilitary actors.

The KNU is strongest in the mountainous areas across all of these districts, and has particularly firm control in Mu Traw District, southern Taw Oo District, eastern Kler Lwe Htoo District, eastern Hpa-an District, eastern and southern Dooplaya District, and eastern Mergui-Tavoy District. In surrounding territories, the KNU has varied levels of control, often overlapping with the government, other EAOs, and state-backed paramilitary actors, but it typically maintains active political and social networks even where its armed presence is weak. The KKO/DKBA is at its most influential in Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District, but also has territories in other districts. The KKO/DKBA has given the KNU formal

---

[42] In 1995, a large faction from the KNU split and formed the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA). Between 1995 and 2010, the DKBA was in regular conflict with the KNU, fighting as a de facto proxy of the Tatmadaw. The Karen Peace Council (also known as the KNU/KNLA Peace Council) splintered from the KNU in 2007 and signed a ceasefire with the government, igniting severe disputes with the KNU. In 2010, the military government demanded that all ceasefire groups in the country place themselves under full state control as "border guard forces" (BGFs). The DKBA splintered, as a major faction agreed to form BGFs (officially giving up the name DKBA) and a significant but smaller faction refused, realigned with the KNU, and briefly returned to conflict with the Tatmadaw, as did the KPC. The rebel faction of the DKBA renamed itself as the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army and formed a political wing called the Klohtoobaw Karen Organization (KKO). The KKO/DKBA was the first to sign a ceasefire with the Tatmadaw in 2011, followed by the KNU and then the KPC in early 2012.

permission to establish its civilian administration in all of these areas, though the KNU's actual access varies from area to area, depending on local relations between the groups. The KPC holds territories in T'Nay Hsah Township, Hpa-an District, where it has allowed the KNU's influence to grow since 2012.

Throughout decades of conflict, education provided by the government has been extremely limited across rural parts of these areas, due both to lack of access to KNU territories and to the government's chronic underfunding and neglect of both the education sector and rural development generally. During this time, local Karen populations mostly experienced the state in the form of its infantry battalions, whose counterinsurgency operations would target entire communities it considered to be supporting EAOs.[43] At the same time, violent attacks by the Tatmadaw were sometimes directed at local social services in KNU areas, including schools.[44]

Thus, education in these areas has long been provided primarily by communities themselves, with support from the Karen State Education Assistance Group (KSEAG), a collective made up of the KNU's KED, the Karen Teacher Working Group (KTWG), and Partners for Relief and Development.[45] Community-established school committees are typically responsible for building, maintaining, managing, and raising funds for schools, with varying levels of support from local EAO authorities, while KSEAG provides administrative guidelines and rules, teacher stipends, teaching materials, and other resources. Until recent increases in government spending, KSEAG would typically subsidize the salaries of local MoE teachers as well as their own, as their salaries were very low.

The KSEAG network model helps to coordinate approaches among the three providers and pool resources for common aims. KED is the formal education authority in all KNU areas, is recognized by local KNU authorities, and is the primary body actually administering schools at the local level. KTWG provides a number of teacher training services, including a two-year, pre-service training program at the Karen Teacher Training College in Mu Traw District and mobile teacher training for in-service teachers. It also provides core support to schools through KED at the local level. Partners Relief and Development, an international NGO, fully funds some schools that are still largely administered by the KED, and provides other support to the broader KSEAG network. KSEAG also gives the system a less politicized label, making it a preferred channel of support for most international aid actors. In the past, there have been some areas where KED was not welcomed by other EAOs or government authorities, and working through community actors under the KSEAG name was therefore more practical.

A KED affiliate, the Karen Refugee Committee – Education Entity (KRCEE), administers 64 schools in five predominantly Karen refugee camps in Thailand, where it mostly uses the KED curriculum. There are dozens of other Karen migrant schools in Thailand, stretching along much of the border with southeast Myanmar. There are also dozens of higher education institutions (normally called "post-10" schools) in refugee camps and nearby areas. In addition to serving refugee and migrant populations, these schools have served tens of thousands of students from KED/KSEAG primary schools in Myanmar, who have traveled across the border to continue their education due to limited school availability at home.

As of December 2015, KSEAG provided varied forms of support for 1,504 schools, reaching 167,574 students, and providing stipends to 4,529 teachers.[46] These teachers are further subsidized through community donations, and sometimes small fees charged to parents by school committees. KSEAG

---

[43] For academic background on such population-centric counterinsurgency efforts, known as the "Four Cuts" strategy, see Smith (1999), pp. 258-262; Maung Aung Myoe (2009), pp. 25-26; Selth (2001), pp. 91-92, 99, 163-164; South (2008), p. 34, 86-87. For more up-to-date analysis of how this was experienced in these Karen areas prior to the KNU ceasefire in 2012, see Jolliffe (2015a), Annex 1; Amnesty International (2008), pp. 26-31; Human Rights Watch (2005a); Human Rights Watch (2005b); TBBC (2008), and KHRG (2009, 2010).

[44] For documentation of 5 attacks on schools and related personnel that should be protected by international law, see KHRG (December 6, 2011) *Attacks on Health and Education: Trends and incidents from eastern Burma, 2010-2011.* Available at: http://khrg.org/2011/12/khrg1105/attacks-health-and-education-trends-and-incidents-eastern-burma-2010-2011.

[45] KSEAG was established in 2005. The KED was founded in the 1950s and organized into its current structure in the 1970s. KTWG was established in 1996, following the fall of the KNU's former headquarters and subsequent massive territorial losses.

[46] KSEAG (2015), p. 5. Full stipends of THB 7,500 per month were provided to 3,235 teachers. Another 1,294 teachers received partial stipends to supplement funds from other organizations or the government and bring their total wages to 7,500.

also provides curriculum materials, stationery, and books. KSEAG's support to schools is generally administered by the KED, through its township-level education administrators and secretaries.

There has always been some level of overlap between these services and those provided by the MoE, due to the fluid nature of territorial control. From the late 1990s until the 2012 ceasefire, the Tatmadaw and its local proxy militia had the upper hand militarily across vast territories where the KNU had been reduced to a guerrilla presence.[47] But the government's administration apparatus was still largely confined to areas under its firm control, such as towns, roads, and areas around large military facilities. In the mountainous periphery, thousands of villages became subject to roaming Tatmadaw patrols and smaller outposts, but generally maintained deeper connections to the KNU,[48] through its well-established administrative system.[49]

As the Tatmadaw expanded its presence in the late 1990s, the MoE sent teachers to areas near its new military positions or those of its proxy militias, often where schools already received some support from the KED and its networks. This led to an increasing number of mixed schools, although until ceasefires were signed in 2012, these schools only made up around 27 percent of the total that received KSEAG support.[50]

Since the ceasefires, however, the number of MoE teachers in KSEAG schools has almost tripled, from 1,574 to 4,718 between school years 2012-13 and 2015-16, leading to the creation of 379 new mixed schools in just a few years. In 2015-16, 49.3 percent of KSEAG-supported schools have MoE teachers as well, up from 26.6 percent in 2012-13. Among this 49.3 percent, KSEAG reports that nearly all also have a strong MoE "administrative presence." Relatedly, among these schools, 285 use only the KED curriculum, 553 use mixed KED and MoE curricula, and 666 use only the MoE curriculum.[51]

This rapid expansion of the MoE has caused a range of bureaucratic and administrative issues, as two largely incompatible education systems have collided at the school level without any proper coordination to help them integrate. It has also caused tensions to arise on numerous fronts, particularly among school staff, but also between teachers and parents, and between school committees and government authorities. Furthermore, the practice of mother tongue-based education, and the teaching of Sgaw Karen literacy, have been disrupted — or discontinued altogether — in some schools where government teachers have been able to take over. Finally, these government advances have threatened the stability of ceasefires by deepening suspicions among the KNU that the government is using "development" programs such as education to expand its territorial control over contested areas in advance of political negotiations. These issues are discussed in detail in Sections 9 and 10.

Karen case study methodology

This case study is based primarily on interviews and focus group discussions conducted by Kim Jolliffe in September, October, and November 2015 during two field trips in Kayin State, Myanmar, and through multiple interviews in Mae Sot, Thailand. The study is also supplemented by existing research and interaction with key actors in these areas over the past seven years.

Field trips were undertaken in the East Daw Na region of the KNU-defined Kawkareik Township,

---

[47] The Tatmadaw has worked with a number of local armed actors of various sizes against the KNU. The most prominent are splinter groups of the KNU, including the DKBA, which prior to its split in 2010 was under the informal command of the Tatmadaw. Since its split, a dominant faction has become BGFs, and a smaller but significant faction has allied with the KNU.

[48] The main exceptions to this, where the KNU had a less dominant role, were areas where Tatmadaw local proxies were already well-established as the main authority in local communities.

[49] The KNU's administration system revolves around a "graded territorial" structure, with upwardly elected administrative committees at village, village tract, township, district, and central levels. This structure means that KNU line departments for taxation, social service provision, justice, and other affairs can operate in these areas through their established networks, even where the organization's military presence is challenged.

[50] In AY 2013-14, 364 (26.8 percent) of 1,356 schools which had teachers supported by KED/KSEAG, also had MoE teachers.

[51] World Education (2016), p. 14.

Dooplaya District (see Map 3), and in Lu Thaw Township, Mutraw District (see Map 1). The East Daw Na region is under mixed control of the KNU and the KKO/DKBA; in most parts of the region, the KKO/DKBA is the main armed authority, but it has allowed the KNU to establish its civilian administration in the area. Lu Thaw Township is perhaps the KNU's most secure stronghold, and despite the presence of numerous, heavily fortified Tatmadaw bases and roads, it is governed almost exclusively by the KNU.

During these field trips, thirteen focus group discussions of varying combinations of school committee members, parents, KSEAG teachers, and MoE teachers were conducted in seven communities, each of which had its own school. Further interviews were conducted with an additional KSEAG middle school head teacher; two additional KSEAG primary school teachers; village heads of four villages that have schools; four KED staff, including district- and township-level administrators and secretaries; five KNU officials; one KKO/DKBA official; two high school graduates; and representatives of the Karen Community-Based Networking Group, the Karen Youth Organization, and the Backpack Health Worker Team.

The study was also informed by one formal interview with the head of the KED and three recorded discussions with the KED secretary, as well as ongoing email correspondences and informal discussions with the Karen Teacher Working Group. Data from prerecorded interviews with two KNU officials has also been used. Additional secondary data, meeting minutes, and PowerPoint presentations were provided by KED, KTWG, UNICEF, World Education, and two specialist education consultants.

The Mon case study

This case study looks at the education provided by the New Mon State Party's education wing in Mon areas of southeast Myanmar, which cover most of the government-defined Mon State and parts of Kayin State and Tanintharyi Region.

These areas have been affected by armed conflict between the state and Mon nationalists since shortly after independence. The principal Mon EAO, the New Mon State Party, was formed in 1956 by rebels who had been fighting, since the late 1940s, under various banners and in close cooperation with the KNU. In 1972, The NMSP established its education department, which was strengthened in the early 1990s as politically active Mon students fled government crackdowns in central Myanmar to join the NMSP, and along with other graduates and students from Mawlamyine University, established the Mon National Education Committee (MNEC).

The NMSP signed a ceasefire with the government in 1995, which provided them with authority over a number of autonomous territories in Mon and Kayin State, including their headquarters area, which covers almost all of Mon State's short border with Thailand. It also maintains a non-military influence in Mon communities across the region, and continues to provide education, justice, and other forms of governance. Administratively, it organizes the Mon region into three districts containing a total of nine townships in addition to its headquarters area, which is administered like a district and is further divided into two township-level areas.[52] The NMSP does not publicly map these areas, due to perceived sensitivities in relation to the KNU and government claims, so maps were not available for this report.

Today, the NMSP education system is organized under two main entities: the MNEC, which is an executive body that leads the development of policy and relations with the international community and other domestic education actors; and the Mon National Education Department (MNED), which

---

[52] The NMSP district and township boundary designations bear little resemblance to those of government, but the townships each follow almost the same boundaries. NMSP Dawei (Tavoy) District, which is the NMSP's headquarters area, consists of Ye (North), and Ye (South) – which together correspond to the government's Ye Township – as well as Yebyu Township. NMSP Mawlamyine District includes Mudon, Thanbyuzat, and part of Kyainseikkyi Townships, whose administrative borders match the government's, as well as a unique township called Bee Graing (around the Jyine river). NMSP Thaton (Sahtom) District is divided into Kawkareik and Kyaikmaraw Townships, with similar borders to those of government, but including parts of Hpa-an Township. The headquarters area, which is effectively at the level of a district but is not considered as such, is then divided into the Bee Ree and the Three Pagodas Pass areas, which are effectively at the level of townships.

oversees the actual administration of education services and is one of eight line departments that fall under the NMSP's administration department. The MNEC chairperson is selected from among members of the NMSP executive committee, as is the secretary, who is then automatically the head of the MNED. The NMSP's ceasefire has remained intact since 1995, despite the reignition of tensions in 2009 and 2010 when the group refused to convert into border guard forces under the Tatmadaw. The group has been closely engaged in multilateral negotiations with the government since 2013, but it did not sign the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement in 2015 unlike most other EAOs in the southeast.[53]

The MNEC/MNED system was strengthened significantly in the 1990s, in part through cooperation with the pro-democracy exile movement's National Health and Education Committee, which helped the MNEC to secure support from international donors and agencies to develop its curriculum and pay teacher stipends. Following the NMSP ceasefire in 1995, although the government did not meet initial requests from the MNEC for financing,[54] the body was able to slowly improve relations with government officials at the local level. This has enabled the MNED to establish schools in government-controlled areas more openly, and to put high school students through government matriculation exams, among other improvements.[55]

As of 2016, the MNED administers 137 Mon national schools across NMSP and government territories. These schools are essentially community schools that rely on local donations and are managed by school committees made up of community volunteers.[56] These schools provide mother tongue-based and multilingual education, using a Mon-language primary curriculum that is mostly translated from the MoE's curriculum, before transitioning to the MoE's Myanmar-language curriculum in middle and secondary school, while maintaining Mon as a language of instruction. Mon history and language lessons are continued as part of the school day throughout the years of basic education. Students who complete grade 11 in Mon national schools can then take government matriculation exams, making them eligible to enter Myanmar universities if they pass.

The MNED also provides 154 teachers for 95 MoE-administered schools, known as "mixed schools," to teach Mon language and sometimes Mon history, too, as part of the formal curriculum. The extent to which these schools are recognized as "mixed" by the MoE is unclear, and they have been established through local-level relationships between MNED administrators and MoE township education officers (TEOs) and head teachers. Mixed schools also have school committees made up of local volunteers, and tend to rely on support from the local community, which subsidizes the incomes of MNED teachers. Students in mixed schools are subject to classroom-based assessments for MNED subjects, but do not need to pass these subjects as part of official MoE assessments.

Mon case study methodology

This case study is based primarily on interviews and focus group sessions conducted by Kim Jolliffe in Mon State and Kayin State, Myanmar, during one field trip in November-December 2015. The areas

---

[53] Indeed, the NMSP's vice chairperson, Nai Hong Sar, has been one of the lead negotiators for the EAO bloc, and the group is a leading member organization of the pro-federal alliance, the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC). The NMSP refused to sign the NCA, in solidarity with other UNFC members that were blocked by the government and Tatmadaw.

[54] According to one of the founders of the MNEC, a presentation on the Mon national education system was given to General Khin Nyunt and other negotiators (interview with MNEC founder, November 2015).

[55] As found in The Asia Foundation's 2014 study, Jolliffe (2014), other improvements for the MNEC/MNED that evolved in the 15 or so years following the 1995 ceasefire included: greater overall safety, security, and freedom of movement for Mon teachers in all areas, including being able to tell authorities at checkpoints whom they work for and where they are going (though some harassment and extortion persists); formal establishment of Mon national schools in some government-controlled areas; establishment of stable, stationary, and safe Mon national schools in NMSP ceasefire territories; incremental formalization of the role of Mon teachers in mixed schools; admission of students at Mon national high schools into government matriculation exams; greater space for Mon monastic schools to expand extracurricular Mon literacy education; freedom for MNEC/MNED members to travel within Myanmar and establish relationships with other civil society groups, INGOs, and donors; access to more internationally funded training opportunities; and permission for donors to visit the NMSP region and some government-controlled areas to oversee and validate Mon education projects.

[56] Some schools have parent-teacher associations and others have school committees, but it is not clear if these differ in their organization or if any schools have both.

visited were under government control, but one was near to an NMSP district headquarters of a district where the NMSP retains limited military control, but informal authority in local Mon communities.

During this trip, a presentation and group discussion were facilitated by Kim Jolliffe and attended by MNED district and township administrators and central staff, including at least four members of the MNEC. Separate focus groups were held with the school committees and teachers in two Mon national primary schools, one Mon national middle school, and one mixed post-primary school.

An additional focus group of six teachers from five mixed primary schools was conducted, as were interviews with two of the original founders of the MNEC and then, separately, with the current MNEC secretary (who also serves as head of the MNED). Less formal, recorded discussions were held with two MNED district administrators, two MNED township administrators, and one staff member from the central office. Additional interviews were conducted with two members of the NMSP central committee and three district-level NMSP officials.

The Shan case study

This case study looks at ethnic Shan communities in five village tracts of Hsipaw Township, Shan State, that are subject to multiple overlapping armed actors. The MoE has very limited access and has not invested much in the region. Communities receive education primarily from a local network of monastic schools with support from a Shan civil society organization called the Rural Development Foundation of Shan State (RDFSS). RDFSS has no formal relationship with any EAOs.

Here, and across Shan State generally, the circumstances are markedly different from the Karen and Mon areas in a number of ways. Shan State is a very large and diverse area,[57] and is home to dozens of EAOs and paramilitary actors representing a range of Shan and non-Shan ethnicities, none of which have established education systems as advanced as those of the KED and the MNED. Meanwhile, an unknown number of civil society and religious actors, as well as culture and literacy programs, support education across the state.

Due to this diversity, the case study does not attempt to characterize education experiences across Shan State or among the Shan ethnic group, nor does it provide a representative account of how education is delivered in areas controlled by the particular EAOs discussed. Rather, it provides a snapshot of a very specific area; but it is an important one, because it shows how ethnic religious and civil society actors can mobilize resources to fill gaps in education provision left by both the state and EAOs, in an area where MoE access is limited.

The five village tracts lie to the west and south of Namlan,[58] a town on the road between Hsipaw and Taunggyi. In this area, the RDFSS works with a network of 25 monastic primary schools that staff 28 teachers and serve 800 students, administered under the leadership of the *Seyadaw* (abbot) of Kaung Hat Monastery. This network of schools will henceforth be referred to as the Kaung Hat network. Some of these schools are registered with the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA), providing them with certain benefits that are then shared with the unregistered schools.

The five village tracts studied are predominantly inhabited by Buddhists of Shan ethnicity, who overwhelmingly backed the Shan League for Democracy in the 2015 election. The 2014 census data for Hsipaw Township shows that 29 percent of people between the ages of five and 25 years have never attended school,[59] and just under 50 percent of men and women over the age of 25 years in Hsipaw

---

[57] Shan State is the largest of all the country's states and regions. The Shan people are the second-largest ethnic nationality after the Bamar, and have a rich history of kingdom-building, monastic education, culture, and literacy. In their own language they are called Tai, and linguistically and culturally have a strong connection with the other Tai peoples in today's Thailand and Laos. Shan State is also home to many other ethnic groups, including multiple Kachin groups, Bamar, Pa-O, Palaung, Wa, Ta'ang, Karen, Lahu, Lisu, Akha, and others.

[58] Namlan is officially classified as a village, but stretches over about four kilometers and represents a significant urban settlement.

[59] This percentage represents 10,843 males and 11,366 females out of a total population of 75,767. Only 21.8 percent of five-year-olds in Kyaukme District, of which Hsipaw is a township, are attending school, but 63.9 percent of six-year-olds are attending school. Ministry of

Township have received no education at all (43,345 out of 91,081).[60]

The case study area has been under the shifting control of various armed groups and the government for the past 40 years (as far back as people interviewed could remember). Currently, the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) and the Shan State Progress Party (SSPP) both lay claim to parts of this area, as do the government and the Tatmadaw, which hold firm control of Namlan. There are also numerous small militias in the area, some backed by the Tatmadaw and others linked to the EAOs.

The main way in which local people encounter the RCSS and SSPP is through taxation and recruitment, which is in some cases reportedly forcible.[61] There is one village tract administrator (ကျေးရွာ အုပ်ချုပ် ရေးမှူး), who is from the area and has been indirectly elected by 10-household heads, in accordance with Myanmar law.[62] Village tract administrators have to report to the government (and Tatmadaw), the RCSS, and the SSPP, according to their demands. However, none of these authorities provide adequate or consistent social services. As explained by a local monk who is also a school principal, "The government controls the area sometimes, but quite a lot of the time they don't care. There are some other ethnic armed [actors] who only [exercise] control, but they don't do education. They're not concerned with that."[63] Another monk, who is a school principal in a different village, said similarly that "they are not interested in education,"[64] and that it has therefore been left to monks and civil society to fill the gap.

Overall, the government appears to have been more active in supporting education than the RCSS or the SSPP. The MoE administers four primary schools in the region, and has at times dispatched MoE teachers to local community schools when the security situation has allowed it. It has been hindered, however, by a high degree of skepticism about these services among local people, exacerbated, as elsewhere, by the MoE's inability to source teachers locally. As discussed in more detail in Section 7, 12 teachers from across nine schools, six monks, and three village school committee members interviewed said that their communities did not want government schools in their villages. This was largely because they equated government schools with Bamar teachers sent from central Myanmar who would not speak the local language. In any case, there were no signs that the MoE had made significant efforts to send teachers to the other villages, as interviewees all stated they had never seen the MoE. Some also felt that the EAOs might not be happy if MoE teachers came to their villages, as they would suspect them of being spies.

In 2014, the RCSS made a one-time contribution of about 30 percent of the necessary funds for construction or renovation of 10 schools in the Kaung Hat network, but it has remained largely distant from the schools since.[65] The SSPP also seems disengaged from education provision, although in the past it reportedly ordered the community of one village to build a school. The now defunct Shan State National Army, which used to be active in the area, once ordered a community to build a school, but provided no additional support.

Therefore, the responsibility for providing education has largely fallen on the monastic sector. Like monastic schools in other parts of Myanmar, the 25 schools in the Kaung Hat network use the government curriculum, are able to put students through government exams, and get some funding

---

Immigration (2015b), Table D-6a.

[60] Ministry of Immigration (2015b), Table D-6a. In Hsipaw Township, 9,178 boys and 11,447 girls between the ages of five and 29 were reported to be currently attending school or college out of a total of 35,172 and 40,595, respectively. Ministry of Immigration (2015b), Table 4. The question on "currently attending school" was flawed, however, because the census took place during the school holidays.

[61] Local people interviewed referred to this as a problem, and one specific instance was provided. For instances of alleged RCSS recruitment in 2015 in a different part of Shan State, see: http://www.irrawaddy.com/burma/shan-villagers-flee-alleged-forced-recruitment-by-ethnic-army.html [accessed 28 December 2015].

[62] Village tract administrators are not formal staff of the General Administrative Department (GAD), but typically receive a stipend from the GAD. See Kyi Par Chit Saw and Matthew Arnold (2014).

[63] Interview with a monk, Hsipaw Township, December 2015.

[64] Interview with a monk, Hsipaw Township, December 2015.

[65] It is not clear if these funds came from RCSS local authorities, from central authorities, or from an external donor.

from the MoE. At the same time, they have the benefit of recruiting local teachers, who can use the Shan language for instruction and who receive training through the monastic network and from RDFSS. Even though they are referred to as "monastic schools," most are not in monasteries, and many were previously existing community schools receiving little or no external assistance. In addition to the Kaung Hat network, a number of other villages in the area have schools supported through other monasteries.

Registration of most of its schools with MORA allows the Kaung Hat network to utilize a small amount of MoE support. The MoE supplies textbooks and six exercise books for every child.[66] Since 2013-14, the government has contributed MMK 36,000 monthly towards the cost of one teacher for the first 20 students in each monastic school, and then further salaries for every additional 40 students.[67] As a result of this quota system, and because some of the 25 schools are only affiliated with schools registered with MORA and therefore do not receive direct funding, the Kaung Hat network currently receives stipends for just 13 out of the 28 teachers. This means the stipends have to be shared among more than one teacher, and sometimes more than one school.[68] As of 2015-16, the MoE planned to include monastic schools within its school grants program funded by Australia and the World Bank.[69] At the beginning of the academic year (AY), MORA provided MMK 2.5 million for general expenditure for all schools in the Kaung Hat network, which may be related to this program.

Government teacher stipends are then augmented significantly by community contributions to bring each teacher's salary up to MMK 80,000 per month, on top of which they may receive additional support from the community, such as housing or provisions of rice and oil. Everyone in the community has to contribute, regardless of whether they have a child attending school, and contributions are weighted according to income. The distribution of salaries is then supervised by monks.

The teachers are locally recruited through the local contacts of the monasteries. All of the teachers are Shan, and most have reached Grade 11 in the government basic education system, with some having passed the matriculation exam. Most of the teachers are in their late teens or early twenties, and have gone into teaching immediately after finishing high school. They all teach more than one grade, and in some of the smaller primary schools they teach all grades. They have normally received some summer training through the monastic system, and also through the Eastern Burma Community Schools (EBCS) mobile teacher training (MTT) program, in which RDFSS participates.

Monastic schools teach the government curriculum. In practice, this means teaching children to memorize Myanmar language textbooks, as there is no curriculum framework or flexibility to teach using locally relevant material. All children receiving education from the Kaung Hat network have Shan as their first language, and very few speak any Myanmar. The advantage of locally recruited Shan teachers is that they can translate the Burmese curriculum into Shan for the children. All 12 teachers interviewed described doing this (this translation method of teaching also occurs to a lesser extent in the few government schools where there are Shan teachers). There is currently no Shan literacy curriculum in the schools, due to the lack of textbooks and the additional burden it would place on teachers who teach multiple grades, but Shan literacy programs are provided in the monasteries in summer and occasionally after school hours.

Each school has a school committee, which in some villages had fewer than three members. These committees report to specific monks, who are each responsible for the administration of clusters of a few schools. These monks then each report to the Kaung Hat *Seyadaw*, who is the lead administrator of the network. In turn, the *Seyadaw* reports to MORA at the beginning and end of the school year

---

[66] The monastic schools report the number of students to the government in March, and then collect the textbooks from the Hsipaw township education office in June. MORA does not provide pens or pencils, which was noted with irony by the Kaung Hat *Seyadaw*.
[67] Ohnmar Tin and Stenning (2015), p. 22.
[68] The stipend is provided on an irregular basis, and has to be collected from the chairman monk of the Township Monastic School Supervision Team in Hsipaw, or sometimes in Lashio.
[69] Ohnmar Tin and Stenning (2015), p. 22.

on student enrollment, other basic student figures, and budgets. He also communicates with the Monastic Education Development Group (MEDG),[70] a nascent coordinating body based in Mandalay that works closely with MORA, although the amount of communication is minimal.

RDFSS, which helped to establish the Kaung Hat school network, provides monitoring and mentoring support, teacher training, and for some of the schools, funding. The RDFSS also provides a boarding house in Namlan for children from the villages who are able to continue school beyond grade five.

Shan case study methodology

This case study is primarily based on field research conducted by Emily Speers Mears in December 2015 in the five village tracts. Interviews and focus group discussions were held with 12 teachers from nine schools, of which two were government schools and seven were monastic; three school principals, who are all monks; three school committee members, who were all influential in their communities; and two RDFSS staff members. Additionally, interviews with Shan education organizations, including the RCSS's Shan State Development Foundation (SSDF), were conducted in Taunggyi, Hsipaw, and Lashio in July 2015, and in Yangon, Mandalay, and Chiang Mai in February 2016.

---

[70] For more about the MEDG, see its website, available at: www.medg.org.

Part II   Reforming Myanmar's Education Sector

SECTION FIVE: The Ministry of Education and its reform agenda
• Increased education spending – government and donors
• The Comprehensive Education Sector Review and
  National Education Strategic Plan
• Main areas of increased spending and education reform
• Legal reform

SECTION SIX: Language, literature, and culture in education
• Mother tongue-based and multilingual education
• Ethnic language, culture, and history
• Finding the right balance of Myanmar and the mother tongue
• Shaky steps towards MTB-MLE
• Framing the challenge ahead

SECTION SEVEN: Strength in diversity: the benefits of having multiple education providers
• International precedents: non-state actors and complementary
  systems
• The importance of EBEPs to Myanmar's education sector

SECTION FIVE: The Ministry of Education and its reform agenda

The Ministry of Education is the largest provider of education in Myanmar, serving 8,853,480 students in March 2016,[71] a figure which has increased by hundreds of thousands each year in recent years.[72] Table 1 presents a list of key statistics related to MoE coverage.

Table 1 Number of schools, teachers, and students in basic education[73]

School category	Number of basic education schools	Number of basic education teachers	Number of basic education students
Upper secondary	3,513	34,393	873,832
Lower secondary	6,224	129,945	2,795,607
Post primary	7,131	-	-
Primary	28, 519	158,176	5,184,041
Total	45,387	322,514	8,853,480

For decades, education in Myanmar has been chronically underfunded and poorly managed. In 2009-10, household spending accounted for an estimated 63 percent of all education spending, with government and external donors making up 31 percent and 6 percent respectively.[74] Many children enroll in school late, and in 2013-14, the last year for which MoE data is publically available, only 73.8 percent of those who had entered Grade 5, then successfully completed primary school (excluding repeaters).[75] Many fewer progress to middle school and beyond: only 85.7 percent of children who completed primary school in 2011-12 went on to middle school.[76] The lack of quality data complicates efforts to map students against school coverage,[77] but it appears that children in poor, rural households are least likely to complete primary school. Meanwhile, student enrollment and retention figures have been found to be far lower in rural areas than in urban areas, and far lower among poor households than among wealthy ones.[78]

According to a 2014 study, MoE has also suffered from the effects of decades of authoritarian rule, as "the highly-centralized and security-focused nature of past education policymaking also means that MoE officials have little experience or expertise in policy research, policymaking, and strategic planning."[79] In addition, there has been little room for civil society or public involvement in such processes.

Since 2011, the government has attempted to reform its education sector, recognizing the need for significantly increased investment in education, and pledging to work with international actors to

---

[71] Myanmar Ministry of Education (2016), p. 9.
[72] This figure indicates an increase of 1,077,332 students since AY 2007-08 (see Myanmar Ministry of Education (2015), p. 12), and 256,132 since AY 2013-14. World Bank (2015), p. 51, notes a 300,000 student increase between AY 2012-13 and AY 2013-14.
[73] The content of this table was copied verbatim from Myanmar Ministry of Education (2016), p. 9.
[74] World Bank (2015), p. 48.
[75] Myanmar Ministry of Education (2015), p. 19. This primary completion rate is calculated by taking the total number of students in the last grade of primary school, minus the number of repeaters in that grade, divided by the total number of children of official graduation age.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Muta (2015), pp. 3-7.
[78] Hayden and Martin (2013), p. 49.
[79] Pyoe Pin (2014).

improve education quality and access.[80]

Increased education spending – government and donors

Under the Thein Sein government, resources available to the MoE increased dramatically, due to an increased government budget and a higher proportional allocation for education. Between fiscal years 2011-12 and 2015-16, annual government expenditure for education rose from MMK 310 billion to MMK 1.4 trillion.[81] Education spending as a percentage of GDP also rose, from 0.6 percent in 2009-10 to 2.1 percent in 2013-14.[82]

Figure 2: Government expenditure on education

● *Total capital spending* ● *Total recurrent spending*
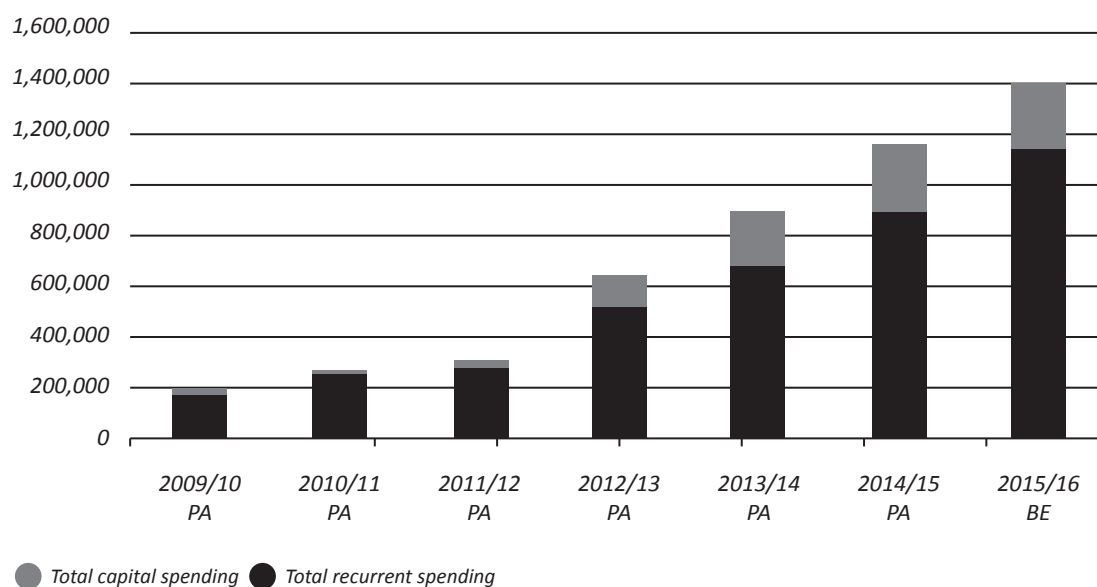
Source: MOE,2015

Source: National Education Strategic Plan, draft 3, December 2015, p. 167. *Note: "PA" means "preliminary actual" spending; "BE" means "budget estimate."*

There has also been an increase in overseas development aid (ODA) commitments for education. Myanmar received consistently low levels of aid throughout the period of military rule, partly as a result of sanctions imposed during the 1990s and 2000s.[83] Since the lifting of Western sanctions beginning in 2012, however, ODA has increased significantly, with total commitments from March 2011 to May 2016 reaching USD 6.96 billion.[84] Of this total, USD 437.75 million was committed to education, most of it probably for MoE services.[85] While there may still be some discrepancies in these

---

[80] President Thein Sein's inaugural speech to Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, March 30, 2011. Published in the *New Light of Myanmar*, March 31, 2011.
[81] See Figure 2, taken from an early draft of the National Education Strategic Plan. The budget estimate (BE) for 2015/16 was mirrored in the budget approved by Parliament in April 2015. See Htoo Thant "U Thein Sein government's last budget approved," *Myanmar Times*, April 2, 2015. Available at: http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/13864-u-thein-sein-govt-s-last-budget-approved.html.
[82] World Bank (2015), p. 49.
[83] Between 1990 and 2007, ODA per capita was less than USD 5.00 annually; the yearly average for 2000-2009 was USD 236 million, among the lowest in Asia. After a brief spike in humanitarian aid following Cyclone Nargis in 2008, ODA per capita in 2010 had fallen back to USD 5.60. See Saha (2011), p. 6.
[84] This figure, which seemingly includes debt relief, was retrieved from Mohinga, an online information service provided by the Foreign Economic Relations Department and the Development Partners Working Committee to track incoming aid flows. See http://mohinga.info/en/. Aid data is also available from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) at: https://public.tableau.com/views/OECDDACAidataglancebyrecipient_new/Recipients?:embed=y&:display_count=yes&:showTabs=y&:toolbar=no?&:showVizHome=no. There are some apparent incongruities between the OECD and Mohinga data, but these are hard to clarify due to the use of different categories and time periods. Overall, Mohinga provides a more detailed picture.
[85] This figure is derived from Mohinga by aggregating commitments to four sectors, "education – level unspecified," "basic education," "secondary education," and "post-secondary education." A figure of USD 296.86 million is listed under the Ministry of Education, but some of the commitments listed are labeled for faith-based and ethnic education, so the actual share going to the MoE is unclear.

calculations, the World Bank recently offered a more general estimate of around USD 100 million per year in ODA to education, up from 40 million in 2009-10.[86] This would make ODA about 10 percent of the government's expenditure on education in 2015. Among donors, the largest commitments have come from Australia, Japan, the World Bank, the European Union, the United States, and the UK.

Since 2011, the primary aid instrument for the government's education system has been the UNICEF-managed Quality Basic Education Program (QBEP) of the Multi-Donor Education Fund (MDEF), a pooled fund for education of USD 81 million over four years (2011-2015). Since 2013, the QBEP has had an integral peacebuilding component.[87] In 2014, the World Bank and Australia signed a four-year, USD 20 million grant and a USD 80 million loan to improve and expand the government's existing school grants and stipends program (discussed below). At the time of writing, this is the only on-budget education program funding currently provided to the Myanmar government.

Other major ODA to government education includes support from the Japan International Cooperation Agency for reform of the basic education primary curriculum, support from the Asia Development Bank for secondary curriculum reform, and support from UNESCO (with Australian funding) and the British Council for pre-service teacher training. In addition, the Swiss Development Corporation (SDC) has provided some funding for government and non-government school construction in the southeast.

The Comprehensive Education Sector Review and National Education Strategic Plan

Donors have also attempted to coordinate their development aid with the government, and have promoted government sectoral planning processes to identify priorities and fundable plans, with the goal of bringing aid on-budget.[88] In the case of education, coordination was first undertaken around the Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR), an MoE-led, internationally supported initiative intended to set the strategic direction for future education planning.[89] The review was initiated in August 2012 and completed in August 2014 by a combination of international and national technical experts and MoE staff.[90] This process was deemed insufficiently consultative by many education stakeholders, including ethnic education organizations.

The evidence base generated by the CESR was used to develop a Quick Wins program and a National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) for the period 2016-21. While a short NESP Policy and Program Framework document was approved and circulated by the former minister of education at the end of her government's term in March 2016, the broader plan was handed over to the current government for inauguration. Following some uncertainty over the new government's intentions, at the time of writing, the NESP is understood to be undergoing a final revision to reflect some restructuring of the Ministry of Education and NLD priorities.

Main areas of increased spending and education reform

The new resources available to the MoE appear to have been directed towards four main areas: wages, recruitment of contract teachers (known as daily-wage teachers), school construction, and making education "free and compulsory." In addition, the Quick Wins program was implemented in 2015-16 as part of the NESP process. The main areas of reform and new spending are detailed below.

---

[86] World Bank (2015), p. 47.

[87] This component, the Peacebuilding, Education, and Advocacy Program, is a three-year, Dutch-funded program valued at USD 5.5 million.

[88] The main document that sets out both government and development partner commitments is the *Nay Pyi Taw Accord for Effective Development Cooperation*, which was presented to development partners by the minister of national planning and economic development and approved at the First Myanmar Development Cooperation Forum, Nay Pyi Taw, January 20, 2013.

[89] The last education sector review was undertaken in 1990-92, and before that in 1951. Myanmar Ministry of Education (1992).

[90] The CESR covered all major components of the education sector: early childhood education, basic education, teacher education, higher education, technical and vocational education and training, and non-formal education. Parallel to this process, in October 2013, the president established a Myanmar Education Promotion and Implementation Committee (EPIC) with an advisory board and 18 working groups made up of senior Myanmar education experts. These bodies were charged with identifying education sector priorities to inform a new National Education Law and linked subsector laws.

Staff and teacher salaries

The majority of MoE expenditure goes towards recurrent spending, predominantly staff salaries,[91] which the government began increasing on a yearly basis in 2011.[92] In 2012, the government boosted salaries and added a monthly bonus of MMK 30,000 for all civil servants,[93] including primary and secondary teachers on permanent contracts. In addition, 16,000 teachers serving across 87 remote and conflict-affected townships and sub-townships were awarded "hardship allowances" that saw their salaries double.[94] This has meant that entry-level primary school teachers in rural areas currently receive a salary of 150,000 MMK per month, which they have to travel to the township education office to collect. The MoE has also started to provide salary subsidies for teachers in the monastic education system; 36,000 MMK monthly towards one teacher's salary for the first 20 students in each monastic school, and an additional salary for each additional 40 students.[95]

Daily-wage teachers

In recent years, the government has introduced a policy that there should be five teachers per primary school (i.e., one per grade).[96] This has required recruitment of teachers at a much faster rate than graduates from the country's 22 education colleges. Therefore, in 2013 the government began a program of mass recruitment of contract teachers, known as "daily-wage teachers," most of whom have university degrees in other fields or have only graduated from high school, and who are paid MMK 2,200 per day. Unlike their salaried counterparts, daily-wage teachers are not civil servants, though they can become such after a certain period of service and completion of a one-year correspondence course. The MoE hired 29,000 daily-wage teachers in 2013-14 and 43,000 in 2014-15.[97]

Thirty thousand of these daily-wage teachers received one-month, township-based training before they were deployed to schools, but it is unclear whether the rest received any training at all, and none have received follow-up training support.[98] These teachers have been disproportionately deployed to remote schools, which lack experienced and well-qualified teachers due to the undesirability of the teaching posts.[99] Some ceasefire areas appear to have received a particularly high number of daily-wage teachers.

School construction and improvements

The MoE has also instituted a school construction and renovation program, building 7,616 new schools and 11,776 new classrooms, and renovating 8,945 schools and 13,555 classrooms, between 2010-11 and 2014-15.[100] In some areas, these renovations have enabled the MoE to upgrade "branch" and "affiliate" schools to the status of fully administered MoE schools. School construction and improvements have also been offered to community schools administered by EBEPs as a way for the MoE to begin providing teachers and bringing the schools under government administration.

Making primary education free and compulsory

The 2008 Constitution calls for primary education to be "free and compulsory."[101] Before the Constitution

---

[91] Recurrent spending rose from 274 billion MMK to 1.13 trillion MMK between 2011-12 and 2015-16.
[92] World Bank (2015), p. 50.
[93] Ibid. For a primary school teacher in some areas, this "bonus" amounted to a 64 percent salary increase.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ohnmar Tin and Stenning (2015), p. 22.
[96] Muta (2015), pp. 20-23.
[97] World Bank (2015), p. 51.
[98] Myanmar Ministry of Education (2016), p. 23.
[99] Muta (2015), pp. 2, 15, 24.
[100] These figures were taken from a draft version of the NESP circulated in December 2015.
[101] Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar (2008), Chapter 1, Article 17c.

came into effect, in AY 2009-10, families still bore 63 percent of the cost of education,[102] contributing to school renovations and paying for school supplies, textbooks, and uniforms on top of registration fees and other costs.[103] In 2011, President Thein Sein reiterated the commitment to free and compulsory education,[104] and it was enshrined in the National Education Law in 2014.[105]

Accordingly, in 2012, the MoE initiated a free and compulsory education program giving stipends to low-income families to keep their children in school and providing uniforms and other school supplies. Primary students receive MMK 5,000 per month over the 10 months of the school year, middle school students receive MMK 6,000 per month, and high school students receive MMK 8,000 per month. The stipend program covered around 16,000 students nationwide in 2014-15, and it is intended to reach at least 100,000 students by academic year 2017-18.[106] The government also introduced a small scholarship program for high-achieving students, which reached 414 students in academic year 2013-14.[107] In addition, since academic year 2012-2013, the MoE has provided all primary students with free textbooks and exercise books, and a grant of MMK 1,000 towards stationery.

In 2012, the MoE started providing all of its schools with a biannual, block grant for recurrent, non-wage expenditures, under a very limited set of uniform criteria.[108] In fiscal year 2012-13, the government allocated USD 250-500 per school, depending on size.[109] In 2014, Australia and the World Bank began supporting this program alongside the student stipends program noted above. As a result, the grants increased to an average of USD 800 per primary school in 2014-15,[110] and to the same amount for middle and high schools beginning in 2015-16.

Quick Wins program 2015-16

In September 2015, to complement these initiatives and introduce some strategic activities in anticipation of the National Education Strategic Plan (2016-21), the government introduced a program of twelve reforms, or "Quick Wins," intended to expand access, improve quality, address inequities, and strengthen the national education system.[111]

However, these initiatives were subsequently scaled back to the following six: (1) preparation for establishing kindergartens in all primary schools, including classroom construction and teacher training; (2) a national study on impediments to effective teaching, supported by the World Bank; (3) establishment of a new student assessment system for grades five and nine; (4) a national school mapping study in all preschools and basic education schools, supported by UNESCO; (5) development and piloting of a standards-based quality-assessment framework for basic education schools, with a specific plan for reaching 5,000 schools; and (6) introduction of a program called Technical and Vocational Education for Training (TVET), to provide short courses for 5,000 out-of-school, disadvantaged youth and young adults.

Legal reform

On September 30, 2014, the president signed the National Education Law, which had been drafted by the Parliamentary Education Promotion Committee. The law was intended to establish the framework

---

[102] World Bank (2015), p. 48.
[103] Ibid.
[104] President Thein Sein's inaugural speech to Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, March 30, 2011, republished in the *New Light of Myanmar*, March 31, 2011.
[105] National Education Law (2014), Chapter 5, Article 17.
[106] World Bank (2014), p. 12.
[107] World Bank (2015), p. 48.
[108] World Bank (2014), p. 6.
[109] Ibid., p. 16.
[110] Ibid., p. 17.
[111] Myanmar Comprehensive Education Sector Review website, *Myanmar Government announces major new initiatives in its Education Reform Program.* Available at: http://www.cesrmm.org/index.php/en/news/latestnews.

for education reform, and included provisions for limited decentralization, the introduction of mother tongue-based learning, expansion of the basic education system to include kindergarten through grade 12, and a promise to institute free and compulsory education at the primary level and beyond.

In the lead-up to the law's passage and its aftermath, there were regular student and teachers' union protests, which came to a head in March 2015 when the police violently dispersed gatherings of student protesters and arrested many of the protest leaders. Subsequent negotiations between activists and the government led to some minor revisions and amendments to the law in June 2015. Some of these revisions were particularly relevant to education in ethnic areas, including provisions decentralizing the education system (Article 4, D, p), allowing states and regions to develop their own curricula based on the standard curriculum (Section 39, A, g), and permitting the use of ethnic languages along with the Myanmar language as a classroom language in basic education (Article 43, b). The law also encouraged greater public participation in policy development and strategic planning (Article 58, b), and established the goal of spending 20 percent of the national budget on education (Article 62, A).

A Basic Education Sub-Sector bill was approved by the upper house in December 2015. It allows schools to teach in local (ethnic) languages, with the stated aim of "valuing and protecting language, literature, culture, art, traditions, and historical heritages of the country's recognized national groups, while developing citizens who understand and accept differences respecting equality, and adopting a basic knowledge for peace." [112]

In addition, constitutional amendments enacted in June 2015 allowed for greater decentralization of education, specifically according states and regions the right "to administer basic education schools…in accordance with Union law," to directly receive ODA, and to raise taxes in a wide range of new areas.[113] However, these provisions do not give the state and region governments any new authority over the Ministry of Education or its schools in their areas, and it is not clear what form schools administered directly by them would take.

---

[112] It is not known whether the bill was actually passed into law or not, or if it will be taken on by the new government. See Htoo Thant, "Education bill bans 'bribes' for teachers," *Myanmar Times*, December 3, 2015. Available at:
http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/nay-pyi-taw/17959-education-bill-bans-bribes-for-teachers.html.
[113] Clause (g), establishing "the region or state right to administration of basic education schools by the Region or State in accordance with union law," was added to Schedule Two under the existing section related to the "social sector." Clause (w), establishing "the region or state right to overseas funding and assistance," was added to Schedule Two under the existing section on "finance and planning." Twenty clauses were added to Schedule Five, allowing states and regions to tax a wide range of sectors "in accordance with Union law."

SECTION SIX: Language, literature, and culture in education

This section explores the importance of ethnic languages and cultures in education, and looks at some of the government's nascent efforts to bring them into the formal basic education sector. This is a key area of policy reform due to the very practical benefits of mother tongue-based education for improving learning outcomes, as well as the political and cultural importance of recognition, preservation, and promotion of ethnic languages and cultures through education. These two aims are key to improving the learning environment for children, maximizing their opportunities for further education and employment, and ensuring that the education sector reflects the country's cultural diversity and addresses the deeply held grievances among many ethnic communities.

The 2008 Constitution commits the Union to assisting in the development of "language, literature, fine arts, and culture of the National race,"[114] and establishes the right of every citizen "to develop their language, literature, culture they cherish [sic]."[115] Many EBEPs have a lot to offer the country's education sector in this regard, with long-term experience teaching literacy in local languages, and using local languages for instruction even when working with Myanmar textbooks and curricula. It should be noted that this section is primarily concerned with MoE-only schools and does not discuss mixed MoE-EBEP schools, which already provide MTB-MLE in various forms, and will be discussed in Sections 7 and 10.

Mother tongue-based and multilingual education

Non-native speakers of the Myanmar language are at a huge disadvantage in the current education system, as Myanmar and English are the main languages of instruction and examination. Furthermore, the curriculum is distinctly Bamar-centric,[116] and often utilizes Bamar and Buddhist concepts and experiences that may not be encountered in other parts of the country. The curriculum and assessment criteria in most subjects revolve around reams of sentences in Myanmar or English that students are required to memorize and then to recite or write down in examinations at the end of each textbook chapter and each year (see Section 11).

Since 2015, tentative steps have been taken to introduce ethnic-language teaching in schools. In some cases, students in the MoE system have received ethnic-language education in "mixed schools," including community-based schools that receive teachers from various education systems, and more established government schools where teachers have been assigned specifically to teach local ethnic subjects. As discussed in later subsections, however, these efforts have had limited success so far.

There are an estimated 111 living languages in Myanmar, spoken by more than 23 million people (See map 6).[117] As many as 30 percent of all rural school children will not have heard the Myanmar language before they enter school.[118] Meanwhile, an estimated 70 percent of teachers working in ethnic areas are unable to speak the local language or dialect.[119] Children's Myanmar-language competence is particularly low in communities that have lived primarily under the governance of EAOs and thus separate from mainstream Myanmar society.

For these students, the current system creates a barrier to learning, and risks damaging their livelihood opportunities and feelings of self-worth. At best, they will have a teacher who speaks their mother tongue and can translate the Myanmar-language curriculum into their own language for them, to

---

[114] 2008 Constitution, Chapter 1, Article 22.
[115] 2008 Constitution, Chapter 8, Article 354.
[116] Salem-Gervais and Metro. (2012), pp. 30, 34-53.
[117] M. P. Lewis, *Ethnologue: Languages of the world*, 16th ed. (Dallas, Texas: SIL, 2009). http://www.ethnologue.com. See Callahan (2003b) for a discussion of the reliability of this data.
[118] UNICEF 2010, cited in Pyoe Pin (2014), p. 8.
[119] Ibid.

improve their comprehension of the textbook content that they are required to rote-learn. In the worst – though apparently not uncommon – cases, teachers using Myanmar materials speak in Myanmar to children who simply do not understand. And as an MNED teacher interviewed by UNICEF observed, "Mon-speaking children often find it difficult when they join the government school and are regarded as slow learners, which makes them feel inferior and leads them to drop out."[120]

Mother tongue-based and multilingual education (MTB-MLE) in the early years of schooling is internationally recognized as the most cost-effective way for children who speak a minority language to get the chance to perform well in school.[121] MTB-MLE not only uses students' mother tongue as the language of instruction, but it also draws on culturally relevant resources to improve cognition in multilingual environments.[122]

As described by UNESCO, MTB-MLE approaches generally start children's education in their mother tongue. The national or dominant language (e.g., Myanmar) is introduced as a second language in early childhood, but it does not become "the medium of instruction until the pupils are sufficiently familiar with it."[123] This approach enables children to develop a firm foundation in their first language, and as a result, to learn other languages, as well as other subjects, more easily.[124]

While competence in the Myanmar language is a crucial, practical and cultural asset, and is much sought after by many ethnic parents, evidence suggests that it is best learned as a second language, rather than by forcing children to spend years in a state of mild confusion in class. Research suggests that it takes between five and seven years for learners to know a second language well enough to be able to understand it as a medium of instruction.[125] As a result, children who are not taught in their first language, especially in early years, have been found to be more likely to drop out of school.[126]

The benefits of MTB-MLE have been observed in the Myanmar context. An early-grade reading assessment by Save the Children in refugee camps along the Myanmar border in Thailand found consistently better education outcomes for Sgaw Karen children, who were learning in their mother tongue, than for Karenni children, who were learning in Myanmar language.[127] A recent study found that "children who speak the same language at home as in school have better comprehension levels."[128] This echoed the findings of an earlier study by the Myanmar-based Nyein (Shalom) Foundation, which found that children brought up in remote areas have little opportunity to gain exposure to the Myanmar language, and therefore do not understand what teachers say, and do not understand very simple concepts in multiple subjects.[129] MTB-MLE is also consistent with internationally recognized linguistic rights of ethnic minorities,[130] and can have extensive sociocultural benefits.[131]

Ethnic language, culture, and history

There has also been a growing recognition globally of the need for formal education to utilize curricula that are appropriate and relevant for children's cultural environment, and that include positive representations of minority histories, cultures, languages, and identities.[132] Education systems that simply reproduce the values, attitudes, and social relations of a dominant group in a society are likely

---

[120] Jessica Aumann, and U Thet Naing, "Working with Non-State Groups to Help All Children Get an Education," *UNICEF Myanmar blog,* April 8, 2015. Available at: http://unicefmyanmar.blogspot.com/2015/04/working-with-non-state-groups-to-help.html.
[121] World Bank (2005), pp. 2-4.
[122] This approach is well summed up by Burton (2013), p. 10.
[123] UNESCO (2003), p. 32.
[124] Nag, et al. (2014), pp. 1, 10-12, 18, 21, 33, 38; UNESCO (2003), p. 15. See also MacKenzie (n.d.), pp. 1, 3-6, 8-10, 17-18.
[125] MacKenzie (n.d.), p. 9, citing Cummins (1979).
[126] Mehrotra (1998). See also UNICEF and UNESCO (2015), pp. 70-76.
[127] Save the Children (2014), pp. 1-3.
[128] Dantdalun (2014), p. 10.
[129] San, and Htin Zaw (2014).
[130] UNESCO (2003), p. 15.
[131] Bender, et al. (2005), pp. 2-3.
[132] UNESCO (2003), p. 15.

to contribute to conflict,[133] as has been seen repeatedly in Myanmar's modern history. Therefore, even at later stages in a child's education, if they have successfully transitioned to understanding the Myanmar language, it is important that they be able to keep studying their own language and history, and other relevant subjects.

As described by an MNED primary school teacher, "We ethnic Mon people have our own language, and we want the government to register and recognize us so we can carry it on."

This relates most obviously to the promotion of ethnic *literacy* – ensuring that people are able to write in their own languages – and to the investment in ethnic *literature* – preserving and building on the bodies of literature that exist in non-Myanmar languages. As described by UNESCO, "Language is not only a tool for communication and knowledge, but also a fundamental attribute of cultural identity and empowerment, both for the individual and the group. Respect for the languages of persons belonging to different linguistic communities therefore is essential to peaceful cohabitation."[134]

Similar feelings were shared by a Karen civil society leader based in Hpa'an, who lamented that, "evening or occasional language classes only provide for language preservation; we need to reinvigorate the study of our own literature and build on it."[135] In a 2015 *Myanmar Times* article, several Shan interviewees explained the importance, not only of studying Shan language and literature, but of learning the traditional songs or poems. Indeed, for rural Shan children, local songs sung by farmers "while they work, plucking tea leaves," might create more interest in learning than traditional texts from central Myanmar or stories about famous landmarks in Yangon.[136]

Further reform is needed in the teaching of history and civics, as current approaches are felt to be deeply biased towards a particular nationalist vision of Myanmar. On the other hand, the curricula that some ethnic groups have developed may be more relevant locally, but also promote a politicized (and also biased) understanding of culture and history.[137] As childhood education has such a deep impact on one's worldview, it is crucial that these subjects both promote diversity and avoid fomenting ethnic antagonisms and social divisions.

Finding the right balance of Myanmar and the mother tongue

Notwithstanding the great importance of mother tongue education, it is also crucial that ethnic students become fully competent in the Myanmar language, to ensure that they have equal access to employment and education opportunities across the Union and can migrate to other parts of the country if they wish. Myanmar has become firmly established as the lingua franca in most parts of the country and is essential to individuals having social mobility, regardless of the seemingly unfair way in which this has occurred. From the perspective of the MoE, Myanmar being a common national language is central to building unity and "for common and equal citizenship."[138]

As noted above, MTB-MLE supports this aim, as the mother tongue-medium gives children a solid basis from which to begin learning other languages once their basic learning skills and confidence have been built. As such, a multilingual education framework is often considered most appropriate for multilingual contexts, even where one language is considered of particular importance. Such a framework typically aims to maintain the mother tongue as the language of instruction for "as long as possible,"[139] but gets students to a point of "using two languages for the acquisition of knowledge

---

[133] Buckland (2004), pp. 9-11.
[134] UNESCO (2003), p. 16.
[135] Interview with civil society leader, June 2013.
[136] See Nyein Ei Ei Htwe and Myat Noe Oo, "Ethnic language struggles near China border," *Myanmar Times*, November 19, 2015. Available at: http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/lifestyle/17707-ethnic-language-struggles-near-china-border.html.
[137] Salem-Gervais and Metro (2012), pp. 59-68.
[138] See Principle One of the Nay Pyi Taw Principles in Annex 1.
[139] UNESCO (2003), p. 31.

throughout the school course up to university level."[140] The number of grades through which it is possible to maintain mother-tongue instruction depends on the level of resources committed, the availability of teachers, and the number of different mother tongues there are among students in the class, among other factors.

There are significant practical benefits for people who have a strong command of the Myanmar language, and the impacts of not speaking it well go far beyond schooling. A 2008 study in three townships in Kayah state found that a lack of Myanmar-language ability makes it difficult for people to find work, and can even put their lives at risk when they cannot communicate with Tatmadaw soldiers.[141] Additionally, an individual's ability to navigate a government building or interact with government officials often depends on a grasp of the Myanmar language that many rural ethnic people don't have. As demonstrated in both the Mon and Karen case studies, even where ethnic parents value their children learning their own language, they often see the benefits of having MoE teachers in their local schools, partly because of the need to learn Myanmar well.

This basic problem is common throughout the world in multilingual countries. On one hand, students are greatly disadvantaged if introduced to education without being able to understand what is being taught. But on the other hand, minorities can become further marginalized and suffer greatly if they are unable to speak the established national language. The problem, in practice, is that many people end up stuck in the middle without professional command, or strong writing ability in either language.

Without a doubt, these issues need to be addressed, first and foremost, through more inclusive government policies that ensure minorities have equal access and opportunities. For example, the government should work to ensure communications are available in multiple languages where possible, and that government staff have appropriate languages to serve the communities where they are posted. At a recent conference on national language policy in Mandalay, numerous ethnic speakers emphasized the need for states and regions to have local official languages, partly as a measure to address these issues, as well as for symbolic reasons.[142]

Nonetheless, the practical reality facing at least the current generation of ethnic people is that they must be able to communicate effectively throughout the country, and ethnic leaders should take this into account when developing language policy. While studies around the world have repeatedly shown the basic importance of MTB-MLE, the exact balance between Myanmar and ethnic languages in education, particularly in the later stages, will remain largely influenced by political factors. It is likely, and quite natural, that this balance will continue to vary between systems and in different parts of the country.

Shaky steps towards MTB-MLE

In recent years, the government has made some limited progress towards introducing MTB-MLE in MoE schools, and the need for MTB-MLE appears to be gaining recognition within the ministry.[143] This recognition is reflected in a nine-point national language policy that was introduced by the MoE at the "International Conference on Language Policy in Multicultural and Multilingual Settings," held at the University of Mandalay in February 2016 as part of an MoE program that began in 2012, supported by UNICEF and the University of Melbourne (henceforth referred to as the Mandalay Conference). This policy drafting process consisted of Union-level and a few state/region-level dialogues between the MoE, technical experts, ethnic culture and literacy bodies, EAO education departments, and other

---

[140] UNESCO (2003), p. 32.

[141] This study is described based on an account of the individual who led this research, documented in Speers Mears, et al. (2014), p. 26. The original study could not be located.

[142] Notes from the "International Conference on Language Policy in Multicultural and Multilingual Settings," University of Mandalay, February 2016.

[143] This recognition was demonstrated at the MoE's Mandalay Conference in discussions with ministry officials, and by the content of numerous studies conducted by ministry staff on language issues in education.

ethnic education actors.

The international conference was inaugurated by the MoE and included presentations by MoE representatives, EBEPs, ethnic literature and cultural committees, academics, university representatives, and civil society actors. Presentations drew on new research on MTB-MLE conducted by these actors, as well as on their own experiences and activities in the field.

The first principle of the National Language Policy is "unity: by supporting all to learn Myanmar language and literacy, for common and equal citizenship." The second is "diversity: by supporting ethnic and indigenous communities to maintain, enjoy, and transmit their languages to their children," and a reference follows to "mother tongues."[144] This demonstrates the MoE's ongoing priority of educating children in the Myanmar language, but also the commitment to education in other languages.

Accordingly, the MoE has made some initial attempts to bring ethnic languages into its schools. These efforts have been hindered, however, by an overall lack of funding and administrative support from the government. Furthermore, ethnic languages are still not compulsory subjects, and are usually taught outside of school hours.

A 2015 amendment to the National Education Law provides that, "if there is a need, an ethnic language can be used alongside Myanmar as a language of instruction at the basic education level."[145] In some areas, at least, this merely recognizes the status quo. In one school visited for this study, for example, government teachers said they had long used the Mon language in class, and that they had always had permission to do so.[146] Nonetheless, the change in the law has likely helped in some schools where teachers who could speak the languages of their ethnic students may have lacked confidence to do so in class.

Beyond the law, however, the deeper challenge is the lack of qualified teachers with ethnic-language skills, as 70 percent of teachers working in ethnic areas are unable to speak the local language or dialect.[147] This is largely a result of low rates in ethnic rural communities of university graduation, which is a requirement for attending MoE teacher training colleges. However, even where these requirements have been waived for daily-wage teachers, many still cannot speak the local language. As discussed in Section 9, daily-wage teachers in Karen ceasefire areas are often unable to speak local languages, leading to a reliance on body language in class. Furthermore, there appear to have been no government attempts to provide training or develop teaching materials specifically to help teachers guide students without native Myanmar through the curriculum using another language as the medium of instruction. Indeed, the law states that ethnic languages should only be used "if necessary," and "alongside Myanmar," rather than asserting that teachers should use whatever language is most conducive to learning.

The 2015 version of the National Education Law also permitted ethnic languages to be taught as subjects. Some MoE schools actually began these subjects outside of school hours in 2013 or 2014, but the law appears to have allowed increased space for in-school-hours teaching and for state/region governments to allocate specific funds for teachers. The law itself states, "teaching of ethnic languages and literature can be implemented by region or state governments, starting at the primary level and gradually expanding (to higher grades)." It also provides that local governments should develop such classes at universities.

As a result, governments of Mon, Kayin, Shan, Kachin, Bago, and other states/regions have begun developing textbooks and teacher training programs for teaching local ethnic languages, leading

---

[144] See Annex 1 for the official English version of the full nine points.
[145] National Education Law (2015), Article 43 (b).
[146] Post-primary mixed school focus group discussion (November 2015).
[147] UNICEF (2010), cited in Pyoe Pin (2014), p. 8.

hundreds of teachers to be mobilized across the country. The coverage of these programs varies greatly, however. In Kayin State, for example, the Kayin State Education Department has documented that 35 percent of its ethnic students received basic literacy education in local languages in the AY 2015-2016.[148] This was all outside of school hours, but there are plans to begin classes during regular school hours in the 2016-17 academic year. In Kachin State, on the other hand, only 1.78 percent of the state's ethnic students received ethnic-language education in AY 2015-2016, all outside of school hours. The director of the Kachin State Education Department has blamed this failure on a lack of funding and commitment from the state government, which he noted has been distracted by "security issues," likely referring to conflict between the Tatmadaw and the KIO.[149]

It appears that Mon State was the only state/region where MoE-only schools had begun teaching ethnic languages during school hours by early 2016, owing to a strong commitment from the local government, whose parliament passed a Mon education law in 2014. It appears since then, however, that the education departments of Kayin State and perhaps of other states/regions have at least *permitted* schools to do so. New state/region-level laws do not seem necessary for in-school-hours ethnic-language classes to begin, but they would likely help institutionalize the practice.

MoE ethnic-language teachers have various levels of training, and include out-of-service teachers recruited to supplement the insufficient number of in-service teachers with literacy in local ethnic languages. In most states, these teachers are paid MMK 30,000 per month for teaching hours that may vary, but in Kayin State this was changed to MMK 500 per hour for out-of-service teachers. Both the Kayin and Kachin state education departments cited lack of quality teachers as a key challenge that they had faced, and the Kayin official spoke of the need for a state-level ethnic education college to train such teachers.[150] At one school in Kayin State, a Mon National Education Department (MNED) teacher received government, ethnic-language teaching subsidies.[151] As discussed in Section 12, this could set a precedent for more formal allocation of government funds for EBEPs.

MoE efforts to provide ethnic-language curricula have been hampered by an initial government requirement that ethnic-language textbooks be translated word for word from existing Myanmar-language texts, meaning they often make little sense. For example, Mon teachers have complained that the grammar in MoE Mon-language textbooks directly mimicked the Myanmar language, placing verb phrases at the ends of sentences rather than before the object as should be the case in Mon.[152] Progress has also been hindered by lack of resources for printing and distribution, which can be extremely expensive in rural areas.[153]

Encouragingly, these deficiencies have begun to be addressed through the UNICEF and University of Melbourne national language policy initiative, noted above. Activities have been most advanced in Mon State, where a relatively inclusive process was undertaken to develop a Mon-language curriculum, which was introduced to MoE schools in Mon State for the first time in February 2016. In January 2016, 400 teachers, including in-service government teachers and others, received training to teach the new curriculum. Trainers came from government, the Mon National Education Department, the Mon Literature and Cultural Committee, and Moulmein (Mawlamyine) Education College.[154] Some teacher training has also taken place through this initiative in Kachin State, for MoE- and EBEP-

---

[148] The majority of these students are designated as "Kayin" (transliterated from the Myanmar word for Karen), and are disaggregated further into those studying Sgaw Karen.

[149] Separate presentations given by representatives of Kayin and Kachin state education departments at the Mandalay Conference (February 2016).

[150] Separate presentations given by representatives of Kayin and Kachin state education departments at the Mandalay Conference (February 2016).

[151] Focus group discussion at MoE-MNED mixed post-primary school (November 2015).

[152] Focus group discussion at MoE-MNED mixed post-primary school (November 2015). Similar concerns were raised by Kachin, Pwo Karen, and Sgaw Karen participants, among others at the Mandalay Conference. See also Lenkova (2015), p. 22.

[153] These difficulties were cited by a representative of the Kachin State Education Department at the Mandalay Conference (February 2016).

[154] See Paing Paing Non, "400 Teachers Receive Mon Language Teacher Training," *Mon News Agency*, January 28, 2016. Available at: https://monnews.org/2016/01/28/6220/.

supported teachers. However, according to community teachers in Kachin State, they were not given the same accreditation, following the course, that was awarded to the MoE teachers, leading them to feel discriminated against by the MoE and UNICEF.[155]

If the NESP is carried out, a specific component of broader curriculum reforms will be implemented to develop "local curriculum, including ethnic languages, to support and uphold the languages, literature, culture, arts, customs, heritage, and traditions of all nationalities."[156] Accordingly, the plan also provides for "capacity development for local curriculum developers in states and regions, supported by curriculum experts from [the MoE's Department of Myanmar Education Research]."[157] The plan also frequently emphasizes the need for culturally relevant curriculum content, particularly to stimulate early childhood learning. According to JICA, the MoE's curriculum development plan is to develop 85 percent of its curriculum nationally and 15 percent at the state/region level.[158] An earlier draft of the NESP stated that local curriculum would be permitted for 120 hours per year of primary education and 108 hours per year of secondary.[159]

In states and regions across the country, EBEPs, ethnic literature and cultural committees, and other cultural associations have invigorated their own efforts in recent years to develop or revive writing systems and textbooks in their languages.[160] Through the national language policy initiative and other government efforts, a limited space has opened up for these actors to cooperate with the MoE to improve these curricula. However, in at least six states/regions, these actors have complained that state/region governments have still not engaged them enthusiastically, nor have they taken the need to improve ethnic education seriously overall.[161] In three states/regions, ethnic education actors felt that the little coordination that had occurred so far had been due largely to the efforts of UNICEF, and they hoped that the new government would seek cooperation more proactively.[162]

Framing the challenge ahead

Under the NLD government, Myanmar has a great opportunity to boost the role of MTB-MLE. The NLD's 2015 election manifesto commits to developing an education system that supports and promotes ethnic languages and cultures as part of a commitment to federalism, stating:

> *In accordance with the principle of a federal union, we will develop an education system that supports and promotes ethnic languages and cultures. In doing so, we will:*
> - *Strive to ensure that primary-age ethnic children who speak different languages are taught by teachers who are able to speak the mother tongue of their students.*
> - *Fund state and regional programs to enable the use of mother tongue in primary education.[163]*

Seeing this commitment through would provide huge pedagogical benefits and be a key step towards peace and national reconciliation, addressing a core grievance that has driven conflict. However, success will require serious political will and the investment of time and funds.

---

[155] Focus group discussions with Kachin EBEP-supported community teachers, Myitkyina (February 2016).
[156] Myanmar Ministry of Education (2016), p. 32.
[157] Myanmar Ministry of Education (2016), p. 33.
[158] Discussion with JICA Basic Education Adviser, Mandalay (February 2016). Notably, JICA is aiding the government to develop new Union-level curriculum that includes techniques for integrating locally relevant content such as foods, but it is not working on local curriculum development.
[159] This information was taken from an unpublished draft of the NESP circulated in December 2015.
[160] Examples of such efforts have been noted in Ayeryawady, Sagaing, Shan, Mon, Kayin, Kachin, Chin, and Rakhine states/regions, and are likely taking place elsewhere too.
[161] Interviews in Myanmar and Thailand (September-December 2015); notes from the Mandalay Conference (February 2016).
[162] Notes from interviews with three ethnic education actors (September 2015-February 2016), and five presentations at the Mandalay Conference (February 2016).
[163] NLD Manifesto, p. 15.

Speaking to the Upper House in September 2016, Education Minister U Myo Thein Gyi announced that the MoE had changed the name of its former "Myanmar-Language Department" to the "Department of Myanmar Ethnic Languages". Additionally, he stated that the MoE had prepared MMK 5.5 billion for the salaries of 18,300 ethnic language instructors in AY 2016-2017, and plans to develop and distribute learning materials in 54 ethnic languages for 540,289 grade one, two, and three students from across 187 townships. However, a proposal made by an MP from Mandalay to invest more in the study of ethnic languages and invest in specific plans to improve literacy among ethnic minorities was opposed by the house. The minister stated that the educational development in such areas would depend on the success of the peace process.[164]

To implement MTB-MLE across the country, there is a wide range of complications in deciding which languages, and which particular writing systems, can and should be taught in which schools. Many languages are not well developed in terms of graphization and standardization,[165] and may have become merged with other languages, such as Myanmar and English, in unpredictable ways. Some ethnic languages have multiple scripts, which vary in their pervasiveness and technical strengths, and which are sometimes attached to specific political or religious cultures. Within some ethnic groups, there are outstanding disputes as to which of several writing systems should be promoted.[166]

Additionally, languages are not confined to specific states and regions, or even townships. Any given township varies in ethnic composition and prevalent languages from village tract to village tract. Furthermore, there are great differences between towns and villages, with the former tending to be much more mixed in terms of ethnicity and also more likely dominated by fluent Myanmar speakers.

There are, then, difficult decisions to be made about how student performance in ethnic-language subjects will be assessed. As seen in mixed schools in Mon and Karen areas (discussed in Section 10), if students are not required to pass ethnic-language subjects in order to progress, the subjects automatically become of lower priority to students, parents, and school administrations. At the same time, ethnic-language examinations in schools of mixed ethnicity require difficult decisions about which students will be examined in which languages.

As these complex decisions are made, likely faster in some areas than in others, implementation will require significant resources and planning for the hiring and training of teachers, particularly given the limited number of teachers in the MoE system with literacy in ethnic languages. In some areas, the MoE may have to consider hiring teachers who have not completed MoE high school education themselves. More appropriate teaching materials and textbooks in local languages need to be developed. As noted above, MoE efforts to simply translate from Myanmar into local languages have had limited success, while some textbooks in use by other organizations date back to the 1930s and are based on outdated learning approaches.[167]

Once books are printed and teachers are trained, there will be great costs associated with transportation to the most remote areas, particularly during wet seasons, when travel is particularly difficult.[168] Furthermore, all of these decisions are being made at a time when the MoE and other education

---

[164] See Swan Ye Htut, "Minister ties improved education for ethnic minorities to peace," *Myanmar Times*, September 13, 2016. Available at: http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/22474-minister-ties-improved-education-for-ethnic-minorities-to-peace.html.

[165] In a presentation at the Mandalay Conference (February 11, 2016), Dr. Win Aung stated that there were 11 ethnic languages "in use and in sustainable condition," 34 others with "standardized literature" (perhaps meaning a writing system), and 49 that are were "not standardized, but still in use." The authors were not able to verify the accuracy of these specific numbers, but they provide a good indication of the overall challenges.

[166] For example, for a description of the difficulties within Kayah state, see: Tadayuki Kubo, *Karenni and Kayah: The Nature of Burma's Ethnic Problem over Two Names and the Path to Resolution*, Asia Peacebuilding Initiatives. Available at: http://peacebuilding.asia/burmas-ethnic-problem-over-two-names-and-the-path-to-resolution/ [accessed 9 August 2015]. There are also at least two writing systems for Sgaw Karen, linked to divergent political and religious histories and narratives.

[167] This was raised by Dr. David Bradley, and by a representative from the Shan Literature and Cultural Committee, in presentations at the Mandalay Conference, (February 12 and 13, respectively).

[168] Presentations by the Kachin State education departments at the Mandalay Conference (February 2016).

actors are also confronting much broader decisions about what pedagogical approaches should be adopted as part of reforms, and what forms of curriculum need to be used.

All of these challenges will depend, not just on implementing new MoE programs, but on collaborative approaches that enhance the role of EBEPs and culture, literature, and other specialists, bringing them to the center of reform efforts, and creating space for their existing activities to contribute to common aims rather than being marginalized.

SECTION SEVEN: Strength in diversity: the benefits of having multiple education providers

This section argues that *EBEPs have many benefits to offer Myanmar's education sector, and that they should be viewed by the government and international development actors as crucial partners in achieving the country's education targets.* The first subsection demonstrates that it is not uncommon in either developing or developed countries to have multiple providers of education; indeed, there is probably no country in the world whose education sector was developed solely by a central government actor and then rolled out unilaterally. The second subsection then explores how EBEPs in Myanmar are of particular importance for four main reasons: their unique access to territory, their experience in providing MTB-MLE, their value in the eyes of their communities, and their potential to contribute to building peace and reconciliation.

International precedents: non-state actors and complementary systems

Education sectors consisting of a wide range of actors, guided by common frameworks and policies, are the norm internationally; in many countries, these sectors have evolved from multiple providers that slowly became connected in various ways. Indeed, "in nearly every country's educational history, the first formal educational opportunities for children were provided by non-state schools, whether established by religious organizations, philanthropists, or private interests."[169]

In the United Kingdom, the Catholic system was separate from the Anglican British state for hundreds of years, and for a long period of time was forced underground, subject to violent repression. An agreement between the state and the Catholic Church in 1847 then brought the two systems closer together, eventually leading to Catholic schools being partly funded by the state, beginning in the 1940s, while maintaining "their distinctively Catholic ethos through various legal protections which continue to apply… to this day."[170]

Thus, the key responsibility of the state to ensure citizens' access to education does not imply that the state itself need be the only education body, or that the services provided need be uniform; it merely implies that the state should develop the most appropriate policy framework for ensuring that quality education is provided to all. Such a framework should ensure that available resources are maximized and that appropriate education opportunities are available to all populations.

Globally, non-state education actors come in many forms, including both for-profit and not-for-profit entities that can receive funds from students' families, from donations (from the community or individual donors), from government, or any combination of these.[171] Lower- to middle-income countries (LMICs) have in recent decades seen a consistent rise in enrollment at non-state schools. According to one estimate, "113 million children in [lower- to middle-income countries] are enrolled in non-state schools, representing approximately 11 percent of primary students and 24 percent of secondary students."[172] To reflect this reality, in 2011 the World Bank revised its definition of an education system to include "the full range of learning opportunities available in a country, whether they are provided or financed by the public or private sector (including religious, nonprofit, and for-profit organizations)."[173]

In other developing countries, there are countless contemporary examples of nongovernmental

---

[169] Quote from a recent study by the Center for Universal Education at Brookings. See Steer, et al. (2015), p. 5.
[170] Catholic Education Service (n.d.), *A Brief History of Catholic Education in England and Wales.* Available at: http://www.catholiceducation.org.uk/about-us/history-of-catholic-education. The Catholic Education Service is the contemporary name for the institution that was formally established as part of the 1847 deal.
[171] See a visual representation of these types of non-state education actors in Steer, et al. (2015), p. 28.
[172] Felsman and Dimovska (2014), p. 13.
[173] World Bank (2011), p. 5.

education systems being embraced by governments and international aid actors alike; indeed, these systems are in some cases favored for their ability to reach underserved populations.[174]

The term "complementary education" emerged in the 1990s to describe the growing number of basic education programs for hard-to-reach children who were excluded from state education due to remoteness, not speaking the dominant language, or other disadvantages.[175] Complementary systems exist in at least 35 countries,[176] and are effectively defined by their ability to provide a recognized form of basic education while retaining characteristics, intended to make the schools more suitable for specific populations with specific needs, that differentiate them from the mainstream schooling system.

As one USAID report described it, "Complementary education programs provide different, community-based approaches to help children with limited or no access to government-provided schooling obtain educational outcomes equivalent to students in regular public schools."[177] In other words, these are not intended as non-formal or extra-curricular programs, but as formal schooling for school-age children.[178] As the same USAID report noted, the basic rationale for this approach is that "the problem of reaching all children – and reaching them with an education that will be effective – cannot be addressed through the continued pursuit of a centralized, uniform administration of schooling."[179]

Complementary education provision usually follows a community school model. This means that schools are managed by communities, through community school networks supported by NGOs,[180] and apply principles of community-driven development.[181] Teachers in complementary education systems are normally locally recruited and minimally compensated.[182] The curriculum is often adapted to be more locally relevant than the mainstream version, and is taught in the mother tongue. For example, New Zealand's Kura Kaupapa Maori Schools use Maori as a language of instruction, and parents and community members are involved in school management, including defining the culturally unique terms under which the school will be run.[183] Normally, though not always, complementary education is recognized by the state.

In some cases, complementary education systems are intentionally structured to allow students to enter the state system at some stage, by preparing them for standardized exams or providing them with equivalency certificates. As one definition puts it, "These systems are complementary in the sense that they provide an alternative route through formal education but match [their] curriculum to the 'official' curriculum, thus allowing learners to return to formal schooling at some stage."[184] Most EBEPs in Myanmar have also structured their curricula for this purpose, including the MNEC/MNED and most religious and community-based systems. However, this should not be seen as the only way for alternative systems to be complementary to those of the state and to be compatible with other systems.

---

[174] See Rose (2007), pp. 19-28.
[175] HEART (2014), p. 1.
[176] A list of 36 complementary education systems is provided in HEART (2014), pp. 3-7. This list of 35 countries includes Myanmar, for its monastic and mobile schools but not for its ethnic education systems.
[177] USAID (2006), p. 1.
[178] This distinction is important. The objectives of alternative or non-formal education are to provide learning that is normally limited to basic literacy, numeracy, and life skills, often provided through institutional arrangements that are set up to be as flexible as possible to learners' needs. See Rose (2009), p. 221, and HEART (2014), pp. 2, 8.
[179] USAID (2006), p. 1.
[180] There are some exceptions to this: a complementary education system in Brazil is managed directly by the government. HEART (2014), p. 9.
[181] On community schools, see Glassman, et al., eds. (2007) and Mansuri and Rao (2004), pp. 1-39.
[182] USAID (2006), p. 1.
[183] Smith (2003).
[184] HEART (2014), p. 1. Complementary education has been proven to be a cost-effective model for "returning" children to formal schooling in some contexts. "There is substantial robust evidence suggesting that CBEs have achieved considerable success in meeting the needs of underserved populations not only in terms of access and equity but also in completion, learning outcomes and a return to formal schooling." HEART (2014), p. 2.

The importance of EBEPs to Myanmar's education sector

While it is not uncommon for a country to rely on multiple providers of education, EBEPs are especially important in Myanmar due to the country's complex political history. As we shall see, EBEPs remain more viable providers of education in some areas, and have a critical role to play in reaching Myanmar's education targets, due to four factors: their unique access to territory, their experience in providing MTB-MLE, their value in the eyes of their communities, and their potential to contribute to building peace and reconciliation. The analysis here also points to the challenges that the MoE faces in providing effective education in conflict-affected and other ethnic areas. While it does not provide a comprehensive comparison of the MoE and EBEPs, it demonstrates some of the major ways in which EBEPs fill gaps left by the state.

Access: realizing universal education

Perhaps the most basic and practical reason that EBEPs are important for Myanmar's education sector is that they have stable access to many territories where the MoE does not, including many of the country's most remote and marginalized communities.

The Myanmar state has committed to providing free and compulsory education to its entire population. As Article 366 of the 2008 Constitution states, "Every citizen, in accord with the educational policy laid down by the Union: (a) has the right to education; (b) shall be given basic education which the Union prescribes by law as compulsory."[185] These commitments are reflected in the 2015 National Education Law, and in MoE policies. They are also reflected in international commitments, such as UNESCO's "Education for All,"[186] and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG 4 commits states to the goal of ensuring by 2030 "that all girls and boys complete free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education."[187] It is likely to be adopted by the Myanmar government.

These targets will simply not be possible to achieve without the work of EBEPs, as they remain the only providers able to access many areas. It is therefore crucial that their services be recognized and their contributions to national objectives be counted. While the 2015 National Education Law recognizes the need for "temporary" or "emergency" services for conflict-affected areas, it seemingly fails to appreciate that many areas have never been consolidated under government control, and so naturally rely on alternative arrangements for education.[188]

Areas controlled by EAOs range from relatively secure, autonomous ceasefire regions, like those of the United Wa State Party, National Democratic Alliance Army, and NMSP; through newer and less well-defined ceasefire territories where the state still has a presence, such as those of the KNU, RCSS, and KNPP; to those that are experiencing active conflict and are defended by EAOs through guerilla warfare, such as those of the KIO and Palaung State Liberation Front. Restrictions on MoE access are sometimes enforced by the EAOs themselves, and sometimes by the Tatmadaw if it deems an area unsafe for MoE teachers.

Furthermore, in many rural areas, lack of transportation infrastructure and poor knowledge of the local geography are significant impediments to MoE access. There are also many areas where ethnic communities remain deeply skeptical of the state and its representatives, particularly Bamar teachers who cannot communicate with students, parents, and school committees.

All three case studies found areas where EBEPs were the only education providers who could gain access

---

[185] Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar (2008), Article 366.
[186] MoE (2014), p. 5.
[187] United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4: "Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning." Available at: http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/.
[188] National Education Law (2015), Chapter 1, Article 2y; Chapter 6, Article 38.

or maintain a stable presence. The MNEC/MNED provides basic education in NMSP ceasefire areas, established in 1995, where the government has to request permission to enter, to a population that includes around 40,000 IDPs.[189] Seven hundred sixty-three out of the 1,506 Karen schools supported by KED/KSEAG receive no support from the MoE, many of them in areas under firm control of the KNU where the state has never had a firm presence. In Hsipaw Township, Shan State, repeated MoE attempts to dispatch Bamar teachers have failed over the decades, but 25 communities are receiving stable education services as a result of collaboration between a network of monastic schools and a civil society organization, the Rural Development Foundation of Shan State.

Across many other parts of Shan and Kachin States, EAO, monastic, civil society, and community-based networks have been more successful at providing consistent basic education to communities than the MoE. The RCSS and its social wing, the Shan State Development Foundation, support 200 primary schools in areas of limited state presence, including in six IDP camps along the Thailand border. In the UWSP's Shan State Special Region 2, the government has no free access to areas outside of the main town of Panghsang, and the MoE supports only seven schools out of 365 across the entire region.[190] In areas controlled by the KIO and other Kachin armed actors, education is provided by the KIO Education Department and by a number of church groups, including Karuna Myanmar Social Services and the Kachin Baptist Convention.

EAO guardedness towards MoE access is due largely to their lack of trust in the state in general, following decades of military rule and armed conflict. In particular, their reservations include: fears that the government will take over territory and establish patronage over populations in their area; concerns that government education will be used to "Bamanize" ethnic populations and weaken ethnic cultures and national identity; difficulties in regulating influxes of support through new channels; worries that such support will be unsustainable and will weaken local systems if there is a return to conflict; and suspicions that teachers will be used as spies by state security agencies. These apprehensions were mentioned variously by EAOs, civil society representatives, school committee members, and others, and are discussed in more detail in Section 9.

Even where the MoE is able to impose access to ceasefire areas, this has often caused practical and political problems. There is the risk of damaging confidence in ceasefires by stoking fears among EAOs that the government intends to use "development" to extend its control, rather than to engage in serious political discussions about federalism. Rapid proliferation of mixed schools without clear guidelines has led to largely impractical education arrangements. And MoE teachers in remote areas are prone to high rates of turnover and absenteeism, because they often struggle to adapt to these communities, and because they must regularly travel to towns to collect salaries and carry out administrative tasks.

Many communities in ceasefire areas remain deeply skeptical of MoE support. According to a village head from a village near Su Ka Li, "[The state] just built [new] government buildings and now wants us to take their education system.… The government wants to tame us."[191] In another village, a Mon leader stated, "We would rather be poor than accept their support."[192] In Hsipaw Township, Shan State, interviewees at one community school explained that when they received an MoE teacher in 1989, it resulted in students and parents losing interest in the school, and subsequently to high dropout rates. The teacher left in 1994. In 2000, however, the school became a monastic school as part of the Kaung Hat network, which appears to have been more successful. It now has 70 students taught by three Shan teachers who are recruited locally and provided with teacher training by RDFSS.[193]

---

[189] There are reportedly a number of MoE schools and mixed MoE-MNEC/MNED schools now operating in the NMSP controlled area. However, state actors need explicit permission even to enter many of the areas that are semi-formally recognized as under NMSP control.
[190] Most of the other schools in the region are run by communities and organized by district- and township-level authorities, who tax communities for school costs and also tend to choose the curriculum. Some schools are established by businesses. Information provided in an internal document of a UN agency operating in the region.
[191] Interview with Kwee Ta Oh village head, East Daw Na region (October 2015).
[192] Women and Child Rights Project (WCRP), and Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) (2015), pp. 28-29.
[193] Focus group discussion with school committee member, monk, and school principal in Look Yom Village, Hsipaw Township, Shan State.

Even in areas where the MoE is not constrained by EAO territorial claims, but which are still remote, hard to access, and underdeveloped, EBEPs continue to fill gaps left by the MoE. For example, in Kayan-populated parts of Kayah State and Shan State, support for community schools is provided by Kayan New Generation Youth, which has explicitly attempted to fill gaps left by the MoE and has actively encouraged greater MoE support. In Chin State and Sagaing Region there are a range of civil society-led efforts to provide education in communities where the government has been unwilling or unable. In these areas, MoE efforts to expand services would likely benefit substantially from cooperating with these EBEPs, recognizing their roles as organizations or networks rather than just approaching schools directly, community by community. Additionally, EAO-linked EBEPs like KED/KSEAG have even found ways to work in areas that are outside of EAO control, but where government services are lacking, because they have developed ways to train and subsidize teachers in their own communities.

Finally, ethnic education systems have generally been structured, by evolution or design, to provide continuing support for community-based schools regardless of the security or political situation, as they are firmly rooted in community networks. In periods of heightened conflict, when MoE services are likely to be disrupted, communities often rely on the support of EBEPs. KED/KSEAG and other providers have developed their administrative protocols with potential displacement in mind, so that schools can continue to operate and gain support even while communities are hiding in the forest, or are on the move. Given the likelihood that the ebb and flow of conflict will continue in many ethnic areas, the education sector should enhance the ability of education actors working in these environments to ensure continued education.

Moving towards MTB-MLE

Section 6 discussed the many benefits of MTB-MLE and noted the government's agenda to introduce it to Myanmar's basic education sector. EBEPs have a great deal to contribute to these efforts, and are already providing MTB-MLE education in a number of ways. As a senior Myanmar education expert noted at the Mandalay Conference, the country is not "starting from scratch" in its efforts to provide MTB-MLE, thanks to the existing work of EBEPs, as well as ethnic literature and cultural committees and other associations.[194] Additionally, ethnic education actors remain the only providers able to access some EAO territories, and in many areas, MoE expansion comes with great political risk.

EBEPs typically have long experience both in teaching ethnic literacy and in using ethnic languages to teach Myanmar-language curricula. The KED/KSEAG uses a Sgaw Karen-based curriculum in 285 schools, and elements of it in a further 553 schools, some of which are mixed MoE-KED/KSEAG schools. This curriculum is also used in 64 Karen schools in refugee camps, and in dozens of Karen migrant schools in Thailand. In its 118 primary and post-primary Mon national schools, the MNEC/MNED uses a full Mon-language curriculum until grade five.[195] It transitions to the government's Myanmar-language curriculum for middle and secondary school, while maintaining Mon as a language of instruction. Mon history and language lessons remain part of the in-school curriculum throughout the years of basic education. According to a grade two student in a Mon national school, "I find it easy to learn here, because I understand the lessons, which are taught in Mon language."[196]

Most other EBEP schools, including those in the Kaung Hat network, primarily use the Myanmar-language government curriculum so that students can take government exams, but they supplement this with teaching methods and basic materials passed down from teacher to teacher. Crucially, however, these EBEPs typically provide teachers who can teach in the students' mother tongue to help

(December 2015).
[194] Dr. Win Aung, presentation at the Mandalay Conference (February 11, 2016).
[195] This curriculum is all in Mon except for science subjects, which use Myanmar- and English-language terms. Most subjects were adapted and translated from the government's Myanmar-language curriculum in the 1990s.
[196] Jessica Aumann and U Thet Naing, "Working with Non-State Groups to Help All Children Get an Education," *UNICEF Myanmar blog,* April 8, 2015. Available at: http://unicefmyanmar.blogspot.com/2015/04/working-with-non-state-groups-to-help.html.

guide them through materials in what is essentially a foreign language. Teachers interviewed from the Kaung Hat network explained that a large part of their job is translating the textbooks. Some EBEPs have developed methods for using ethnic languages for instruction while teaching the MoE curriculum, and provide teacher training with that particular skill in mind. EBEPs that focus on the MoE curriculum sometimes continue to teach ethnic languages as additional subjects, either as elective out-of-school hour subjects, or as part of the standard curriculum.[197]

According to Mon and Karen community members interviewed for this study, communities support and value the MNEC/MNED and KED/KSEAG education systems primarily for their MTB-MLE capacities. According to a Mon mother, "I feel proud to send to my son to Mon School.… All the curriculum is the same as the government school, but the Mon school gives my child a better chance to learn his mother language and to learn Mon history."[198]

A school committee leader from a Mon national school in a government-controlled area said, "If we look at the political situation, we are under the [Myanmar state's] authority and control, and in the past we could not teach Mon language; so now that we are allowed, we have to use that opportunity." Indeed, according to the school committee, this school was founded in 1995 by a local *Seyadaw* specifically because he was "so worried about losing the language." Prior to that, Mon was taught in summer schools, but this was not considered sufficient.[199] An MNED-supported primary school teacher in a nearby village explained, "Mon is a nation, and each nation should have a language and should teach the mother tongue to its children, so we will keep trying [to improve and build our education system] until the end."[200]

In Karen ceasefire areas, where the mass arrival of MoE teachers has often placed KED/KSEAG teachers under pressure to resign, local communities have worked hard to retain them in order to continue Sgaw Karen-language classes. According to a member of a school committee that had to make such a decision, "We told [the MoE] that we had to continue with Karen language or we would not accept [their teachers]. We are Karen people; we want to learn our language. If we don't have our literacy, we will be lost; the Karen people will be lost."[201]

Communities also typically prefer teachers who are able to use the local language for instruction, particularly if using the MoE curriculum. For example, teachers, monks, and school committee members in Hsipaw Township stated a preference for the local monastic and RDFSS-supported schools rather than the MoE schools, specifically because of the language of instruction (even though these schools do not teach Shan-language subjects). Many of them said that because of the local language, students performed better in the EBEP schools than in nearby MoE schools, and they felt that it directly aided students' ability to pass exams. It was said that no child had ever passed grade five exams at the nearby MoE schools. Local language was also seen as crucial for parents and others in the community to engage with teachers. As one school committee member in Hsipaw Township, Shan State, put it, "If the teacher is Bamar, it creates a language barrier between the students and the teacher, and between the teacher and the community."[202]

Government teachers and school committee members at mixed MoE-MNEC/MNED schools emphasized the valuable contribution of the MNEC/MNED to the teaching of Mon language and history. In a mixed, post-primary school visited in Kayin State, there is one MNED teacher who only teaches Mon subjects, and five government teachers assigned additional Mon classes on top of their

[197] For example, numerous Kachin EBEPs teach ethnic languages alongside the MoE curriculum. However, schools in the Kaung Hat network do not provide Shan language as a school-hours subject, but help organize a summer Shan literacy course.
[198] Jessica Aumann and U Thet Naing, "Working with Non-State Groups to Help All Children Get an Education," *UNICEF Myanmar blog,* April 8, 2015. Available at: http://unicefmyanmar.blogspot.com/2015/04/working-with-non-state-groups-to-help.html.
[199] Focus group discussion with parents and teachers at Mon national middle school one (November 2015).
[200] Focus group discussion with parents and teachers at Mon national primary school one (November 2015).
[201] Focus group discussion in school one (October 2015).
[202] Interview with school committee member in Look Yom Village, Hsipaw Township, Shan State (December 2015).

usual schedule. According to the MoE head teacher, the MNED teacher plays a leading role in teaching Mon subjects due to her experience, and this is particularly important because consistent government support for the subject is uncertain. She also said the school depended on the MNED curriculum due to deficiencies in the government one, which they only used because they were told to (although the MoE Mon-language curriculum has been upgraded since).[203]

The experiences and capacities of EBEPs in providing MTB-MLE demonstrate the importance of their schools and their additional services in MoE schools. Recognition of the education already provided by EBEPs would boost indicators of access to MTB-MLE and of progress in meeting related national targets. This wealth of experience could also be harnessed to support the MoE's efforts to develop its own materials and train its own teachers. Such cooperation is already taking place in Mon areas of the southeast, as discussed in Section 6.

However, it should also be noted that there is great room for improvement of the MTB-MLE services provided by EBEPs. For example, in a small number of cases, KSEAG teachers are not able to read and write in Sgaw Karen themselves and are thus unable to teach it, either because they are from another Karen sub-group, or because they were educated in an area with only government schools. In these cases, they tend to use Burmese language materials anyway, including the government curriculum. Furthermore, students whose mother tongue language is Pwo or another Karen language are often taught in Sgaw Karen, meaning they also fail to receive mother tongue-based education. There are certainly deficiencies of this kind among most EBEPs, despite their relative strengths in this area, in comparison with the MoE.

At the heart of the community

EBEPs tend to be deeply valued by the ethnic communities they serve. This is not to say that ethic communities always prefer EBEPs to the MoE; indeed, the MoE offers more recognizable qualifications and its teachers sometimes involve fewer costs.[204] Resultantly, communities' preferences vary. This is apparent in areas where parents have a choice of where to send their children, and in cases where community schools must choose between offers of support from both the MoE and EBEPs (see Section 9). On the whole, however, communities continue to invest heavily in their EBEPs, and many continue to exhibit a clear preference for them over the MoE. Indeed, most EBEP schools depend on donations from a wide range of people, beyond those that have children attending the schools.

Even at a mixed MoE-MNEC/MNED school primarily administered by the MoE, the head of the school committee emphasized the importance of the MNEC/MNED system to the community. He said, "We really need to build up our Mon education system for the future. If we just wait and rely on the government system, we won't get [what we really want], so we really need support from the international community and others to help us build our own local system."[205]

This is so for a number of reasons. Firstly, where EBEPs are well established, ethnic communities often view them as their own national education system, and even take pride in them. A Mon mother of an MNEC/MNED middle school student put it simply, saying she chose to send her child there "because we love Mon [nationality] and we are patriots, because we are Mon."[206] This is often connected to the desire to maintain one's language, culture, and history, as discussed previously. In Kayin State, a KED/KSEAG-supported teacher who was asked by the MoE to retrain and teach for a much larger salary

---

[203] Focus group discussion with head teacher and school committee leaders at mixed post-primary school one (November 2015). Similar experiences were recounted during a focus group discussion of teachers from five mixed primary schools and an MNED administrator in NMSP-defined Thaton (Sahtom) District. (November 2015).

[204] This is sometimes so because they are paid higher salaries and don't require community subsidies. However, there have also been many cases where receiving MoE support has led to new costs, such as for textbooks, unexpected school trips, or other fees, as discussed in Section 9.

[205] Focus group discussion with head teacher and school committee leaders at mixed post-primary school one (November 2015).

[206] Focus group discussion with parents and teachers at Mon national middle school one (November 2015).

explained that she had turned down the offer because she "didn't want to serve the government."[207] An MoE head teacher for 20 years who had switched to being a head teacher in a Karen school gave similar reasons for his shift: "I want to serve my people – I don't want to work too closely with the government."[208]

Some EAO education departments (EAO-EDs) have been the established education authority for decades and are recognized as such by parents who themselves were educated in that system. In the Karen case study especially, school committee members often explained that they saw their EBEP as the local authority on education, and so had persistently requested that the MoE consult with that authority when reaching the area for the first time. As one Karen village leader explained, "As I see it, we have our [KNU] leaders in place at every level, so unless our leaders accept something, we cannot do it. Every leader must accept it, or we can't get help [from outside]. For education, it should come through the KED, then to the village level. We are just a village."[209] According to a Karen woman in Mu Traw District, which is largely under the control of the KNU, the EAO should be responsible for education, because graduating the students will be "useful for the country."[210]

Communities in Hsipaw Township interviewed for the Shan case study repeatedly said that the Kaung Hat network was particularly valuable because it gave them a feeling of ownership over the schools, while also providing some external support and government recognition. Meanwhile, having the patronage of the Kaung Hat *Seyadaw* was said to provide protection from disruptive or predatory actions of the Tatmadaw or EAOs. As one interviewee put it, "We cannot go away from monks if want to work effectively for the education system in Shan State."[211]

Even when EBEPs are new to an area, they tend to work more collaboratively with school committees and parents than the MoE does, because their staff and teachers speak the local language, understand the local customs, and often take the time to build trust with elders, village leaders, and school committees. According to a Karen woman in a village with an MoE-KED/KSEAG mixed school that currently has two principals, "If we have to select a new principal, we only want a principal from local staff. The [Myanmar] government side doesn't understand the village situation."[212] This difference in relationship is also apparent in cases where communities turn to EBEPs with their complaints about MoE teachers in the same schools, as they don't have the confidence or the connections to go directly to the MoE (see Section 10).

In a village in Hsipaw Township, Shan State, there are two adjacent schools, one run by the MoE and the other by the Kaung Hat monastic network with support from RDFSS. A man serving on the school committees of both schools explained that the community finds it difficult to communicate with the government teachers, as only one villager (an elder) speaks Myanmar language. "We, the parents and the community, have no right to make any suggestions, or to be involved in the school… or what our children are taught," he said. As a result, he said that the community wanted to remove the government school and just have a monastic school.[213] Similarly, the KED recounted multiple complaints about the conduct and professionalism of new MoE teachers arriving in Karen State, because there was no accountability mechanism between the MoE and the community.

Furthermore, EBEP-supported teachers are often from the village they serve or nearby, and are looked after by the rest of the community, who provide housing and donations. This also means that they are in the village, or are easy to contact, during school holidays. While EBEPs also suffer from high teacher turnover in some areas, there are many communities that have had the same teacher for years, which is often difficult for MoE teachers to do because they typically come from urban areas and are unlikely

---

[207] Interview, Kayin State, Myanmar (October 2015).
[208] Interview, Kayin State, Myanmar (October 2015).
[209] Interview with villager leader of village two, East Daw Na region (October 2015).
[210] KHRG (2016), p. 34.
[211] Interview with RDFSS director, Lashio (July 2015).
[212] KHRG (2016), p. 41.
[213] Focus group discussion with members of school committee (December 2015).

to move permanently to a remote area. EBEP teachers were also said to be more reliable than MoE teachers in some areas, as they are reputed to work harder and have the right "attitude."[214] According to a committee member in Shan State, the school committee was dissatisfied with the teacher they received from the MoE, because the teacher just came "to get paid," rather than to contribute to the community, and taught the children the same thing every year. The schools were subsequently converted to monastic schools, under the Kaung Hat network, in 2007.

Building peace and reconciliation through recognition of EBEPs

Since before coming into power, the NLD has made peace and national reconciliation, including ending ethnic armed conflicts, central aims of its government. This will be extremely difficult after decades of recurring conflicts driven largely by ethnic grievances and political disputes that have never been properly addressed.

Explicit efforts by the new government to recognize and formalize EBEPs, ensuring that they have a future as valued institutions within the Union, would give a significant boost to peacebuilding efforts and to the "establishment of a genuine, federal democratic union."[215] It would build confidence in the peace process among EAOs and communities; it would demonstrate that ceasefires will not be used to undermine their existing systems and structures; and it would be a constructive first step towards incorporating those structures into the future state. It would also facilitate real and tangible forms of cooperation between the state and EAOs – as well as formerly marginalized ethnic, religious, and civil society organizations – to help build trust and demonstrate that hostile relationships are being transformed.

In the long term, such forms of cooperation can increase access to MTB-MLE and build a more inclusive education sector that is representative of the country's diversity. All these processes would provide a strong foundation for the eventual transition to a more decentralized, federal form of government, recognized by all stakeholders as the central aim of the peace process.

Some of the country's most established EAOs have formed proto-governments and have taken great pride in fulfilling their perceived duty to provide for their communities, particularly in the absence of state services during decades of military rule. EAO-EDs often feel that the education systems they have built under incredibly challenging circumstances are a symbol of their legitimacy and their claim to represent the communities in areas they control. Meanwhile, other EBEPs are often connected to locally influential religious or other community figures, and also hold significant social capital within their societies. EAO leaders and other ethnic elites involved in education provision understandably trace their legitimacy to the long history of self-government in their regions, even during British colonial rule.

At the same time, many ethnic societies affected by war and oppression remain deeply skeptical of a state which they have mostly experienced in the form of the Tatmadaw. For communities that have yet to be brought under government administration, particularly those that are under firm control of EAO parallel administration systems, questions around the incorporation of community schools into the Union's education system relate to much bigger questions around the identity of a particular community. Reconciliation, therefore, will involve processes that can bring societies that have been formed outside of the state's purview into the Union of Myanmar and allow for the development of more representative and locally relevant institutions to accommodate them.

In the words of a female elected leader of a Karen refugee community in Thailand, "[To repatriate], we

---

[214] This is highlighted in KHRG (2016) as particularly important to Karen women when judging the quality of education provided by MoE and other actors. See page 35.
[215] Myanmar News Agency, "State Counsellor Offers New Year Message," *Global New Light of Myanmar*, April 17, 2016.Available at: http://globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/amendment-essential/.

don't just need a program to deal with our basic needs, we need our whole society to be invited back [into the country] by that country's [Myanmar's] leaders…. We have our own way, our own community and education system, and we need to know how we can come back [into the country] along with these things."[216] While refugee communities represent the most extreme examples of societies that have become separate from mainstream Myanmar, similar sentiments are shared by people from areas inside the country governed by EAOs too, including IDP communities that have sought protection in EAO-held territories.[217]

Therefore, peace and reconciliation will likely require the steady integration of existing institutions and societal structures that have existed under the control of EAOs into a formally recognized political space, within the Union of Myanmar. This relates to what Kyed and Gravers (2015) have argued for as a process of "RDD" – reintegration prior to disarmament and demobilization.[218] Efforts to override the existing political orders, on the other hand, are likely to breed distrust and opposition among communities that have depended on them, and particularly among the leadership of EAOs. The potential for active engagement by the government to recognize and include EBEPs represents a great opportunity to begin such a process.

---

[216] Comments from a female section leader in Mae La temporary shelter in Tak Province, Thailand, giving feedback on repatriation research carried out by Kim Jolliffe (February 2014).
[217] Focus group discussions held with Mon IDPs in October 2013 reflected this view. In an IDP community in the KNU's Mu Traw District in June 2013, IDPs explained fears that government development in their areas could lead to their existing governance and societal structures being weakened and undermined.
[218] H.M. Kyed and M. Gravers (2015).

Part III   Opportunities, Challenges, and Recommendations

SECTION EIGHT: Taking the first steps
• Framing the challenge ahead
• Recommendations
• Formally recognizing EBEPs
• Recommendations
• Towards improved coordination and cooperation
• Recommendations

SECTION NINE: Ministry of Education expansion into ceasefire areas
• EAO concerns and risks to the ceasefires
• Community responses to government advances
• Wasting human resources
• Recommendations

SECTION TEN: Formalizing and managing mixed schools
• Mixed schools in the context of MoE expansion
• Mixed schools in general
• Recommendations

SECTION ELEVEN: Student assessment, qualifications, and transfers between systems
• Key challenges identified
• Recommendations

SECTION TWELVE: Quality and financing of EBEP services
• Sources of financing and support
• Teacher support and training

SECTION EIGHT: Taking the first steps

This section frames the basic policy problem that this report attempts to address: how to develop effective and sustainable arrangements to maximize the potential of EBEPs and to ensure complementarity between them and the MoE. It provides analysis and initial recommendations for government, EBEPs, EAOs, and the international aid community on how to view the challenge ahead. It then recommends two important first steps for the government to take in coordination with other stakeholders: providing firmer legal recognition of EBEPs and their current status as education providers, and establishing basic mechanisms for more systematic coordination between them and the MoE.

Framing the challenge ahead

Achieving quality education for all in Myanmar, by reaching even the most remote and marginalized populations and by implementing MTB-MLE, will not be possible by just expanding and improving MoE's own initiatives and programs. Given the diversity that already exists in the education sector, much can also be achieved through government reforms that facilitate the efforts of other education actors to feed into a common process based on common aims. While the MoE is – and will remain – the main provider of education throughout the country, it is not – and need not be – the only one.

Such reforms would help to promote unity in diversity by utilizing the existing capacities of the many actors already involved in ethnic-language education and giving them more official recognition. Furthermore, as conflicts, territorial dynamics, and alternative governance arrangements are likely to ebb and flow for decades, the state will need to develop systems that can accommodate this diversity and maximize complementarity between distinct systems. Therefore, the government and international partners should ensure that these issues are considered early in developing reform strategies. In addition to the educational benefits, ensuring that EBEPs have a future as valued institutions within the Union will be crucial to achieving peace and national reconciliation, and will help lay the foundations for the "establishment of a genuine, federal democratic union."[219]

While it is typical for a country to have a wide range of education providers and even multiple systems, states remain responsible for ensuring that every child has adequate and affordable access, that quality of education is consistent, and that recognized qualifications are provided. States typically have mechanisms in place to ensure that students are being educated for – and assessed on – common outcomes and criteria across all schools, so that students have comparable abilities and can transfer between systems. Particularly where the state has committed to providing free education for all, it will usually also have systems in place to delegate funds to other providers.

Establishing a diverse but cohesive education sector of this kind, under the guidance of the state, should be seen as the ultimate aim of all education providers in the country. However, building up the state to assume this kind of role will depend on far more than technical solutions and the development of the right capacities. Most ethnic elites will likely deem this possible only after a political settlement can be made and there is a sustainable agreement on the country's constitution and the structure of the Union.

Following a political settlement between EAOs and the government and Tatmadaw, some EBEPs might envision integrating into the state system, either by individuals taking key roles in the MoE at central or state/region levels, or by systematically reforming the state system to include their existing structures. Alternatively, as in many other countries, it would be perfectly natural for other education organizations to continue providing the full range of education services from outside the MoE, but to still be considered important education stakeholders at the local and national levels.

---

[219] Myanmar News Agency, "State Counsellor offers New Year Message," *Global New Light of Myanmar*, April 17, 2016. Available at: http://globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/amendment-essential/.

Whichever path this process takes, the state will first have to earn the necessary recognition and legitimacy in the eyes of ethnic elites, communities, and particularly EBEPs to take the lead on education affairs. The remaining challenges in doing this relate not just to the lack of trust following decades of armed conflict, but also to lack of faith in the MoE due to such poor management of the sector in recent decades. This is most visible today in Kachin areas, where, since conflict reignited in 2011, elites have become increasingly forthright in their attempts to divorce their own approach to education from that of the state, shedding the use of the Myanmar language.[220] Nonetheless, EBEPs should recognize that the government has a democratic mandate to serve its people, including in the management of education, and they should see improving complementarity and cohesion with the MoE system as an important aim.

While recognizing the many political challenges that remain, the MoE and EBEPs should work in the near term to enhance complementarity between their systems through increased coordination, cooperation, and trust building. Children get older each year, and these reforms cannot wait until all conflicts are solved; rather, the education sector will need to become better adapted to uncertain political and security situations and to functioning through times of war and peace.

It is crucial that all stakeholders recognize the diversity among EBEPs. Some are the education departments of EAOs; some are affiliated but remain independent; others remain entirely autonomous, but have the necessary connections to ensure their security in EAO areas, like religious actors that hold great social capital of their own. The exact arrangements and policies needed to facilitate the work of EBEPs will vary from type to type.

Recommendations

The following recommendations outline the general approach that the major stakeholders should take towards reforming their systems and increasing cooperation with their counterparts:

Government recommendation #1
Ethnic Basic Education Providers should be seen as valued partners in reaching the government's education targets. Policies should be developed to enable and support EBEPs through active cooperation and avoid undermining their activities.

Government recommendation #2
Ensuring that EBEPs have a future as valued institutions within the Union should be seen as a crucial to achieving peace and national reconciliation. This will boost confidence in ceasefires in the short term, and help lay the foundations for the "establishment of a genuine, federal democratic union."[1]

EAO/EBEP recommendation #1
EBEPs should work to improve coordination and cooperation with the government to ensure that MoE and EBEP services are complementary and coherent. EBEPs should recognize that the government now has a democratic mandate to serve the population, including in managing the education sector.

---

[220] See South and Lall (2016), pp. 14-15. As written in the report: "A Kachin educator said (22/4/15): 'We can't trust a Burmese, so we need to develop a separate Kachin school system.''' According to KIA Deputy Chief of Staff Sumlut Gun Maw: 'We have to undo half a century of damage to Kachin education inflicted by the Burmese government.'

International aid community recommendation #1
As long as conflicts continue, supporting both the MoE and EBEPs is crucial to helping the country meet its education targets and to ensuring conflict sensitivity. EBEPs should be seen as particularly valuable partners in reaching some of the country's hardest-to-reach and most vulnerable communities, and in improving access to MTB-MLE.

Formally recognizing EBEPs

Although there are currently no explicit barriers to supporting or receiving education from EBEPs, their exact legal status remains ambiguous, which has hindered their ability to provide quality education and harmed their relations with government. In interviews for this study, parents, school committee members, EBEP and MoE teachers, and representatives of EBEPs all stated that "recognition" of ethnic education systems, schools, and staff was of crucial importance. Interviewees' interpretations of "recognition" varied greatly, and often related to complex practical challenges such as accreditation, financing, and so on that will be addressed in following sections. However, an undercurrent of all these interpretations was the desire for EBEPs to be officially, legally, and unambiguously recognized by the government.

According to a senior MNEC leader, "The main challenge we face is [lack of] recognition from the government – this makes long-term sustainability a very big problem…. We want to be included in their official policy, their constitution, and so on."[221]

A move from the NLD government to provide EBEPs with greater legal recognition would represent a clear peacebuilding gesture to EAOs, ethnic civil society, and ethnic communities that value their education systems. It would also help create space for more formal coordination and cooperation, particularly at the local level, where government officials often have relations with EBEPs in their areas but may be unsure about the risks of engaging with them too openly.

Legal recognition would also make it possible for the government to officially record the hundreds of thousands of children in ethnic schools as "in school" for national and international indices and monitoring mechanisms.[222] This would help the government to track progress towards access-to-education targets more accurately,[223] particularly those aimed at children in "remote areas,"[224] and to demonstrate the country's progress towards international development goals.[225] Legal recognition could also help lay the foundations for more formal accreditation, regulation, and public financing of EBEPs, as discussed in Sections 11 and 12.

Current status of EBEPs

EBEPs are not formally recognized by the government as particular entities with particular rights or

---

[221] Interview with senior MNEC leader (November 2015).

[222] Attendance at ethnic education schools may have already been reflected in the 2014 census, which did not specify the type of school that was being attended. However, it depends on how the question was asked, and since the question was asked by government schoolteachers, it is possible that this skewed the results in cases where people might have been scared of admitting attendance at a nongovernment school to a government official with knowledge of the education system.

[223] The government's Thirty-Year Long-Term Basic Education Development Plan (2001-2002 to 2030-2031) has "completion of basic education by all citizens" and "carrying out basic education activities in collaboration with community" as two of its 10 programs. See MoE (2014).

[224] See National Education Law (2014), Chapter 6, Article 34. The NLD has already demonstrated an interest in reaching such populations with education. See Tin Htet Paing, "NLD launches 'Sharing' Program for Poor Schoolchildren" *Irrawaddy*, February 1, 2016. Available at: http://www.irrawaddy.com/burma/nld-launches-sharing-program-for-poor-schoolchildren.html.

[225] The government has committed to the targets of Education for All (EFA), and will likely base ongoing education reform efforts partly on the Sustainable Development Goals. Myanmar is also anticipating funding from the Global Partnership for Education, which would be linked to EFA targets. Key amongst these indicators are the out-of-school rate – see UNESCO, et al. (2015) – and possibly the primary/secondary cohort completion rate, which is a suggested indicator for the EFA 2015 review, an MDG indicator, and a post-2015 education agenda indicator. See UNESCO (2013) and UNESCO et al. (2015).

responsibilities. Furthermore, EAOs that have not signed the nationwide ceasefire agreement (NCA) remain on a list of "unlawful associations," meaning that the antiquated 1908 Unlawful Associations Act actively bars citizens from associating with them, placing their education departments in a murky legal area.[226]

Notably, the government has not enforced any explicit barriers to EBEPs receiving funds from donors or partnering with INGOs, and many international aid actors have supported them openly for decades. Neither communities that provide financial support to community schools nor families with children in those schools appear to face any particular risks for doing so. Indeed, even EAO-EDs have operated openly in some government-controlled towns and rural areas for decades, and are in many cases active in the same schools as the MoE.

However, EBEPs are not formally recognized by the government, which hampers coordination efforts, affects how they are viewed in some communities, and also raises questions among aid donors about their legitimacy.

There is nothing currently in law that recognizes EBEP systems as entities with their own administrative hierarchies and operational processes. The National Education Law (2014) lists 11 "kinds of schools," none of which clearly relate to basic education provided by EBEPs; indeed, the law only recognizes "community-based education" in the informal sector.[227] While the monastic education sector is formally recognized, there is no recognition for organized networks of monastic schools like the Kaung Hat network, or for ethnic civil society networks that support them, such as the RDFSS (see Shan case study). Meanwhile, despite Myanmar's official status as a secular country, there is no official recognition or direct support for education systems organized by non-Buddhist religious institutions such as the Baptist and Catholic churches.

In negotiations for the NCA, EAOs pushed repeatedly for "interim arrangements" that would comprehensively recognize the governance roles played by EAOs and ensure their autonomy in providing development and other services in the period prior to a political settlement. This, they hoped, would include formal recognition of their education departments and the services they provide, and establish limits on unwarranted expansion of government development and social services.

They failed to reach an agreement on this, however, and the final NCA text contains only a loose recognition of their role in education, among other sectors, while emphasizing that they need to cooperate with the government in such activities. This provides a basic formal mandate to signatories of the agreement that could protect their education services from explicit government repression, but it fails to provide them with clear authority. The text first states that that the Tatmadaw and EAOs shall work in consultation with one another to "improve livelihoods, health, education, and regional development for the people."[228] It later states that, "The ethnic armed organizations that are signatories to this agreement have been responsible for development and security in their respective areas," and that prior to a political settlement, signatories are to, "in consultation with one another," undertake "projects concerning the health, education, and socioeconomic development of civilians," and "efforts to preserve and promote ethnic culture, language, and literature."[229]

In August 2015, a "senior delegation" of leading figures from the most powerful EAOs in the negotiating bloc went to Nay Pyi Taw for talks aimed at clearing up remaining issues with the NCA text, one of which was the lack of comprehensive "interim arrangements," particularly in the area of education. As a compromise, it was agreed that an attachment to the NCA, including details that were agreed

---

[226] The 1908 Unlawful Associations Act was promulgated when the country was under British colonial rule. The unlawful associations list is not publicly available, but is known to include all EAOs that remain in opposition and have not signed the NCA, including those with bilateral ceasefires in place.
[227] National Education Law (2014), Chapter 6, Articles 31 and 34.
[228] Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (2015), Article 9a.
[229] Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (2015), Article 25.

in person but omitted from the official text, would state that the above-mentioned NCA articles "shall not restrict or prohibit…implementing the education program."[230] The apparent intent was to ensure that the provision committing both sides to carry out such activities "in consultation with one another" would not be used as a premise for the government to unilaterally restrict existing social services and development activities of EAOs and their networks. In practice, there have been no issues with the government actively prohibiting ethnic education, so these provisions are of limited utility. Furthermore, these provisions only apply to EAOs that sign the agreement, and have no scope for including non-EAO-related EBEPs, so they hinge on the political status of groups, rather than on what is best for the provision of education.

The NESP sets a positive precedent for MoE policy by making at least some references to the existence of ethnic education actors. An NESP "Policy and Programming Framework," approved by the former government at the end of its term, briefly mentions "ethnic education schools" and "ethnic education systems," once each, at the end of lists of other non-state providers, including private, monastic, and community-based. There is no mention of schooling systems linked to religions other than Buddhism.[231]

Recommendations

As an overture to EBEPs, and to facilitate greater cooperation in the near term, the NLD government should offer in Parliament an amendment to the National Education Law, or propose a new law altogether, that explicitly acknowledges EBEPs and the role they currently play in providing basic education. This legislation should not prescribe a specific form that EBEPs must take, require a specific process of registration, or be tied to a specific ceasefire agreement. Rather, it should openly recognize the status quo by stating that EBEPs of various types and affiliations are important providers of formal, basic education in the country, and may receive funds from communities and international actors. More formal accreditation of EBEPs, their schools, and their staff should be a separate and longer-term aim.

The legislation should commit the government to coordinating its own education programs with EBEPs wherever both are operating. It could stipulate that the MoE and other government bodies will consult with EBEPs on matters of national education policy and issues related to ethnic cultures, languages, and history. It could also state that EBEPs may receive funds from government entities, thereby creating space for future delegation of funds and responsibilities by Union or state/region governments.

Further consideration and consultations with EBEPs would be necessary to determine the appropriate terms and categories for EBEPs, but the emphasis should be on recognizing that a variety of ethnic actors are providing basic education, and on allowing more space for engagement between them and government actors at the local level, rather than on creating perfect categories. Particular consideration would also be needed for religious providers, including church-based groups, that often provide education to ethnic communities through local teachers and using MTB-MLE, but that may not identify explicitly by their ethnicity.

If getting such a law through Parliament is not possible, the government could issue a presidential notification to the same effect. At the very least, these provisions should be included in future MoE policies to properly recognize the status quo in its operating environment.

Government recommendation #3
Provide legal recognition to EBEPs, without specific conditions or registration requirements.

---

[230] *Decisions and Records for Reference Extracted from the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement Drafting Meetings,* attachment to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, October 12, 2015. The document is referred to in Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (2015), Article 30.
[231] Myanmar Ministry of Education (2016), pp. 8, 29.

Towards improved coordination and cooperation

Many of the issues examined here involve the need for better communication and coordination between the government and EBEPs. Existing challenges will be difficult to solve through piecemeal agreements and occasional discussions. Although far from adequate, there are some forms of coordination that already exist, and that can be built upon. These include ground-level engagements between EBEPs and government where they naturally overlap, as well as recent, more formal engagements, often facilitated by international actors.

In mixed schools, MoE and EBEP teachers interact with each other on a daily basis. MoE township education officers (TEOs) and the administrative staff of EBEPs have varying levels of direct engagement with each other, particularly in areas where there are many mixed schools. In Mon areas, where there are 95 MoE-MNED mixed schools, cooperation appears strongest at the local level, where MoE head teachers and TEOs have often been more cooperative with MNED than their MoE superiors at state and union levels.

In areas of mixed KNU and government control where the MoE has rapidly expanded its presence, coordination between the KED and the MoE has been limited. According to a KED administrator in the East Daw Na region, he has met with the local TEO informally a few times when they have passed each other's workplace. For example, the TEO once stopped at a KED high school that has one MoE teacher on his way to nearby sub-township towns. KED officials have also visited the Township Education Office when visiting Myawaddy. "This helps, as they know our situation better – what [their teachers] should and shouldn't do [in our schools and communities]. It also helps us to ensure that government teachers [are told to] follow KED policy, which is very helpful," he explained. "The TEO knows that we have our own education policy and so on, but there has been no political dialogue yet [in the peace process], so [the relationship] is not stable. But he understands that we should cooperate during the transition period. So they don't try to stop us using the KED curriculum." [232]

These relationships are often hampered, however, by a perceived lack of freedom among low-level TEOs and EBEP administrators to openly engage with their counterparts from the other system. Some EBEP staff said this was particularly true of MoE TEOs, who can be relatively cooperative and supportive of EBEP activities on the ground, but are still hesitant and inconsistent in their interactions, or simply lack the seniority to affect broader policy issues.[233] Indeed, according to another KED staff member in East Daw Na, in practice, the MoE has often failed to respond to the KED when trying to manage issues with new MoE teachers in KED-administered schools.[234]

On the other hand, EBEP administrators in some areas are restricted by their leadership from engaging directly with their MoE counterparts, or are hesitant to be too forward while peace negotiations remain ongoing. As explained by a KED district administrator in one KNU district, "Our department does not stand alone. We are under the district. Our district does not want to make any contact with the government, so we do not have any communication. Our position on the matter is the same as theirs." In this district, issues related to sending KED curriculum to mixed schools, among others, have had to be coordinated between the KED's central office and the MoE's Kayin State Education Department.[235]

Since MoE teachers began being dispatched to a number of RCSS-supported schools in Shan State, the RCSS has reportedly struggled to engage the MoE systematically due to a lack of local-level capacity.[236]

At more senior levels, initiatives supported by UNICEF have increased cooperation and coordination

---

[232] This case was taken from the KED administrator of KNU's Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District, an area that is in the government-defined Myawaddy Township, and so under the Myawaddy Township Education Department.
[233] Similar opinions were shared by MNEC/MNED members and KED staff at various levels.
[234] Interview with East Daw Na deputy administrator (October 2015).
[235] Interview with a KED district administrator (November 2015).
[236] Interview with SSDF representative, Chiang Mai (February 2016).

between some EBEPs and the government systems.[237] In 2015, the MoE's state education departments in Mon and Kayin States began hosting formal, quarterly, state-level education coordination meetings.[238] These are open to all actors working in education in the state, including EBEPs, and are facilitated by UNICEF. These meetings have provided opportunities to discuss MoE provision of textbooks to MNED, and student transfers between EBEP and government schools, and for EBEPs to give presentations on their programs and activities and to ask questions and raise concerns.[239] These meetings have also been complemented by other forms of engagement between EBEPs and the MoE, including a steering committee for developing a new Mon-language curriculum, and coordination of grants for MNEC/MNED schools via the MoE.

According to one of MNEC's most senior leaders, these new opportunities for interaction, particularly the coordination meetings, have brought notably positive changes in attitude among local MoE officials. However, she said, this has not had a great impact on policy, because state/township-level officials do not have the authority to make big changes.

> Our experiences with the UNICEF language policy and coordination events have brought a change in the attitude of [state- and township-level MoE staff] and their understanding of mother tongue language education. They are supportive, and they have changed. However, those officers are not the policymakers; they are just the implementers, and they can't really influence the policymakers; so those [more senior officials] are not being changed….[240]

Furthermore, the same MNEC leader expressed concern that the government is not genuinely interested in engaging MNEC directly or establishing more formal coordination of the intricate, practical challenges that require better communication.

> We would prefer it if the government were bringing us together, one-to-one with them, and not just UNICEF inviting us. UNICEF has created the space, and it has been helpful, but ideally, in the future, the state government should create the space for coordination and run it.… The MoE's Mon State Education Department said, "You should come to us anytime you have a problem." But we don't want to just look at it like that. We want to meet regularly, to improve our work together, not just when we have problems.… If it is just to deal with problems, then we will be hesitant to go to them with small problems, but if we have regular coordination, then we can address all the small issues based on our regular experiences and can deal with them.[241]

Less in-depth discussions with KED/KSEAG leaders indicate that the state-level coordination meetings have also been very welcome and have been useful to begin building trust and start addressing key issues. However, they have still been unable to gain clarity from the MoE on certain issues they have raised, and they hope that more practical and focused engagements will be possible with the new government.[242]

Leaders from MNEC, KED/KSEAG, and RDFSS also expressed their desire to be recognized as key stakeholders in national education reform; they were disappointed at their lack of proper inclusion in the Comprehensive Education Sector Reform (CESR) initiative and in the drafting of education laws at the Union and state level. According to a senior MNEC leader, "With the UNICEF program, we

---

[237] In 2013, UNICEF Myanmar began a Dutch-funded, three-year, USD 5.5 million peacebuilding, education, and advocacy (PBEA) program. The PBEA has enabled the agency to mainstream peacebuilding into its existing country education project, the Quality Basic Education Program (QBEP), which largely supports the government.
[238] Three have been held in Mon State – in February, May, and October 2015. One has been held in Kayin State, in December 2015. All were attended by MNEC, and the KED also attended the meeting in Kayin state.
[239] Meeting minutes, Kayin and Mon state education stakeholder coordination meetings, February, May, October, and December 2015.
[240] Interview with a senior MNEC leader (November 2015).
[241] Interview with a senior MNEC leader (November 2015).
[242] Interviews and looser discussions with KED senior staff (October 2015, February 2016, May 2016).

are involved as invitees whenever they have training or events, but we are not considered to be key stakeholders who can really effect change…, the government just does everything by itself."[243]

Recommendations

Concerted and regular coordination between the MoE and EBEPs will be crucial to building more collaborative relationships and to achieving all of the objectives outlined in this report. This could be achieved through regular forums at various administrative levels. These would likely vary in design from region to region, depending on the size and number of present EBEPs.

In areas with many EBEP schools, MoE and EBEPs should establish regional coordination mechanisms to discuss broad issues and joint education planning. The Mon and Kayin state coordination mechanisms facilitated by UNICEF could provide a good model, and should be continued where MoE and EBEPs continue to value them. But ultimately, it is crucial that the government itself take steps to create formal spaces for coordination, and that these engagements become more practical and focused.

The most practical way to organize these forums might not always be by state or region. For relatively large and centralized EAOs such as the KED/KSEAG and MNEC/MNED, it might be useful to have separate mechanisms for each EBEP, with participation from MoE staff from all the relevant townships in their catchment areas.[244] This might allow for more concerted and practical collaboration. There might be cases where forums organized by ethnic nationality might be most useful, for example among Kachin EBEPs in both Kachin and northern Shan State. There might be other cases where smaller, sub-state areas are the most logical organizational unit, such as in Shan State, where the political geography varies widely between different areas. In some cases, it might be most useful to explicitly base coordination around the territories of specific EAOs. This broadly defined level of coordination will be called "regional-level coordination" for the remainder of the report.

Additionally, regular and systematic meetings between administrators at township or equivalent levels should be used to deal with specific, practical issues, particularly where EBEPs have relatively small coverage. To ensure that administrators have the authority and confidence to work together, the MoE and EBEPs should use regional coordination to mandate engagements at the lower level and set parameters for key areas where cooperation and joint action are necessary.

Where possible, coordination mechanisms and processes should ensure that communities retain a central role in administering and allocating resources for their schools. Community school committees have been at the heart of education in remote areas, administering school resources procured from a wide range of external actors, and filling gaps in school services left by EBEPs and the MoE. Their role is not always properly recognized by education providers, however, and there seems to be no systematic way for them to evaluate the services available from various different actors and conduct strategic planning for their schools. In practice, they generally have to take whatever they can get, even when there are pros and cons to different forms of assistance. Options for school-level coordination, which would be key to community-led approaches, are discussed in Sections 9 and 10.

Government and EAO/EBEP recommendation #1
Establish formal coordination mechanisms at appropriate administrative levels.

---

[243] Interview with a senior MNEC leader (November 2015).
[244] EBEP coverage does not usually correspond to government administrative designations of states and regions. For example, the MNEC/MNED provide services in Kayin State, and the KSEAG provides services in Mon, Bago, and Tanintharyi. Therefore, coordination mechanisms might be formally centered on states/regions but also include relevant people working in surrounding states and regions. In the framework for political dialogue developed following the partial signing of the NCA, regional dialogues at this level are referred to as "national dialogues," seemingly because they relate to specific nationalities (e.g., Karen or Shan), not to Union-level talks.

There would be particular value in establishing regular, Union-level consultations on broader strategies and agendas, perhaps on a biannual or annual basis. This would create space for discussion of reforms in the education sector in general, and would also allow senior MoE staff and senior ethnic leaders to guide and promote focused engagement locally. This is what occurred in Myanmar's health sector, where Union-level engagement between the Ministry of Health and ethnic and community-based health organizations was crucial to empowering state and region health directors to work directly with their ethnic counterparts.

In particular, Union-level coordination should be used to allow the MoE and EBEPs to begin aligning strategies, agendas, and priorities, to ensure that such plans are "country-owned" in the broadest sense, rather than merely "government-owned". Developing joint targets and indicators to monitor progress would also promote a common approach to education reform and to improving overall sector planning.

To achieve this, the NLD government must foster a more inclusive approach to education planning and policy by making other education providers genuine and valued stakeholders. This is important, firstly, for the very practical reason that other providers will be critical to achieving universal access to education, and their input is essential. Additionally, ensuring that government plans are viewed as legitimate and jointly owned is critical to getting other actors to support them. Finally, failure to include EBEPs in education planning and policymaking would exacerbate long-held grievances about the state's failure to include ethnic leaders in the affairs of the Union more generally, and particularly in the state-building process.

Government and EAO/EBEP recommendation #2

Develop mechanisms for Union-level coordination to align education strategies, agendas, and priorities, as well as to allow greater space for lower-level engagement.

Government recommendation #4

Foster more inclusive approaches to education planning and policy by recognizing other education providers as genuine and valued stakeholders.

At the same time, EBEPs should recognize that the MoE will continue to lead the development of education strategies, as it is the largest education provider in the country and the government is charged with a responsibility to its electorate to improve the education sector. EBEPs should work to align their agendas and strategies with those set by the government, as long as such efforts do not contradict their mandate or obstruct their operations.

Such alignment will encourage greater support from government, and from major international development partners as well. For donors to commit development funds, they must show how they are contributing to global, regional, and national targets. If EBEPs can demonstrate, using common indicators, that their services are contributing to specific, government-set targets, it will clearly demonstrate their value and earn them greater support. Therefore, EBEPs should not see alignment with some government strategies as an implication of their inferiority or a threat to their autonomy; they should see it as a strategically wise policy.

EAO/EBEP recommendation #2

Recognize that the MoE is responsible for leading the development of education strategies, and that EBEPs can benefit from aligning their agendas and strategies with the government's.

International aid community recommendation #2
Continue to support coordination initiatives where participants deem them worthwhile, but encourage the MoE to take more initiative and responsibility.

SECTION NINE: Ministry of Education expansion into ceasefire areas

Benefiting from extensive new resources and new access due to ceasefires, the MoE has extended its coverage significantly in some new ceasefire areas, where territories remain contested and where EBEPs are often already providing support for education. While this has the potential to improve education for under-served communities, in practice it has often led to a range of practical and political complications, damaging confidence in ceasefires and hampering service delivery.

This section discusses how MoE expansion has taken place in these areas, how it has been received by EAOs and communities, and highlights some of the initial challenges experienced. It then provides recommendations for better coordination of MoE expansion in ceasefire areas. Related issues that arise once the MoE is established in EBEP-supported schools, are discussed in Section 10.

MoE expansion seems to have been particularly prevalent in KNU and KKO/DKBA ceasefire areas, where thousands of teachers have been assigned to existing KED/KSEAG-supported schools in the past few years.[245] Some MNED/MNEC Mon national schools have experienced similar advances from the MoE, but Mon schools are generally in areas where the MoE already has its own schools nearby, or where the NMSP is more clearly recognized as the local authority and the state does not try to enter without permission. An unknown, but seemingly smaller, number of teachers have been sent to areas controlled by the RCSS in recent years, including some where the RCSS's education department and the Shan State Development Foundation provide support. However, little information was collected on these developments in Mon and Shan, as they seemed less prevalent overall. Accordingly, this section draws primarily on research conducted in Karen areas for the analysis.

The MoE has expanded its presence in ceasefire areas primarily by sending its teachers and offering school infrastructure upgrades to community schools. This has been possible because the recent ceasefires have failed to provide even temporary territorial divisions to delineate authority.[246] In Karen areas, and perhaps elsewhere, these MoE advances have been at the forefront of wider efforts to extend government administration into ceasefire territories.

In Kayin State, nine settlements, mostly in areas of mixed authority, have been designated as "sub-township" towns by the General Administration Department, which falls under the military-run Ministry of Home Affairs and is the backbone of the government's local governance structure.[247] All of these settlements are surrounded by territories controlled or influenced by EAOs, but they have been brought under somewhat stable government control in recent years through the establishment of Tatmadaw bases or by local, state-backed paramilitary actors. In each of them, GAD offices and police stations have been established, and government high schools and health facilities have been built or greatly expanded. These sites have then served as administrative centers for the surrounding territories. New roads have also been built to connect these settlements to each other and to other major towns and international trade gates.[248] (See Maps 1 and 4 for the locations of sub-township towns in Southeast Myanmar, and Map 3 for sub-township towns and road developments in the area around Waw Lay Myaing and Su Ka Li.

---

[245] Between the academic years 2012-13 and 2015-16, the number of MoE teachers active in KSEAG schools rose by 3,144. However, this number does not represent the total that have been dispatched, as there have been dropouts, and many schools have rejected them.

[246] Initial bilateral ceasefires in January and April 2012 did not mention territorial divisions. Subsequent efforts led by the KNU to establish a bilateral code of conduct that would, at least in part, deal with territorial arrangements were stifled repeatedly by lack of buy-in from the Tatmadaw, and eventually were sidelined in late 2013, as attention was drawn to the multilateral NCA negotiations. NCA talks then stalled for over a year, in part because of failure to agree on interim arrangements defining the authority and mandate of EAOs. In the final NCA text, the "interim arrangements" are limited (discussed in Section 8) and do not provide for clearly defined territorial divisions.

[247] These are Leik Tho, Baw Ga Li, Kamarmaung, Paingkyon, Shan Ywar Thit, Kyaikdon, Su Ka Li, and Waw Lay Myaing.

[248] There are 84 "sub-township" towns across the country. There was some backlash from Parliament to the use of the term "sub-township," as the designation does not appear in the Constitution, and so these settlements are now formally just known as towns. However, the term "sub-township" is still widely used by government and development partners, and was central to the methodologies and datasets used in the Myanmar census published in 2015, and the towns are still primarily operating as administrative centers for surrounding rural areas rather than as self-contained settlements.

Since the 2012 KNU ceasefire, the government has been able to connect with communities surrounding these settlements and those on the periphery of township capitals, often in areas where the only previous government visits had been from the Tatmadaw. The state's first step in engaging new communities has often been for GAD, MoE, or Tatmadaw officials to offer support to community schools, including those that have long been supported by KSEAG and local EAO authorities. From township capitals, TEOs have often engaged communities directly; from sub-township towns, such efforts have usually been led by head teachers of the new high schools.

Teachers have been the main form of support offered – often less qualified daily-wage teachers. School grants, for things ranging from new roofs and toilets to Sky Net television, have also often been offered, sometimes as a first step to initiate relations with the school. Both of these kinds of support have generally acted as a starting point for increased MoE engagement, leading towards the school being converted into a branch school and then a full MoE school. Government officials have not coordinated their efforts explicitly with the KED or other KSEAG bodies at the central, district, or township level.

Some communities and EAO authorities have accepted the offered support, some have resisted but have been coerced or forced to accept it, while others have rejected it altogether. Overall, the number of MoE teachers in KED/KSEAG-supported schools almost tripled between the 2012-13 and 2015-16 school years, from 1,574 to 4,718, leading to the creation of 379 new mixed schools. In 2015-16, 49.3 percent of KSEAG-supported schools also have MoE teachers, up from 26.6 percent in 2012-13. Among this 49.3 percent, KSEAG reports that nearly all now have a strong MoE "administrative presence." Many of these schools have received consistent support from the KED for decades, and were considered KED schools by local people; others have likely struggled to obtain consistent support from any actor in the past, and are primarily considered community schools.

An unknown number (likely dozens) of schools that were formerly administered solely by the KSEAG or the MNEC/MNED have been fully converted into government schools in recent years.

EAO concerns and risks to the ceasefires

Given that the state has never fully governed many of these areas, and that education is often already being provided by EAOs and associated EBEPs, this rapid expansion appears unquestionably political in nature. This has greatly deepened suspicions among some EAO leaders that the government just aims to use ceasefires to override their territories through development rather than to negotiate a political settlement.

The NMSP reportedly does not prohibit schools from supporting the MoE.[249] The RCSS's position is less clear, but it is developing an education policy that includes an approach to coordination with the government, particularly in light of the NCA signing. In practice, there is probably great variety among local-level commanders and administrators of both EAOs, meaning that the response to MoE initiatives differs from area to area.[250]

KNU headquarters has issued numerous warnings that the government is expanding its presence prior to negotiation through the provision of education support. These have not usually prescribed whether local authorities should accept the teachers, but have urged them to make appropriate plans for their area. The responses of local KNU and KKO/DKBA authorities have differed from place to place, depending on the degree of EAO control, the extent of existing service provision, and the varied attitudes of different leaders, who tend to enjoy significant autonomy from their central leaders.

In some areas, district leaders have set firm rules for lower-level authorities to obstruct government

---

[249] WCRP and HURFOM (2015), p.28.
[250] Interview with SSDF, Chiang Mai, February 2016.

activities, wherever possible, until the peace process moves forward and they feel more confident. In other areas, the KNU has been more flexible in allowing communities to choose, though generally advising them against engaging too fast. According to one local-level KED official in a mixed-authority area, "If the KED or the individual school requests support or accepts [teachers or other support] from government, then they are allowed. But if it is not agreed, it's not OK. In 2013, the government started sending teachers without request. This is a problem."

As this demonstrates, although MoE expansion is often permitted, its rapid and uncoordinated nature has been of great concern to the KNU overall. KNLA battalion commanders from six out of seven brigades stated that the expansion of the government's administration through development and social service delivery was the most urgent security threat they face, citing the concomitant strengthening of the Tatmadaw as of less but still significant concern. Commanders from one brigade, whose area includes the two sub-township towns that have received particularly high levels of international support through the government, listed government and outside investments in social services as its primary threat.[251]

A number of KNU leaders at various administrative levels described new government assistance as a cause of tension between the KNU and the communities that have long fallen under KNU administration. "Some villagers misunderstand the KNU because we cannot support them the way the government can," explained one local administrator.[252] One executive committee member of the KNU explained, "The government is going into the villages and making many offers, and because the people don't understand the importance of the political process, they simply think the government is improving things for them, but they don't understand the bigger [political] problems and the need for genuine change."[253]

KNU leaders and other interviewees concerned about government expansion often over-estimate the level of international assistance for these initiatives, perhaps not realizing that increases of MoE resources have come mostly from increased government spending, despite some not insignificant ODA as well.

External support for the government is perceived by some KNU leaders to be tipping the popularity scales in the government's favor. According to the chief commander of the KNLA Fifth Brigade, whose area remains almost entirely autonomous and has never been under centralized rule, "The international community gives support to the government, and they provide for our people, and it becomes like they are government[-ruled] people. So when we go to [peace] negotiations, what can we say? Because it looks like we have no people."[254] According to a local-level KED administrator, "The government gets a good reputation from this because of international support. The international community should not give support only to them. They should not be biased.... These funds serve to make a good name for the government, but that just means they will control our people."[255]

Similar concerns were expressed by a senior commander from the KKO/DKBA, whose EAO has often solicited education support from the MoE in the past, but has had patchier relations with the government since nearly a year of renewed conflict in 2010 and 2011. According to the commander, "We feel like the government is trying to separate the civilians from the EAOs. It seems like the wrong attitude. We accept the [Myanmar] government's administration, but their approach is the wrong way. If there is peace, then we can accept, but now it is too early."

---

[251] Focus group discussion with KNLA battalion commanders (November 2015). The specific concern about health and education was shared by many participants, but it was considered most important by battalion commanders of the KNLA's Seventh Brigade, whose area of operation corresponds roughly to the government's Hpa-an and Hlaingbwe Townships and northern parts of Myawaddy and Kawkareik Townships. Paing Kyon and Shan Ywar Thit were not mentioned specifically, however.
[252] Interview with East Daw Na region chairperson (October 2015).
[253] Interview with the KNU's joint general secretary two, Padoh Thaw Thi Bwe (February 2014).
[254] Interview with Fifth Brigade chief commander (November 2015).
[255] Interview with East Daw Na region KED head administrator (October 2015).

Additionally, KNU leaders and KED teachers expressed concern about the sustainability of new channels of assistance to communities if they are established before a more stable security and governance environment is in place. As one teacher explained in discussions with the author in 2013, "As we see all of [these changes], we can clearly see the Karen system being broken down.… If they attack us again, we will be weaker, because our community will be lost." According to the deputy chairperson number two of Mu Traw District, his local administration remains focused on strengthening its own system of governance in case ceasefires break down, and he fears that any assistance that depends on cooperation with the government will be unsustainable.[256]

EAOs have also expressed fears that the government will use MoE teachers to gather intelligence. According to a battalion commander from the KNLA's Fourth Brigade, "[The teachers] have to go to the town once a month to report to their leaders; they might be reporting on other matters."[257] Some civilians interviewed in a mixed authority area in Shan State said they worried that the RCSS would be against allowing MoE teachers to the area, in part because they might suspect them as spies.[258]

Community responses to government advances

Community responses to MoE overtures vary greatly depending on their own feelings and on their relations with various authorities. Some communities defer to EAOs in their area, who might allow or disallow MoE access, while others act on their own initiative.

In one of the main research areas, the KNU-defined East Daw Na region of Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District (see Map 3), there are 32 schools, three of which have long received MoE and KSEAG support. The other 29 have long been KED/KSEAG-only schools, but have all been offered MoE teachers and other forms of support between 2012 and late 2015. While 13 schools eventually accepted the teachers, bringing the region's total number of mixed schools up to 16, the other 16 refused, and remain KED/KSEAG-only schools. In a 2015 report, the Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) documented MoE offers of support to seven MNEC/MNED Mon national schools, of which three accepted and four refused.[259]

Government teachers are immediately attractive to communities because they are said to be free, whereas communities have to provide money or food to support EBEP teachers. They are sometimes also required to help find and recruit EBEP teachers. As one villager explained to the Karen Human Rights Group, "[The education situation] has been improving very much compared to the past. In the past, we had to hire the teachers, but now we do not have to hire the teachers. The teachers are sent into our village [by the MoE], and it makes it easier [for] the villagers."[260] On the other hand, many times government teachers have led to extra costs for communities too, often without much transparency or prior notice.[261]

Some communities also see receiving government teachers, and thus being incorporated into the MoE system, as a bonus, because it appears to offer students greater opportunities for the future. It is typically easier for students who have been to a government primary school to get into government

---

[256] Interview with deputy chairperson two of Mu Traw District (November 2015).

[257] Interview with battalion commander from KNLA Fourth Brigade (November 2015).

[258] Focus group discussion with school committee members, Hsipaw Township, Shan State (December 2015).

[259] WCRP and HURFOM (2015), p. 28. This was likely an MNED or community-supported teacher, but the report does not specify.

[260] *Karen Human Rights Group website*, "Dooplaya Interview: Saw A---, April 2014*,*" June 18, 2015. Available at: http://khrg.org/2015/06/14-34-a1-i1/dooplaya-interview-saw-april-2014#sthash.9GSV9apQ.dpuf. KHRG has reported similar points of view from other communities too. See "Thaton Interview: Saw A---, October 2014," July 28, 2015. Available at: http://khrg.org/2015/07/14-85-a6-i1/thaton-interview-saw-october-2014.

[261] According to KED administrators, new government teachers have initiated new costs in some cases, such as toilet cleaning, or have charged parents textbook fees. Out of 32 Karen communities surveyed by KTWG, six reported that "the government teacher seeks additional tuition fees from parents in the community." See also KHRG (2016), pp. 38-39. KHRG has also documented cases of government teachers charging parents for their own travel costs and for costs related to a sports competition. See *Karen Human Rights Group website*, "Thaton Situation Update," February 14, 2015. Available at: http://khrg.org/2015/02/14-101-s1/thaton-situation-update-bilin-thaton-kyaikto-and-hpa-an-townships-september#sthash.a3MdX9jP.dpuf.

middle or secondary school. Meanwhile, EBEP middle and secondary schools in the country are limited in number, meaning students that pass grade four in an EBEP school often have to leave home to continue their education, either to other villages in Myanmar, or across borders to schools in the refugee camps. As the number of government middle and high schools rises, and ceasefires allow greater mobility between rural EAO-influenced areas and the towns, there are increasing opportunities for parents to put their children into government schools near their homes.

On the other hand, communities have many reservations about government assistance, following decades of war in which they were often targets of Tatmadaw counterinsurgency strategies aimed at destabilizing communities that support EAOs. As discussed in Section 7, the main reasons that communities have such reservations include their own fear and distrust of the state, their aversion to having Bamar or other outsider teachers in the community, fears that they will not be able to maintain classes in their own language, and their own desires for autonomy. Indeed, according to HURFOM, three communities that recently accepted MoE support for the first time did so under the precondition that the schools would take government teachers, limit the teaching of Mon language, and begin using government school uniforms. [262]

HURFOM also provides accounts from three village administrators who rejected assistance from the MoE, citing these reasons. One of the village administrators they interviewed said, "We would rather be poor than accept their support." Another village administrator said, "The Burmese government offered to support the school, but it would become their school…. We have no plan to get their help and support."[263] A Karen woman quoted by KHRG explained sentiments in her village in Mu Traw District:

> "Actually the Burmese government wants to support our education, but we do not allow them. … Our leaders [KNU] do not allow them and the villagers do not accept it either. I think their support would not be sufficient even if we allowed them. They [Myanmar government] will not do it properly, and only do it to make themselves look good."[264]

A young KSEAG teacher working in her own village expressed significant skepticism about the government's intent in offering support to her school.[265] "The government is trying to occupy the area," she explained. When asked if the MoE official was not, in fact, just trying to help the village, she shook her head and explained, "I can see [the MoE official] just wants to send government teachers. He also asked immediately if I wanted to be a government teacher myself, and said I could apply,… but I don't want to serve the government."

In many cases where communities have had such reservations, however, they have ultimately, grudgingly accepted government support. One such example is a school in the East Daw Na region, which had been supported by KSEAG for 16 years before accepting government offers to construct a new school building and provide government teachers in 2012. According to the village leader, "As Karen people, we would prefer [to have only] KSEAG teachers, but in this situation we cannot refuse [government] assistance. We cannot do it ourselves, that's why we need the government's help."[266] According to a teacher in a Mon national school formerly administered by MNEC/MNED, "We did not want to accept Burmese teachers, but as the NMSP could not provide support to our school, we had to accept support from the Burmese government."[267]

---

[262] WCRP AND HURFOM (2015), p. 28. This was likely an MNED or community-supported teacher but the report does not specify.

[263] WCRP AND HURFOM (2015), pp. 28-29.

[264] KHRG (2016), p. 40

[265] Interview with schoolteacher, East Daw Na region, October 2015. The teacher had been visited directly by the Su Ka Li sub-township administrator on one occasion, and by an MoE official, who had reportedly refused to speak with the KED, on another.

[266] Discussion with village leader and school committee of school one, East Daw Na region (October 2015).

[267] WCRP AND HURFOM (2015), p. 28. This was likely an MNED or community-supported teacher, but the report does not specify. The KHRG also documented a case where the community had not wanted to accept government teachers but had eventually realized that if they did not allow a mix of "local school teachers and government teachers [in the education system], the students [would not be able to] continue their education into high school, because they do not have high school and college… [in the village]."

Thus, the inability of EBEPs to meet demand and the feeling that the community cannot alone cover the cost of education are key factors contributing to MoE expansion. As Padoh La Say, the head of the KED, conceded, "The problem is that we can't support the teachers, so the government sends theirs."[268]

In another case reported by the Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG), communities were said to have accepted government teachers despite hesitations, because that was considered the only way to ensure their children could continue past primary school. According to the report, "The [Myanmar] government sent schoolteachers to the Karen villages, but some Karen villagers do not want school teachers from the government. However, if they do not mix local schoolteachers and government teachers [in the education system], the students cannot continue their education into high school,… so this is causing difficulty."[269] A committee leader in another village where a government teacher was recently accepted also explained concerns about having two systems overlap.[270]

In other cases, however, communities refused to accept teachers or other support, but were pressured into taking them anyway. In one such case, the village leader stated, "The community doesn't want the government teacher either, but the government found a way to get her here." Apparently, the MoE persistently pushed for the community to take a teacher, but the village leader repeatedly refused, as he had two KED/KSEAG-supported teachers at the school already. As the village was near a Tatmadaw Tactical Command base, however, he was reportedly called to the base and scolded, being told, "You don't know anything. The government wants to help you voluntarily, and you don't understand, because you have no brain!" The village leader apparently delayed the decision by saying that he would wait to see if other villages in his village tract accepted. After further refusals, the MoE teacher simply arrived at the village with her luggage and said she was staying, and so the village leader felt obliged to accept her.[271] The teacher herself explained that she had been waiting in Su Ka LI Sub-Township Town for a few years, filling in at the Su Ka Li high school, while the village repeatedly refused to let her join their school.[272]

Persistent pressure from the government was also described by the head teacher of a large and long-established KED middle school in a village tract controlled entirely by the KNU, but surrounded by areas where authority is mixed with the KKO/DKBA and the government. The teacher initially refused to accept notebooks, stationery, and textbooks from government officials, but was later called to Wawlay Myaing Sub-township Town by the KKO/DKBA and pressured into taking government school uniforms from the MoE high school. According to the head teacher, "When I returned, the KNU questioned me about it, but I said, "How could I say no?" You see, it's a mixed authority area [and the DKBA had called me]."[273]

The middle school head teacher, who had previously been an MoE head teacher and a village tract leader in Ayeyarwady Region for 20 years, explained that he thought the government's main intention

---

[268] Interview with P'doh La Say, head of the KED (September 2015).

[269] *Karen Human Rights Group website*, "Hpa-an Situation Update: Hlaingbwe and Nabu townships, December 2014 to January 2015," July 23, 2015. Available at: http://khrg.org/2015/07/15-32-s1/hpa-an-situation-update-hlaingbwe-and-nabu-townships-december-2014-january-2015#sthash.L3kHYB9w.dpuf.

[270] The interviewee said, "We are concerned about having two [education] systems overlapping, but we have to do what is necessary to keep the kids in school." Leader of school committee of school two, East Daw Na region (October 2015).

[271] In joint discussions with the village leader and the teacher, the former said that the KNU authorities had eventually agreed to receive her. However, in private conversations, he later explained that this wasn't entirely true, and that she had just arrived and made them feel obligated.

[272] Discussions in East Daw Na region village two (October 2015).

[273] Interview with KED/KSEAG head teacher (October 2015). In April 2015, his school was reportedly visited, unannounced, by the GAD "sub-township administrator," high school head teacher, and an immigration official, all from Wawlay Myaing, who arrived with a truck full of notebooks, stationery, and textbooks that the head teacher refused to accept. Then, in August 2015, the KED/KSEAG head teacher received a phone call from a DKBA commander, who told him to come and meet them at Wawlay Myaing High School. This time, the sub-township administrator and MoE high school head teacher had a large set of school uniforms to give him. According to the KED head teacher, "I didn't want to accept it, but they kept insisting, and told us it was because they had extra. So I asked if I had to sign for it, and they said 'no', so I took it."

was to take over the school and to bring him under the MoE's administration again. He explained, "I know [the head teacher] just wants to help the government occupy the school. But I want to serve my people; I don't want to work too closely with the government. In my opinion, he does not really want to help the school; he just wants to take over because it is a school of more than 100 students. For schools that size the [State Education Department] can get six to eight lakh."[274]

Wasting human resources

As a result of MoE teachers being sent to community schools, seemingly hundreds of EBEP teachers have been effectively ousted from their schools, including many who have long served in their own villages. According to a survey conducted by the Karen Teacher Working Group (KTWG), local KED/KSEAG teachers had been ousted in 38 percent of the 32 communities where interviews were held. This demonstrates poor use of resources in a context where communities remain underserved, and where many gaps could be filled if deployments were coordinated more systematically. As will be discussed in Section 10, there have also been cases where these teachers then had to return before the end of the same school year because the MoE teachers were absent.

Furthermore, the MoE has been able to hire large numbers of former EBEP teachers in recent years due to the significantly higher salaries it can now offer. According to the MNEC, around 20 percent of the MNED teachers they were supporting in 2013 have been recruited by the MoE, most likely to work as daily-wage teachers. There has been no coordination between the two systems, nor has the MNED been compensated. The MoE and other government officials have made similar offers to KED/KSEAG-supported teachers when contacting community schools for the first time. According to the teacher quoted above who rejected such an offer, a number of her colleagues in other villages had accepted MoE employment.

To a large extent, this is an issue of the disparity in available finances between MoE and EBEPs. Teachers should have the right to change jobs freely between systems, and deserve to be paid well. However, it also highlights the need for better coordination of MoE expansion, as funds might be better spent bringing new teachers into service in under-served communities rather than taking teachers out of existing positions to change systems. These recruitments also add to EBEP and EAO perceptions of government hegemony, and risk further damaging confidence in the peace process.

Naturally, EBEPs also expand their services when they can. As a result of increased stability, the number of schools supported by KSEAG rose from 1,295 in academic year 2012-13 to 1,504 in 2015-16.[275] If not managed well, this may also cause administrative problems and inefficient outcomes on the ground, particularly if expansion is taking place at the expense of quality in existing schools. However, the KSEAG operational model means they are typically expanding to give additional teachers to under-supported schools, often where there is limited or no support from MoE, rather than attempting to bring existing schools under completely new administration.

Another issue in the deployment of MoE teachers to KNU areas without clear arrangements is their personal security, as they fall under the de facto jurisdiction of authorities who have not authorized their stay. As a local KED official explained, "We recently had five teachers arrive: two males and three females. I had to ask them, who is your leader? Who sent you? They didn't respond clearly, so I had to ask them what they expect to happen if there is an accident or a case,[276] and who is supposed to be taking responsibility for them."[277]

---

[274] The teacher was seemingly referring to MoE school grants, which are allocated based on the level of schooling and the number of students. The amount he cited could not be verified precisely, but it fits within the limits of figures provided in World Bank (2015), p. 52.

[275] The number of teachers supported actually decreased in this period, from 4,581 to 4,529, likely because KSEAG stopped subsidizing government teachers, and KSEAG-supported teachers in some areas were effectively made redundant by MoE expansion.

[276] The term "case" is usually used to refer to any kind of negative or concerning incident, particularly to a dispute. The English word has been adopted into the Myanmar language to such effect and is used by Karen and other Myanmar-based nationalities too.

[277] Interview with East Daw Na KED deputy administrator (October 2015).

Recommendations

These examples show that ethnic communities in many areas need more support for their schools, but that their willingness to accept it from the MoE varies. However, the way new resources have been committed and MoE teachers have been dispatched has created practical and political complications. Furthermore, while communities have demonstrated significant agency in their attempts to elicit different forms of support from different providers depending on their preference, they have received very little clear information about what is available, and no useful assistance in making strategic decisions for the benefit of their schools.

Better coordination between the MoE and EBEPs is crucial to allocating resources more effectively and in conflict-sensitive ways. This will require new attitudes and practices in the MoE and GAD. Under the previous government, local-level MoE and other government staff have focused primarily on expanding the MoE's own coverage, and have paid little attention to enhancing the role of existing service providers. Additionally, the routine involvement of GAD administrators in reaching out to new settlements suggests that MoE expansion is often part of broader GAD attempts to expand administrative control.

While the government has a mandate to ensure that all children have access to quality education, it need not be the sole actor providing that education directly. If MoE staff were incentivized first and foremost to ensure that maximum numbers of children in their jurisdictions were in school, they would be less concerned with bringing existing EBEP schools under MoE administration, and more inclined towards improving the quality of education in those schools and using their resources to reach remote populations not yet served by any provider. This would de-emphasize the abstract goal of simply dispatching large numbers of daily-wage teachers to remote areas, even where existing services are available, and reduce MoE recruitment of teachers already working for EBEPs.

In an ideal scenario, the government and EAOs would make formal arrangements, through the peace process, to determine catchment areas for different providers, including where they overlap and have to work together. But previous EAO efforts to establish comprehensive "interim arrangements" left them with only a vague recognition of the status quo, which then only applies to NCA signatories, and is, thus, tied to political factors. As a result, the MoE and EBEPs will have to take steps to coordinate more directly. Additionally, the government will often have to find ways to coordinate more effectively with EAOs, particularly where they do not have education authorities present.

As a first step, the MoE should make it mandatory for State Education Department staff, TEOs, and high school teachers involved in outreach to rural areas to contact all existing education providers for any school where they plan to send teachers or other support, rather than just dealing with the school itself or the local village leader. Communities in the Karen case study often insisted that the government coordinate new support directly with the KED or the KNU, but the government typically failed to do so, leading to mixed outcomes. In many EBEP catchment areas, EBEPs were receptive to government support for schools they administered, but were also insistent that it be well coordinated to ensure the best use of resources and the protection of existing values and structures.[278]

Government recommendation #5
Consult all existing education providers whenever deploying teachers or offering resources to schools in new communities.

---

[278] As noted, there are still some areas under the authority of EAOs or EBEPs that remain totally averse to MoE activity.

Where possible, more systematic coordination of catchment areas should take place at the "regional level". Multilateral coordination mechanisms such as those recommended in Section 8 could provide a forum to begin such discussions. Providers should aim to delineate areas where MoE is the main provider, areas where EBEPs are the main providers, and areas where there is a high degree of overlap. Specific local protocols could then be developed for the areas of greatest overlap.

In some areas, de facto arrangements are already in place, if not spelled out explicitly, due to the nature of territorial control. In areas where EAOs are strongest, the MoE has far less access, for example. Mutual recognition of such arrangements, even as temporary expedients, would facilitate coordination and reduce the risk of conflict over social service expansion. Formalizing such agreements in the peace process would further build trust and make them more binding.

Government and EAO/EBEP recommendation #3
Through regional coordination, delineate areas of coverage where possible, while recognizing that many areas are inevitably areas of mixed coverage.

When the MoE is expanding into areas of mixed control, it is crucial that it has the approval of present EAOs, in order to avoid disputes, and assure communities that MoE support is authorized. This is also crucial to the personal security of MoE teachers. In cases where EAOs have active education departments providing education, this approval may be achieved through coordination with them as discussed above. In other cases, EAOs may have to be engaged separately, or could be brought into coordination mechanisms as separate actors.

In practice this is complicated, and it will not always be possible – or even justified – for MoE to require a certified "green light" from every armed actor with influence in every village. This is because many areas are subject to the authority of multiple EAOs and state-backed paramilitary actors, which also vary in their legitimacy as representatives of local communities. Nonetheless, particularly where EAO authority is firmly established, it is critical that the MoE and other government actors are making efforts to consult them on the deployment of teachers and other forms of assistance as much possible. This is especially important where communities are eager for support but remain hesitant without clear approval from EAOs they live under.

Government recommendation #6
Always consult EAOs that have well-established authority in target areas before dispatching MoE teachers or offering other support to communities.

Where possible, particularly in areas of mixed coverage, formal discussions should take place at the school level between the MoE, EBEPs, and communities (represented by school committees, parents, respected local teachers, and possibly village leaders). Such discussions should provide communities with the opportunity to consider the forms of support available from each provider and to make decisions on what to accept. This would provide greater conflict sensitivity and allow communities more influence over the way that new arrangements are being setup. This would be a key development, as it is currently difficult to ascertain what communities' priorities are, regarding the benefits and drawbacks of receiving services from different providers. School-level coordination at this stage would be a first step towards giving school committees an official role in strategic planning, so that they can tailor their school administration to their communities' needs (see Section 10).

Government and EAO/EBEP recommendation #4
When new forms of support for a community school are proposed, the MoE, EBEPs, and the community should hold formal meetings to agree on services to be provided. Initial sessions should seek consensus on the support (including teachers) to be accepted from each system.

If trust can be established, the MoE and EBEPs could also use coordination meetings to devise joint strategies for a region, where each provider takes on specific responsibilities, and joint responsibilities are developed for areas of mixed coverage. Developing shared information systems would allow the MoE and EBEPs to establish common mapping and documentation of what services are being delivered where, identifying areas of no or low coverage, and areas of duplicated services. This would also be a useful first step towards establishing common goals, which would facilitate program development and the measurement of outcomes.

This would be a very sensitive area of engagement, and would not be possible everywhere. However, pilot projects in areas where relations between the government and EAOs and EBEPs are particularly strong might provide useful lessons. A promising example is the pilot mapping project to identify areas of low coverage that has been conducted by ethnic health organizations and the Ministry of Health in Kawkareik Township, Kayin State.

Government and EAO/EBEP recommendation #5
Consider options for more strategic coordination of services at appropriate administrative levels.

International aid community recommendation #3
If the will is there among service providers, international actors could facilitate information sharing and joint strategic planning programs, including joint mapping exercises.

SECTION TEN: Formalizing and managing mixed schools

Another key area where better coordination would improve education is the formalizing of mixed schools. These include longstanding MoE schools where EBEPs or communities themselves provide local teachers, typically to teach local languages and other subjects, but sometimes just to fill gaps. There are also many mixed schools that have had inconsistent support from various actors over the years, and have been largely dependent on the community. And there are schools that have long been run by EBEPs and communities, but have recently begun receiving MoE support for the first time, such as those in Karen areas discussed in Section 9.

In Mon areas, there are 95 mixed MNEC-MoE schools that seem relatively formalized and have received a relatively high level of attention from scholars and researchers connected to the aid community.[279] These schools, however, still depend on local arrangements between MNED and MoE TEOs rather than on formal, state-level arrangements. In some Karen areas, there have been mixed schools for decades that have received support from both KED/KSEAG and MoE. Their number has grown rapidly since the 2012 ceasefire, from 364 to 734 by the 2015-16 academic year. Across much of the country, including Kayah, Shan, Kachin, and Chin areas, among others, communities and civil society or religious organizations provide teachers to MoE schools or to community schools that also receive some degree of MoE support. Additional teachers are often provided because more help is needed, or specifically to teach local literacy and history subjects.

The mixed school model has many potential benefits. Tens of thousands of students have access to MTB-MLE through mixed schools, while also gaining a full MoE-recognized education. In many cases, communities and school committees depend on multiple sources of teachers and other resources simply to provide an adequate level of instruction, particularly where the MoE has provided too few teachers or these teachers have been prone to absenteeism. In a context where all service providers have limited resources and capacities, and where the government has been unable to provide MTB-MLE, mixed schools have found a way to pool resources to come closer to meeting community needs.

A wide range of challenges must be addressed, however, to ensure that resources are used efficiently, communities' needs are met, and potential sources of conflict are mitigated. This section looks at the opportunities and challenges surrounding mixed schools, firstly in the context of recent MoE expansions and then at mixed schools in general, and provides recommendations.

Mixed schools in the context of MoE expansion

When MoE teachers have been sent to EBEP-supported schools for the first time, there has typically been little or no coordination with the EBEPs to determine how these schools will be managed. As noted in previous sections, even basic agreements that local EAO authorities will ensure MoE teachers' security are often lacking, let alone proper administrative guidelines for integrating them into the schools. In most of the new mixed schools in Karen areas, both the MoE and KSEAG have assigned head teachers, meaning all administrative decisions depend on compromises between them, or on deference of one to the other. Out of 379 new MoE-KED/KSEAG mixed schools, the government reportedly "has a strong administrative presence" in all but 31, as a result of its greater resources, and in a few cases due to Tatmadaw pressure on school committees. This has allowed the government to prevail on a number of issues in schools, even where EBEPs have been the main education authority for decades.

Language, culture, and nationality

Language issues are perhaps the most contentious, along with others related to nationality. In schools

---

[279] See Lall and South (2011), South and Lall (2016), Jolliffe (2014), among others.

that have previously been under the KED/KSEAG system, and have thus had the Sgaw Karen language as a major subject and the primary medium of instruction, communities have often pushed to keep KED/KSEAG teachers in service where possible. Of the 13 schools in the East Daw Na region that have accepted MoE teachers for the first time since 2011, communities in all but one insisted that the KED/KSEAG teachers stay.[280] According to the village head of one of these schools, "As KED had supported our school for 16 years, we said they have to cooperate with KED or we won't accept it.… We are Karen people; we want to learn our language. If we don't have our literacy, we will be lost; the Karen people will be lost." [281]

In an unknown number of schools, however, MoE teachers have arrived and have restricted local-language teaching, consigning it to outside of regular school hours, allowing it only for certain grades,[282] or blocking it altogether.[283] Out of 32 communities surveyed by KTWG, 12 "were prevented from teaching the Karen language as a subject."[284] According to a school committee member from the KNU-defined Thaton District, documented by the Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG), "[The MoE head teacher] does not allow us to teach the Karen language and she complains that it is just making everyone busier and if we want to teach Karen language, we have to teach it after school."[285]

WCRP and HURFOM documented conditions attached to MoE grants to MNED-supported Mon national schools that included making Mon an out-of-hours subject, but it is unclear if this is because MoE teachers were also being sent to these schools.[286] Notably, the MNEC/MNED has a policy that it will not support mixed schools unless they allow Mon subjects to be taught in school hours.

Furthermore, as discussed in Section 11, even where government teachers have been flexible about allowing ethnic language and history teaching to continue, these subjects tend to become less important when MoE examinations are introduced, because students do not need to pass them to advance to later grades, unlike other subjects. According to the KED administrator for Mu Traw District, Sgaw Karen language in mixed schools is treated "like an extra" subject, and is not taken as seriously.[287]

In the East Daw Na region, a long-established mixed school had a new government head teacher assigned in 2014. He was ethnic Bamar, and was replacing an ethnic Karen head teacher who had recently retired. He then tried to ban the teaching of Sgaw Karen language, but was forced to leave the village altogether due to dissent from the community. As a female KED teacher from the school explained, "He ordered the school to stop teaching Karen, to take down the Karen flag and to put up a Myanmar flag. His attitude is not normal: he sacked three Karen teachers, but we just rehired them,… and we continued to teach the Karen language anyway. We now have a joint [Myanmar and Karen] flag, but he is not accepted by the community.… He was sent back [to Myawaddy Town] in December 2014, and works in the township education office."[288]

According to a Karen woman, documented by KHRG, "In our village, the school was constructed and supported by the villagers, [a] school teacher, and our monk, and I think we should only hang our Karen flag. [The Myanmar] government teachers do not like that, and they want to hang the Burmese

[280] The only case in this area where the KED teacher didn't stay was in a village positioned at a military base close to Su Ka Li Town, called Thaw Waw Thaw, where two schoolteachers previously under the KED/KSEAG system just stopped collecting their stipends and materials from KED/KSEAG and broke contact. The KED later learned that the school now had government teachers, and that the KED/KSEAG teachers had resigned but still lived in the village. (Interview with KED deputy administrator of East Daw Na region, October 2015).

[281] Focus group discussion in school one (October 2015).

[282] According to an account from a Karen teacher, documented by KHRG, the MoE only allows teaching of Sgaw Karen in grades one and two, whereas it had previously been taught up to grade four. KHRG (2016), p. 41.

[283] Interview with KTWG central staff and teacher trainers (December 2014); interview with KED department head (October 2015).

[284] KTWG (2016). The document gives the figure of 38 percent.

[285] Karen Human Rights Group website, "Thaton Situation Update: Bilin, Thaton, Kyaikto and Hpa-an townships, September to November 2014," February 10, 2015. Available at: http://khrg.org/2015/02/14-101-s1/thaton-situation-update-bilin-thaton-kyaikto-and-hpa-an-townships-september#sthash.a3MdX9jP.Gsw2eJ8c.dpuf.

[286] WCRP and HURFOM, pp. 28-29.

[287] Interview with KED Mu Traw District administrator (November 2015).

[288] Interview with teacher from East Daw Na school three (October 2015).

[Myanmar] flag in front of the school instead."[289] Anecdotal reports suggest that disputes over the raising of flags are common in mixed schools.[290] Disputes of this kind are particularly sensitive, and often lead to tensions in communities, fuel the suspicions of EAOs, and set a bad example for young people, particularly during a time of peacebuilding.

There are further issues around language of instruction. Although the 2014 National Education law states that "an ethnic language can be used alongside Myanmar as a language of instruction at the basic education level," the curriculum and teacher guidelines are built from the base up around Myanmar language as if it was the first language of the learner.

Furthermore, many of the MoE teachers dispatched to ethnic areas are unable to speak any Karen language.[291] Out of 32 communities surveyed by KTWG, "22 communities (69 percent) reported that [new MoE teachers] did not speak the local language and made no attempt to ensure that children understood their lessons in Burmese language." The majority of these communities then attributed poor student performance to this issue.[292]

As one young MoE teacher explained, "The children don't speak Myanmar, so communication is a problem…. Yes [it is much slower to get through the class]. We just have to use images and body language. For example, we hold up a pen when we need them to use a pen."[293] However, another MoE teacher interviewed for this study could speak Sgaw Karen fluently.

Administrative differences, unprofessional conduct, and poor community relations

Disputes also tend to emerge due to differences between the administrative practices of each system, such as reporting and evaluation protocols, scheduling systems, sizes of classes, and so on.[294] Speaking in a focus group alongside KED/KSEAG teachers, a young MoE teacher explained, "Before we had this [MoE] head teacher, the school was like a bamboo basket without a rim. Now we have more direction, such as how to teach, how to manage things. We have more structure." However, a KED/KSEAG teacher was annoyed by this and responded, "Before he came, we had rules and regulations – he just came with his own rules and regulations," and another KED/KSEAG teacher agreed.[295]

At the same time, there are widespread reports of unprofessional behavior among new government teachers in remote areas, particularly absenteeism. Of 32 communities surveyed by KTWG, absenteeism was reported by school committees in every one, with 94 percent of the communities reporting absences of one week or more within a month, and 16 percent reporting absences of one to two months within a semester. In another 16 percent of cases, schools were closed in the teacher's absence, with no advance notice to the communities. Meanwhile, government teachers did not return at all in 6 percent of the cases studied.[296]

KHRG has also documented community concerns over high levels of unprofessional conduct, including teachers spending periods of one or two months away from their village, teachers not teaching regularly when in the village, a teacher taking time off to sell lottery tickets, teachers assigning tasks

---

[289] KHRG (2016), p. 41.
[290] Interview with KTWG central staff and teacher trainers (December 2014); interview with KED department head (October 2015). See also this example where Karen community members in Paing Kyon Sub-township, which has been a Tatmadaw and BGF stronghold since the late 1990s, raised their Karen flag for the first time and held a ceremony. *Karen Human Rights Group website*, "Hpa-an Situation Update: Paing Kyon Township, June to October 2014," August 27, 2015. Available at: http://khrg.org/2015/08/14-91-s1/hpa-an-situation-update-paingkyon-township-june-october-2014.
[291] An estimated 70 percent of teachers working in ethnic areas are unable to speak the local language or dialect. UNICEF (2010), cited in Pyoe Pin (2014).
[292] KTWG (2016), p. 2.
[293] Interview with male MoE teacher in school one (October 2015).
[294] Focus group discussion with teachers in East Daw Na school one and East Daw Na school two; interview with East Daw Na KED deputy administrator (October 2015).
[295] Focus group discussion in school one (October 2015).
[296] KTWG (2016).

and then using their phones rather than overseeing the students' work, and a teacher having her unqualified, unemployed husband fill in for classes.[297]

A mother interviewed by KHRG said that these kinds of issues had caused the village's entire grade four to fail government exams, twice in one year: "[Because of the poor quality teaching] They [the children] know nothing. Like my daughter, she is 12 years old and she is in fourth standard and she knows nothing".

Reasons given by KHRG interviewees for lack of teacher professionalism include lack of oversight from TEOs, the juniority and low qualifications of teachers, and lack of commitment to the job.[298] All of these reasons could help explain why rates of unprofessionalism seem particularly high in these contexts, because many teachers are daily-wage teachers, usually dispatched to rural areas with which they are unfamiliar, and receiving very little systematic supervision from their distant TEOs.

According to a teacher interviewed by KHRG, "If they criticize me, I will leave the school without letting them know. If they do not criticize me, I will do the best for the students. Don't need to worry for myself. I also have other ways for doing business."[299] Professionalism issues reported by school committees and KED/KSEAG administrators during research for this study include absenteeism, overly strict punishment of children, and inappropriate behavior between a male MoE head teacher and female MoE teacher.[300]

Communities have also recounted difficulties in establishing good relationships with new MoE teachers, both professionally and socially, whom they sometimes have to provide with housing, food, and other support.[301] Of 32 communities surveyed by KTWG, 12 communities (38 percent) reported that MoE teachers did not maintain "good relations with students and parents," and 13 communities (42 percent) reported that MoE teachers "[did] not participate in school committee or parent association meetings."[302]

Eleven of the 32 surveyed communities said they believed the government teacher was only working in a remote area for the salary, not because they "enjoy their teaching job or want to live in the community."[303] According to a Karen woman quoted by KHRG, in her community, "The teachers currently are not trying to socialize with the villagers; they just stay on their own.… Some [current] teachers said to some of the students,… 'I am teaching not because of having good-will [not because I want to], but because I have a duty to teach.'" The woman also asserted that the teachers should make more effort to engage with parents [and] students.[304]

Due to poor relations with teachers, parents or other local people faced with unprofessional conduct have sometimes complained to the school committee and at other times to the KED, rather than to the teachers themselves. To address reported issues in the East Daw Na region, KED administrators have at times approached the MoE teachers directly, and in other cases they have contacted the MoE's

---

[297] KHRG (2016), Section B, Chapter II. See also, *Karen Human Rights Group website*, "Toungoo Interview: Naw A---, January 2015," August 17, 2015. Available at: http://khrg.org/2015/08/15-14-a6-i1/toungoo-interview-naw-january-2015; "Thaton Field Report: January to December 2014," November 19, 2015. Available at: http://khrg.org/2015/11/15-1-f1/thaton-field-report-january-december-2014; "Toungoo Interview: Naw A---, January 2015," October 15, 2015. Available at: http://khrg.org/2015/10/15-14-a4-i1/toungoo-interview-naw-january-2015.
[298] Various accounts documented in KHRG (2016), Section B, Chapter II.
[299] KHRG (2016), p. 38.
[300] Interview with East Daw Na KED deputy administrator; focus group discussion with school committee and parents, school one (October 2015). The case of inappropriate behavior included alleged intimate relations as well as frequently traveling to a nearby town, getting drunk, and returning to the village late at night. Furthermore, of 32 communities surveyed by KTWG, 31 percent reported MoE teachers using corporal punishment in their school.
[301] Of 32 communities surveyed by KHRG, 10 reported being "burdened with supporting food, housing, transportation, cooking, cleaning, [or] other needs." KTWG (2016), p. 4. When EBEP teachers are serving in their home community, they don't typically require support for housing, but are subsidized by community donations of money and food. However, when they are from other villages, as at least three of the KSEAG teachers interviewed for this study were, they typically require housing and more concerted support.
[302] KTWG (2016), p. 4.
[303] Ibid.
[304] KHRG (2016).

Myawaddy TEO. But they feel they have been unable to get a clear commitment to change.[305]

In one such case, a school that had been administered by the KED for 20 years recently accepted MoE teachers who then went absent. According to the East Daw Na KED deputy administrator, "The government went around [circumvented] the KED to get these teachers into the school. Then later, the village leader called us to complain that these government teachers were in Myawaddy Town [rather than at the school, teaching], six months of the year; so we questioned [the MoE teachers], and they just gave us blah, blah, blah, and nothing was solved."[306]

EBEP teacher morale and retention

Despite the apparent prevalence of unprofessional conduct among MoE teachers, teachers supported by KSEAG have often reported that they feel demeaned by their MoE seniors and colleagues because they are not formally recognized by the ministry, and because their main subjects have been degraded. Out of 32 communities surveyed by KTWG, "[KED/KSEAG-supported teachers] in 13 communities (41 percent) reported that [new MoE teachers] do not treat them with respect," and KED/KSEAG-supported teachers in six communities (19 percent) reported that new MoE teachers refused "to cooperate with them."[307]

These and other pressures have led an unknown number of KSEAG-supported teachers to leave their schools altogether. The KTWG found that at least one local teacher had been "ousted" in three of the 32 communities it surveyed. A female KED teacher working near a community where a KED/KSEAG teacher had dropped out explained that she had also thought about leaving. "Before the ceasefire, we struggled and got no support from the government. Now it just feels like the government does not want us to be here. It feels like we are going to have to stop teaching," she said.[308] However, due to the absenteeism among MoE teachers, community teachers have in some cases been recalled, as they live in the community. Overall, these trends have added to the feeling among KNU, KSEAG, and communities that the MoE is "occupying" or "taking over" the Karen areas.[309]

This relates to an area of general frustration for several KED/KSEAG-supported teachers in this study, who said that they felt treated at work like substandard teachers, despite having greater overall responsibility for the school both in and out of school hours. As described by the female KED teacher just quoted, "We are the native people from the community – we can stay with the students.… The government teachers have to go back at the end of the school year. So all the responsibility is on the local teachers. But communities just see that they have to pay for local teachers, and they don't like that when they can get government teachers for free." [310]

Mixed schools in general

While many of the concerns noted above are particular to areas of rapid MoE expansion, established mixed schools face a range of challenges that are sometimes similar. These generally stem from the lack of formal arrangements, particularly as the MoE does not officially recognize mixed schools. Generally, even mixed schools that have been established for two decades or more are considered by government to be simply MoE schools (though sometimes branch schools). This makes it extremely difficult for certain administrative, financing, testing, and other arrangements to be precisely tailored to the providers unique to those schools. In the Mon case study, school committee leaders, an MoE head teacher, MNED teachers, and MNED administrators all expressed similar frustrations with practical

---

[305] Interview with East Daw Na KED deputy administrator (October 2015).
[306] Interview with East Daw Na KED deputy administrator (October 2015).
[307] KTWG (2016), p. 3. The original document just stated 19 percent.
[308] Interview with female KED teacher in school one (October 2015).
[309] Interview with East Daw Na KED deputy administrator (October 2015). Focus group discussion with KNLA commanders (November 2015). Interview with KNU Executive Committee member (February 2015). Interview with head of the KED, P'Doh La Say (September 2015).
[310] Interview with female KED teacher in school one (October 2015).

issues related to this lack of formalization of mixed schools.

A major concern raised in the research was that, even where EBEP teachers provide local literacy, history, or other ethnic subjects during classroom hours, these subjects are not given priority by students or administrators, because they are not required for graduation to the next grade or to meet MoE targets.

According a school committee leader in a mixed MoE-MNEC/MNED school, "The students cannot really read Mon, because there is no legal [formally recognized] test for them to study for. So they just go to the class and try a little bit, and they don't do much at home, so they will lose the language, bit by bit.... So I really want the kids to have to do a [mandatory] Mon test in order to pass their grade."[311] Of course, there is a need for broader consideration as to whether children should be held back for failing tests rather than being automatically promoted. Nonetheless, the key problem is that ethnic subjects are given lower priority than other subjects. According to the Mu Traw KED administrator, Karen language in mixed schools in his area is treated "like an extra" subject, and is not taken as seriously. Meanwhile, the curriculum for two other KED subjects, Karen history and "social subjects," has been rejected by the MoE, likely due to the Karen nationalist content.[312]

This undermines efforts to promote and sustain local ethnic languages. It also reinforces the perception that the government accords lower status to ethnic languages and history than to Bamar-oriented "Myanmar" subjects. This will be a challenge for the government's broader efforts to introduce MTB-MLE and other ethnic subjects across the country, not only in mixed schools. Teachers and school committee leaders in mixed schools often gave this as a reason for wanting to build up their own EBEP systems and make their schools independent, often noting that they only relied on the MoE because of lack of resources.[313]

As in the newly established mixed schools discussed in the previous section, EBEP teachers in other mixed schools often complained of feeling demeaned and discriminated against by their MoE colleagues and superiors. They said this was partly because of the lower status afforded to ethnic-language subjects, and also due to their much lower pay. Even in cases where relations were good between EBEP and MoE teachers, EBEP teachers often felt that they were seen as inferior, despite their local-language skills and the benefits they provided by being from the community and being present in students' lives outside of school hours and on holidays. The need to find better funding for the wages all EBEP teachers, including those in mixed schools, is discussed in Section 12.

School committee members, MoE teachers, EBEP leaders, and EBEP teachers all expressed their frustration that mixed schools lacked the concrete administrative arrangements that would come with official government recognition. In the Mon case study, MoE and EBEP teachers said that MoE TEOs generally supported MNED teachers teaching in mixed schools, but that they had very little influence or budgetary control. Furthermore, when TEOs are rotated to different assignments, they have to learn their situation anew, which can hamper cooperation and coordination between them and EBEPs. Therefore, EBEPs across the board said that they needed more formal recognition of mixed schools at more senior levels of government

---

[311] Focus group discussion with head teacher and school committee leaders at mixed post-primary school one (November 2015). According to an MNED teacher from a mixed primary school, "At the moment, [our subjects] are not fully official, so it's not necessary for the kids to study as hard. We want a full MNEC/MNED system to be implemented in this area, so that it can be the official system.... I'm just imagining for the future." (Focus group discussion with MoE-MNED mixed primary school teachers, December 2015).

[312] Interview with KED Mu Traw district administrator (November 2015). According to the administrator, Karen social subjects include personal guidance on "how to ensure peace between religions. Another [topic] is about how to be a good person and to be a good person in the community, how to respect each other, and to have a good mind. It also includes politics and the history of our leaders, so [the students] will have the mentality of loving their country and their people and understand the politics. It also includes economics, which includes how to build a business, how to live their life, how to manage their resources, and so on."

[313] Focus group discussion with head teacher and school committee leaders at mixed post-primary school one (November 2015); focus group discussion with MoE-MNED mixed primary school teachers, December 2015.

Recommendations

The benefits of the mixed school model to Myanmar's education sector would be greatly increased by more systematic and formalized administration. In many areas, EBEPs' ways of working are based around providing additional subjects and support in MoE schools. Where mixed schools are the product of sudden MoE expansion, however, the MoE has shown little interest in developing mutually accommodating ways of working with EBEPs, and appears mainly concerned with converting schools to full MoE schools. Meanwhile, in areas where mixed schools are long established, any sign of recognition or eagerness to cooperate appears only at the school or township level.

As a first step, the MoE should recognize mixed schools in its policies and establish appropriate practices at each administrative level. The MoE should begin documenting and understanding all schools that also receive support from EBEPs as "mixed schools," and should begin working with EBEPs to develop formal procedures for establishing and administering them. These efforts should be aimed at maximizing the contributions of each provider, according to community needs and other education priorities. In particular, the MoE should issue guidelines to TEOs and MoE head teachers requiring that EBEP instruction in ethnic languages and other ethnic subjects take place during school hours as part of government's efforts to promote MTB-MLE.

Government recommendation #7
The government should formally recognize and record any school that also receives EBEP support as a "mixed school."

The MoE and EBEPs should further cooperate to develop clear guidelines for the administration of mixed schools, through coordination at regional, township, and school levels. A wide range of issues need to be considered: deployment and retention of teachers from each system, the hierarchical relationships between head teachers, school grants, use of curriculum, examinations, ethnic-language teaching hours and prioritization, rules and regulations for teachers and students, and smaller, everyday issues.

Due to the differences in available resources from school to school, differences in ability to access different territories, desires and needs of communities, and political and historical context, many of these decisions would be best made at the school level, albeit within parameters set by the MoE and EBEPs at higher levels. This would enable communities to weigh the different services, resources, and opportunities available and make informed decisions based on their particular situation. At present, communities already effectively make these decisions by accepting or rejecting different forms of support, but without clear options or adequate information to make the best decisions. For example, communities might want to accept MoE school grants and a limited number of MoE teachers, but might prefer that existing EBEP teachers continue teaching ethnic languages. They might also want to ensure accountability of MoE teachers, and to maintain certain rules, regulations, and administrative protocols.

Better coordination on these matters could be achieved through multilateral "school steering committees" that include the MoE, EBEPs, and the community. Communities could be represented by school committees, parents, and long-serving local teachers. Where new mixed schools are being established, initial meetings like those recommended in Section 9 would be a first step to establishing such committees. Parameters and guidelines would likely need to be established at regional and township levels.

There may be lessons to learn from existing MoE school grant procedures, in which school committees have now been given official roles, particularly since the program was augmented by the World Bank and Australia. Establishing more explicit, multilateral coordination mechanisms for mixed schools

would also ensure greater conflict sensitivity, inclusivity, and community participation for international actors providing resources to mixed schools.

Among the guidelines and parameters established at higher administrative levels, ethnic-language teaching and other ethnic subjects should be a priority consideration, to ensure that they are taught during classroom hours in mixed schools, and that MoE administrators and head teachers view them as a key part of the curriculum.

Government and EAO/EBEP recommendation #6
Establish formal guidelines and school-level steering committees for the administration of mixed schools.

Considerable effort is needed from the MoE to ensure that the teachers it dispatches to remote areas are conducting themselves professionally, especially because communities in these remote areas are typically tight-knit communities and do not receive many outsiders of other ethnicities or from urban areas.

Substantive recommendations to improve professionalism are beyond the scope of this paper. However, these issues underscore the value of local teachers working in their own communities, and the need for MoE to find ways to support the work of existing providers in areas where they exist, rather than dispatching its own teachers from faraway places. This seems particularly sensible because many daily-wage teachers do not meet the traditional teacher recruitment requirements either. Furthermore, the MoE should provide teachers dispatched to rural areas with pre-service and in-service training to prepare them for the challenges they will face in their host communities, and work to develop approaches they can use to avoid disputes and foster better community relations.

Government recommendation #8
Ensure that teachers serving in remote ethnic areas are able to do so professionally, and are able to develop good professional and social relations with their host communities.

Where possible, MoE and EBEPs should start joint initiatives to develop more harmonious working relationships in mixed schools. Disputes, belittling by senior MoE teachers, and feelings of degradation among teachers create an inefficient working environment and set a bad example for children, particularly where ethnic and political factors are involved. These issues can also exacerbate ethnic grievances, as EBEPs and communities receive the message that the government does not value their contribution to the Union or respect their aspirations to provide education based on local values and cultures.

It is crucial that head teachers and other teachers from MoE and EBEPs be supported and encouraged to find compromises on their rules, regulations, and practices. In particular, MoE head teachers need to make sure that they and their students are respected and trusted by local communities, and that their schools are managed in ways that suit local circumstances. They also need to ensure that all teachers feel valued and equal. MoE could run trainings to instill these values in its staff and teachers. Joint consultations, where MoE and EBEP teachers from mixed schools are encouraged to share their experiences and discuss key challenges, could help policymakers on both sides establish better ways of working. Furthermore, joint workshops could be undertaken at state/region or township levels to encourage discussion between MoE and EBEP teachers, and for them to learn methods for compromise and dispute resolution.

Government and EAO/EBEP recommendation #7
MoE and EBEPs should start joint initiatives to develop more harmonious working relationships in mixed schools.

SECTION ELEVEN: Student assessment, qualifications, and transfers between systems

While the existence of multiple education providers should not be seen as a problem per se, it is crucial that they be compatible enough that children can move between systems with ease, and that any qualifications or forms of assessment be recognized as equal. Currently in Myanmar, there are a range of challenges associated with lack of recognition for education offered by EBEP systems. Overcoming these challenges will require exemplary leadership and compromise on the part of the government, and considerable cooperation from EBEPs, who will need to commit to a certain degree of alignment with the Union-level education system. This section first looks at the main challenges in this area, before providing recommendations for addressing them. Many of these challenges also relate to curricula being used, but this is not covered as a key area in its own right.

Key challenges identified

The need for children to acquire officially recognized qualifications or to qualify for entry into MoE schools was frequently raised as a major challenge for EBEPs by the whole range of interviewees, particularly parents, school committee members, and teachers. Notably, accreditation and school transfer issues were often given as reasons for communities accepting MoE teachers, or for parents choosing to put children in an MoE school rather than an EBEP school. These same interviewees, however, often said they would rather have local children receive an EBEP education, so they can study their own language and other ethnic national subjects from local teachers, if only it were recognized as official and provided equal opportunities.

The ability of students to transfer between systems is particularly important to families who migrate, such as those among the thousands of IDPs and refugees fleeing and returning every year and countless other internal and cross-border migrants. Additionally, many communities have an EBEP or MoE primary school in the village, but are closest to a middle or secondary school run by a different provider, requiring children to transfer after grade five.

In other cases, families might prefer that their child attend an EBEP primary school and study in their first language, a proven benefit to early learning, but then to transfer to the MoE system in middle school to improve their Myanmar-language skills and earn MoE qualifications. Conversely, particularly prior to recent reductions in MoE school fees, many parents have opted to transfer their children from MoE primary schools to refugee, IDP, or migrant middle or secondary schools run by EBEPs, which are often free and may provide food, shelter, and other assistance to students.

While detailed research was not conducted on the topic, no problems were mentioned in relation to student transfers from MoE to EBEP schools, and KED and MNEC representatives said they often take MoE students and have not found this to be problematic. In recent decades, refugee and migrant schools have accepted large numbers of students who started their education in MoE schools, because their families either had to flee or migrate from their areas, or because they traveled to the camps specifically due to lack of education opportunities at home.

The MoE's current student assessment system consists of specific tests that are the same all over the country, and that effectively test a student's ability to memorize reams of sentences and lists of facts from textbooks. These include year-end examinations in grades five and nine, and a matriculation exam in grade 11, as well as tests at the end of textbook chapters.[314]

Any student transferring to an MoE school, including those coming from another MoE school, such as

---

[314] These chapter-end tests are part of the Continuous Assessment and Progression System (CAPS).

from a primary to a secondary school, is required to obtain a transfer slip from the original school that confirms the child has completed the grade prior to the one they are entering. Therefore, students entering middle school (grade six) need to have passed grade five exams and must have the transfer slip to prove it.

Some EBEP-supported community schools, as well as monastic schools registered with the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA), use the MoE curriculum and are able to put their students through MoE examinations and matriculation, usually by arranging for students to travel to MoE "host" schools in nearby towns. Many of these community schools are primary only, and this system typically allows students to get transfer slips for them to transfer to MoE secondary schools in towns or larger villages.

For example, the Kaung Hat network looked at in the Shan case study has 13 of its schools registered with MORA, which allows students to take grade five exams at nearby host schools. Additionally, the RDFSS runs a boarding house in Namlam for middle and high school students who had previously attended RDFSS-supported primary schools in rural areas where the MoE's presence is limited. The boarding house currently hosts 60 children attending MoE secondary school. They come from a range of monastic schools, schools supported by EAO education departments, and community schools only supported by RDFSS, all in areas of limited MoE presence. In Kayah State and numerous Kachin areas, among others, some EBEPs have worked to attain affiliate or branch school status for community schools,[315] in order to allow students to take their exams at host schools and to get transfer slips. Some refugee and migrant schools in Thailand have also begun putting students through MoE exams in host schools, by taking students across the border for exam day.

However, in doing this, EBEPs are immediately restricted in their ability to prioritize local languages or locally relevant curriculum, as any study on top of what is needed to pass MoE exams becomes a burden and a lower priority for students and school administrations. Additionally, because all student assessments are carried out in the Myanmar language, teachers from the Kaung Hat schools said they spend the majority of classroom time interpreting the Myanmar-language textbook into Shan, an inefficient use of valuable school hours, an ineffective method of teaching, and also, as one principal put it, "very tiring."

Alternatively, some EBEPs are developing their own curriculum and assessment frameworks for the stages of basic education. KED/KSEAG uses its own Sgaw-language curriculum all the way through primary and secondary schools, exclusively in 285 schools, and alongside the MoE curriculum in 553 schools.[316] Similarly, the Karen Refugee Committee – Education Entity (KRCEE) uses this system in the 64 schools it runs in refugee camps in Thailand, as do a number of Karen migrant schools.

Karen refugee and migrant schools also provide the main education pathways available to KED/KSEAG students. In recent decades, tens of thousands of students have traveled to Thailand to complete secondary school, and thousands of these have gone on to higher education in a range of refugee and migrant "post-10" schools. A much smaller number are able to secure scholarships to universities in Thailand or third countries, or to gain Thai-recognized, non-formal education certificates,[317] but these opportunities are extremely limited.

For students who miss these opportunities, their educational qualifications are generally only recognized by community-based organizations, NGOs, and companies that are familiar with the specific context, in addition to the administrative and military apparatuses of Karen EAOs. Education leaders and students in these communities are often keen to serve and strengthen their war-beaten

---

[315] Affiliate schools are schools that can take MoE tests through host schools but do not have MoE teachers, and seemingly do not get funding. Branch schools have MoE teachers, but it is unclear exactly what features distinguish a branch school from an ordinary MoE school.
[316] World Education (2016), p. 14
[317] Some Karen migrant schools also have Thai teachers, provided by the Thai government, and are able to offer students recognized equivalency certificates.

society and to build their perceived nation, so many students return to their areas to serve as teachers or in other social roles. Nonetheless, while the grade 11 completion rates among Karen refugees are vastly higher than the Myanmar average, the majority of these graduates gain little recognition across most of the country.[318]

Since 2012, large numbers of students have needed to transfer from KED or KRCEE schools into the MoE system, as refugees and IDPs have returned to places of origin now under greater government control, access to towns has increased for rural, conflict-affected communities, and the MoE has established or reinvigorated middle or high schools in areas of mixed control. The large majority of these transferees have not had transfer certificates, because they have not studied the MoE curriculum.

Since the 1990s, the MNEC/MNED has developed a system for its non-mixed Mon national schools to transition students from mother tongue-based education in primary school to the MoE Myanmar-language curriculum in middle and high school, with Mon language and history as additional subjects. To do this, it has maintained an almost fully Mon-language curriculum at the primary level, but one which is mostly translated from the MoE curriculum, so students will be familiar with the same material as MoE primary school students.

While high school students in Mon national schools take the MoE grade 11 matriculation exam, grade five and grade nine students do not take end-of-year MoE examinations, even though they are studying the full MoE curriculum in grade nine. Without having taken grade five or grade nine examinations, MNED students sometimes have difficulties transferring to MoE secondary schools,[319] which, for families in many areas, is particularly concerning, as there are relatively few MNED middle and high schools available.[320]

During the 17-year, government-KIO ceasefire (1994-2011), the KIO Education Department put its students through MoE exams at all levels, allowing them to transfer more easily and to matriculate with government-recognized qualifications. However, since the ceasefire broke down in 2011, these ties have been cut, and according to South and Lall, an official Kachin State government decree was issued disallowing these students from taking the exams. This has meant tens of thousands of students no longer take the exams and can no longer acquire transfer slips for government schools.[321] Notably, tens of thousands of students in IDP camps in the former KIO ceasefire special region now attend KIO Education Department, community, or religious schools there. Meanwhile, at least one school in Kachin territory uses a curriculum and assessment framework from India, allowing some students to go on to tertiary education in India.[322]

The actual experiences of students trying to transfer from EBEP systems into the MoE system vary greatly. Interviews conducted by Save the Children with 11 students attempting to transfer from schools in Karen and Karenni refugee camps to MoE and private schools in Myanmar, discovered a variety of required placement tests, required fees, and required documentation. The study also identified one case where bribery of a head teacher was used, and found that the process was often dependent on the discretion of individual head teachers.[323]

Such experiences were not documented extensively for this study, but interviews with parents, school committee members, and EBEP teachers and administrators further indicate that placement tests are often used. These tests are typically taken from year-end examinations or chapter-end classroom tests,

---

[318] A survey on completion rates of all school-aged children (6-18) in the three most populous refugee camps found all but 4.2 percent to be in school. From World Education and Save the Children, presentation at UNHCR operations meeting, September 10, 2015, Yangon.
[319] The MNED administers 16 Mon national middle schools and three Mon national high schools. The rest are primary or post-primary.
[320] Focus group discussion with parents and teachers at Mon national primary school one (November 2015). Additional discussions with an MNED township officer and MNEC leaders (November 2015).
[321] South and Lall (2016), pp. 24-25.
[322] South and Lall (2016), p. 20.
[323] Dare (2015).

covering material that is ordinarily learned by rote, and so do not test students' broader competencies. The ability of students to pass, therefore, often depends on the extent to which they studied that material in their previous school. For MNEC/MNED primary students and KED/KSEAG students at all levels, such tests are thus almost impossible to pass without special preparation, even if they have a good command of the Myanmar language.

Students who fail these tests may be rejected, or may be put back one or more grades – a student who completed grade five at an EBEP school, for example, might be placed in grade three rather than grade six. The utility of this is questionable, as such students are unlikely to be any more familiar with the previous year's material than with the current year's. Grade retention of this kind also risks damaging the student's confidence and further burdening families, who often already struggle to keep their students in school for a full eleven years of education. Furthermore, even passing these tests does not appear to guarantee students' enrollment in all cases.

Indeed, the MoE appears to have extremely strict requirements for grade promotion even within its own system, as large numbers of students are held back for one grade or more for failing the end-of-year exams. As is the case globally, this appears to be a major cause of poor student retention, as high numbers of children are simply unable to keep returning for additional years in order to qualify.[324] Clearly, there is a broader question here for MoE regarding the relative benefits of holding failing students back (grade repetition/retention) versus automatic promotion.

Despite the difficulties their students have in transferring, the MNEC and KED/KSEAG are committed to maintaining their current curriculum, assessment, and qualification frameworks. This is largely due to concerns that any further introduction of MoE curriculum would require them to deemphasize their own language, history, and social subjects, and would impinge on their freedom to teach in their own languages. Meanwhile, since the Kachin conflict re-erupted, the KIO Education Department and numerous other Kachin EBEPs have begun developing completely new systems based on the Jinghpaw language, as an explicit move away from the MoE system.[325]

The MNEC/MNED and KED/KSEAG insist that the MoE should accept transferring students who have completed their grade five and grade nine exams, rather than requiring them to take the MoE exams, and that they should find equally flexible ways to accommodate students entering at other levels. KED/KSEAG and KRCEE have also argued that the government should officially recognize their matriculation certificates (and higher education certificates) as official qualifications. Both EBEPs have voiced these requests repeatedly in the state-level, education-sector working groups discussed in Section 8, along with requests for clearer and more consistent MoE policy on transfers in general. While these issues remain largely unresolved, there appears to have been progress in 2015 and 2016, and evidence of growing MoE flexibility.[326]

Recommendations

It is crucial that the government and EBEPs adopt short-term and long-term measures to allow smooth student transfers between systems, to provide full recognition of EBEP qualifications, and to ensure that both administrations and students assign the same importance to ethnic languages and other ethnic subjects as they do to other subjects.

---

[324] As Hayden and Martin argue, "While some of the loss of students during the secondary years may also be attributed to affordability and access, what mainly impacts on retention during these years is the increasingly selective nature of the examination system. By grade 11, when students sit for the Basic Education High School Examinations [the matriculation exam], most secondary students have left school because they have not been able to pass the succession of examinations leading up to the completion of grade 11." Hayden and Martin (2013), p. 49.

[325] See South and Lall (2016), pp. 14-15.

[326] Minutes from numerous education-sector working-group sessions and discussions with KED staff (February 2016, May 2016).

Long-term reforms

Over the long term, reform of the country's assessment and qualification frameworks could create a more inclusive and diverse education sector, one that supports and enhances the roles of all providers, and that is supportive of MTB-MLE. Such reform would promote unity in diversity, by utilizing the existing capacities of the many actors already involved in ethnic-language education and giving them more official recognition. Furthermore, as conflicts, territorial dynamics, and alternative governance arrangements are likely to ebb and flow for decades, the state will need to develop systems that can accommodate this diversity and maximize complementarity between systems.

The NESP recommends "a move away from a system focused on the accurate repetition of acquired content knowledge to a more balanced system that assesses student learning progress against national learning standards.[327]

Such a shift to the teaching and testing of competencies is crucial, and could have a number of positive impacts on compatibility with EBEP systems. Firstly, students would be recognized for their ability rather than their familiarity with specific MoE textbooks. This would give schools and teachers more freedom to decide how they teach, and make it easier for EBEPs preparing students for MoE examinations to use their own approach and their own additional core subjects. It would also mean that transferring students could be more fairly assessed in placement tests, even if unfamiliar with the specific material.

Additionally, the introduction of local curriculum, particularly for local languages, should be accompanied by the introduction of official assessment of these subjects to ensure that they are given status equal to other subjects. The MoE should allow ethnic students, particularly at the primary level, to study Union-wide subjects in local languages, ideally with ethnic-language textbooks, even if the actual content and outcomes are identical around the country. The national assessment framework might even go so far as to state competencies required in each student's first language, and competencies required in their second and third languages, for each level, with Myanmar representing the first language for native Myanmar speakers but the second language for non-native Myanmar speakers.

Reforms such as these would increase the importance attributed to these subjects in MoE and mixed schools, and would likely also encourage more EBEPs to use at least parts of the MoE curriculum in their schools, and to prepare students for MoE exams. This is particularly likely if EBEPs could be involved in the development of new curriculum, as was seen to some extent with Mon curriculum and the MNEC/MNED. Additionally, even where EBEPs continue using their own curriculum, materials, and approaches to teach ethnic literacy, teaching towards recognized competencies would enable their students greater chances of passing MoE assessments.

In the future, the government could also establish systematic processes for accrediting qualifications provided by EBEPs, particularly for ethnic-language subjects, perhaps through an independent accreditation body. Such qualifications could include basic education matriculation certificates as well as non-formal and higher education certificates. These qualifications could then be assigned official equivalences to levels of attainment in the national qualifications framework.[328] Given the vast challenges and practical limitations the central government will face in developing appropriate courses and qualifications for all of the country's languages, a decentralized approach that allows existing local actors to take the initiative might be more effective.

---

[327] Myanmar Ministry of Education (2016), p. 34. An unpublished daft of the full NESP circulated in late 2015 stressed that these learning standards would be related to "child educational development and the skills they will need for lifelong learning."
[328] As part of Myanmar's efforts to develop a technical and vocational education and training (TVET) system, a TVET National Qualifications Framework has been planned, but it is unclear if or how this will relate to basic education levels of attainment.

Government recommendation #9
As part of the MoE's broader agenda for curriculum and assessment reforms, improve compatibility between EBEP and the MoE systems to promote MTB-MLE and to build a more diverse and inclusive education sector.

Throughout all of these reforms, the more that EBEPs can be involved in planning the better, as this will ensure greater complementarity between systems, and that government frameworks are better suited to accommodate the diversity that exists across Myanmar's education sector. In particular, collaborative work is needed to compare existing curriculum and assessment frameworks, and to identify areas where approaches could be aligned to ensure greater compatibility. This will take great compromise, particularly on issues such as language and history. The more that EBEPs can cooperate on the development of new curriculum and assessment frameworks, the more likely they will be to integrate them into their own systems.

Government recommendation #10
Include EBEPs in the reform of curriculum and assessment frameworks as much as possible.

EAO/EBEP recommendation #3
Become involved in and influence government reforms of curriculum and assessment frameworks, and support complementarity between systems.

Government and EAO/EBEP recommendation #8
Undertake collaborative research and curriculum design projects to increase complementarity between education systems.

International aid community recommendation #4
Develop programs to support collaborative research and curriculum design projects to increase complementarity between education systems.

Immediate and near-term measures

Even with a high level of commitment, the reforms recommended in the previous subsection would likely take many years, but several immediate or near-term measures would help address these issues for the students of today and the near future.

Given the high dropout rates in most rural ethnic areas, and the apparent link to high levels of grade repetition, allowing more straightforward transfers from EBEP schools to MoE schools should be part of a broader government effort to maximize access and student retention. In line with its constitutional mandate to provide all children with an education, and its policy goals of 100 percent enrollment in primary school, the MoE should make enrollment and retention of students a central priority, regardless of their current or prior achievement or linguistic ability.

Accordingly, the MoE should make it a priority that all students be enrolled and kept in school, and that they receive the best assistance their schools can provide to raise their achievement. This should

include students previously enrolled in EBEP schools, and students with poor Myanmar language skills or any other perceived capacity gap.

Additionally, enrollment should not depend on parents paying any informal fees or bribes, or on personal connections with head teachers or other officials. Such practices are antithetical to the government's constitutional mandate of providing all children with an education, and should not be tolerated by the MoE under any circumstances.

Government recommendation #11
No child should be rejected from enrollment in basic education, including those previously enrolled in EBEP schools and those with poor Myanmar-language skills.

There are many ways in which coordination between EBEPs and the MoE would help to make student transfers smoother. Coordination between the government, the MNEC/MNED, and the KED/KSEAG (and KRCEE) should continue and be expanded to other EBEPs to establish formal protocols for smooth transfers between systems. A basic system should be developed immediately, so that pro forma transfer slips issued by EBEPs can be accepted by MoE schools as valid confirmation of the student's level of experience. If placement tests must be used, there should be clear policies on exactly what tests will be used at each grade, so that EBEPs can prepare likely transfer students. These basic areas should be negotiated as soon as possible.

Government and EAO/EBEP recommendation #9
As soon as possible, establish these basic protocols, to ease transfers between EBEP schools and MoE schools: • *Pro forma transfer slips issued by EBEPs that are recognized by MoE.* • *Consistent policies on the use of placement tests.*

Over the long-term, further concerted discussions and joint planning will likely be needed to develop systematic mechanisms for transfers, which should be guided by new primary research and regular monitoring of student and school experiences. In particular, efforts should be made to determine what forms of assistance transferring students need to allow them to enter MoE schools at a grade appropriate to their experience, and whether there is any actual benefit to holding them back.

Government and EAO/EBEP recommendation #10
Over the long term, pursue concerted coordination between government and EBEPs to develop more consistent and systematic protocols for student transfers.

Particular research agendas could include: comparisons of current curriculum and assessment criteria of the MoE and EBEPs; surveys of the difficulties faced by children transferring from each EBEP school and at each grade into the MoE system; comparative studies of transfer students who are put back to earlier grades and those who are not; surveys of the difficulties faced by MoE schools and individual classes receiving high numbers of EBEP students; surveys of the experiences of students transferring from MoE schools into EBEP schools and how challenges have been overcome; and studies of patterns and strategies for refugee and IDP return and resettlement, and how to manage EBEP-to-MoE transfers in this context. [329]

---

[329] Some limited work in this area has already been done in two separate advocacy reports, produced by a group of Karen and Karenni EBEPs and by Save the Children, which include more detailed recommendations including numerous practical programmatic and policy suggestions. See KRCEE, et al. (2015), and Dare (2015).

Government and EAO/EBEP recommendation #11
The development of transfer protocols should be guided by new primary research and monitoring of student and school experiences.

International aid community recommendation #5
International development partners should assist government and EBEPs in developing new primary research and monitoring of student and school experiences.

This research should then inform the development of additional services to support transfer students and maximize their achievement. These could include induction and catch-up courses in the Myanmar language and unfamiliar subject matter. If research shows that transferees are significantly lacking capacities and knowledge of important information, six month or even one year courses might be necessary to prepare children for grades appropriate to their age.

Where possible, the MoE should ensure that classes with significant numbers of non-native Myanmar speakers have teachers who can communicate in the dominant first language. Where qualified teachers with these language skills are not available, or in classes where only a minority of students struggle with Myanmar, classroom assistants with local-language capacities could help students who are struggling. These classroom assistants might also be able to assist underachievers.

Mixed MoE-EBEP schools may often be better equipped to support students transferring from full EBEP schools, as they have local-language capacities and teachers who know the EBEP systems. If the administration of mixed schools can be formalized, these schools could be instrumental in assimilating former refugees, migrants, and IDP students who have been attending EBEP schools.

It is crucial that students be placed in the grade most appropriate to their level of advancement. They should only be held back if research can show this is of some benefit. The opposite is often more likely, as the student who is held back must still adjust to a completely new system – and sometimes a new language – and then faces the humiliation of studying alongside younger children. This may lead to high dropout rates, and could damage the confidence and performance of students. Globally, many education systems, primarily to reduce dropout rates, allow automatic promotion of all students, either for all grade transitions, or at key stages such as primary to middle and middle to high school. Placement tests taken by transferring students might therefore be better utilized to determine what forms of assistance they need, rather than what grade they should be assigned to.

Government recommendation #12
Students transferring from EBEPs should receive additional assistance to improve their level of achievement and remediate any linguistic or academic weaknesses.

Government recommendation #13
Students transferring from EBEP schools should be placed in the grade most appropriate to their prior experience and most beneficial to their learning. • *More research is needed to determine if, when, and how it is useful to hold back students transferring from EBEP to MoE schools, and this will likely vary from EBEP to EBEP.*

Meanwhile, EBEPs have the responsibility to ensure that their students who are likely to transfer are as well prepared as possible. EBEPs that are committed to using their own curriculum and assessments in primary or middle school, but are unable to offer practical pathways to the next phase of education themselves, have a responsibility to ensure that students are well prepared to eventually enter the MoE system. In areas where a high numbers of students are entering the MoE system, EBEPs should ensure they are providing students greater exposure to the Myanmar language, and could even begin preparing them for MoE placement tests. This would be significantly more practical if there were a consistent, agreed-upon transfer process, including specific provisions on placement tests.

EAO/EBEP recommendation #4

EBEPs have a responsibility to ensure that students are well prepared for transfers to MoE schools if this is a pathway they are likely to take.

In lieu of the more comprehensive assessment and qualification reforms recommended in the previous subsection, the MoE should take more immediate, incremental measures to ensure that ethnic subjects are considered equal to other subjects, and that students completing their education under EBEPs have qualifications that will be recognized.

In mixed schools (and in MoE schools that have introduced ethnic literacy classes), it is crucial that ethnic subjects be considered equal to other subjects, so that students and school administrations give them adequate attention. Interviewees who raised this issue consistently said that they wanted promotion between grades to be contingent on students passing ethnic subjects as well as other subjects. While the MoE should perhaps consider loosening these promotion requirements, consistency across all subjects is important. In mixed schools, testing on these subjects is currently done in the classroom, often with tests developed by teachers in that school. Providers will have to decide if these tests should be recognized as official, or if uniform tests should be centrally developed by EBEPs, or by the MoE and EBEPs in collaboration.

Government recommendation #14

In lieu of more comprehensive assessment reforms, ensure that assessment of ethnic subjects is given the same weight as other subjects by school administrations and students.

In lieu of a more comprehensive system for accrediting EBEP qualifications, the government should take steps to ensure that credible qualifications issued by EBEPs are recognized as official. Thousands of students – if not tens of thousands – have completed high school and even higher education in the Karen and Karenni schools in refugee camps in Thailand, and in other IDP and migrant schools. These graduates include not only refugees and repatriates, but also large numbers of children who have not been fully displaced, but who traveled to the camps to get an education and have now returned to their homes with their families. The government should evaluate these qualifications to verify that they match the levels of attainment of MoE qualifications and officially recognize them, where appropriate, as valid. Ideally, they should be recognized as equivalent to MoE qualifications.

This could be done initially as a temporary measure, with plans for further alignment and convergence of the two qualification frameworks in the future. In the meantime, students who have already completed high school and higher education should not be denied the opportunities they deserve in Myanmar.

Such a move could take the form of legislation or a presidential notification. It should be publicly announced, and reported in the media, so that employers are aware. Public campaigns could be

undertaken in areas with high numbers of repatriates or other people that have Karen and Karenni EBEP qualifications. Although the Karen and Karenni EBEP systems are the best known for their alternative qualifications, more work is needed to identify other EBEPs offering credible, educational certification.

Government recommendation #15
In lieu of a more comprehensive system for accrediting EBEP qualifications, the government should take steps to ensure that credible qualifications issued by EBEPs are recognized as official. Those issued by Karen and Karenni EBEPs, such as from schools in refugee camps are the best known, but there may be others that have similar credibility.

SECTION TWELVE: Quality and financing of EBEP services

EBEPs face significant challenges in improving the overall quality of the education they provide. Some of these challenges are similar to those of the MoE, but EBEPs also suffer particularly from poor financing, which leads to high teacher turnover and makes it difficult for them to develop long-term strategies for developing their systems. A proper technical assessment of the EBEPs is beyond the scope of this research; they vary greatly in any case. Nonetheless, this section outlines and provides recommendations on some of the broader structural challenges that EBEPs face.

Sources of financing and support

Presently, EBEPs work primarily by supporting community-based schools that depend on extensive resources provided by local communities. Funds are typically raised from the entire local community, not just those with children in school, through door-to-door donation collections as well as fetes and other public events. These contributions go first to supplementing teacher stipends, and are also used for building costs, materials, repairs, and furniture. Schools often rely on the committed support of local religious leaders, EAO leaders, and other influential people to encourage and organize support from communities. Parents also pay specific donations for teacher stipends, though these are often discretionary so that poor families can still put their children through school. Meanwhile, school management, maintenance, and most regular tasks rely on people volunteering on school committees or parent-teacher associations (PTAs), as well as local religious leaders.

It should be noted, however, that government schools also depend on a high degree of community support, with school committees often raising additional funds to fill gaps, and parents burdened with various formal and informal fees to keep their children in school. The MoE estimates that the share of all education spending that came from households declined from 63 percent to 30 percent between AY 2009-10 and AY 2013-14, owing largely to increases in government spending; nonetheless, 30 percent is still a significant share.[330] In one example, a school committee leader at an MoE-MNED mixed school that is primarily funded by the MoE complained that the government's support was barely adequate, and noted that it often came with additional costs that were not covered, such as transportation of furniture. "It's like they're just pretending to give us something, but are not really concerned," he explained.[331]

Their level of involvement in school administration provides a sense of ownership to communities that generates pride in local schools and makes them highly valued, but it also places a significant burden on local people, particularly parents. According to the Karen Human Rights Group, community support for education "takes an especially high toll on women who are raising their children on their own, as well as female teachers, who must work to improve education with very few resources at their disposal."[332] The leader of the school committee at a Mon national primary school asked the author to "please include a recommendation for MNEC, government, international groups, or whomever to find a way to fund our schools so we don't have to rely on villagers' contributions. They feel a lot of obligation, but it can cause problems, and whispers too, so it's not good."[333]

Beyond funds provided by communities, most EBEPs depend on international aid, which is typically provided through partnerships with INGOS or consortiums. Tranches of funding are often provided on a project-by-project basis, which means that different functions and services are funded through

---

[330] This estimate was included in an unpublished draft of the NESP circulated in December 2015, which cited the World Bank's public expenditure review. However, the World Bank Public Expenditure Review circulated in 2016 stated that data was not available to make such estimates but confirmed that "the Union government has likely replaced private households as the main financier for education". See World Bank (2015), p.47.

[331] Focus group discussion with head teacher and school committee leaders at mixed post-primary school one (November 2015).

[332] KHRG (2016), p. 34. Specific reasons are not given to indicate if these burdens fall more on female teachers than male teachers.

[333] Focus group discussion with parents and teachers at Mon national middle school one (November 2015).

different channels, and that these budget lines are often only secured for six months to a few years at a time. This makes long-term planning difficult, as future budgets cannot be guaranteed, hindering EBEPs from developing long-term strategies to address core weaknesses or even guaranteeing continued support to community schools.

Where EAOs play a governance role, they often provide some support for their own education departments, for religious education bodies, and for community schools directly, particularly if they have ceasefires and more stable sources of funding. However, the amounts provided vary greatly from EAO to EAO, and sometimes between different administrative and command areas. The most basic and common forms of support include the establishment of central offices for EAO-EDs, the provision of rations and accommodation for teaching or non-teaching staff, vehicles for staff to travel to schools and transport materials, and funds and materials for one-time school construction projects.

Local level EAO authorities also provide various forms of support, including funds and resources for school construction, rations (and sometimes stipends or "pocket money") for administrative or teaching staff, organizing fundraising campaigns,[334] and levying taxes on companies for specific education programs (for example for IDPs). They might also exempt education staff from paying certain taxes, including those collected at checkpoints along transportation routes. However, overall, EAOs have usually depended to a large extent on international funding for their social services, and have not committed much of their own funds.

The only non-MoE schools in ethnic areas that receive government support are monastic schools registered by MORA. Thirteen of the 25 schools in the Kaung Hat network have this registration and receive textbooks, school grants, and teacher stipends, which are then shared with schools that are not registered (see Section 4). However, schools associated with other religions receive no government funding.

Teacher support and training

Due mostly to lack of funding, EBEPs face particular challenges in hiring, retaining, and adequately compensating quality teachers. Teacher salaries – or more aptly, stipends – are extremely low, and even so, are usually not guaranteed for more than a year, because of unstable sources of funding. Figures for teacher stipends were not systematically recorded, but they tend to range from around 15 to 60 USD per month, excluding community donations. Most EBEP teachers have at least a high school education – from their own system or the MoE – as well as competence in their ethnic language. However, such people can often be difficult to find and retain.

When asked what the main challenges were in ensuring quality Mon language education, a government head teacher in a mixed post-primary school, said that the difficulty was in retaining the school's only MNED teacher, despite having paid her the small government funds provided for Mon language teaching. "It is difficult for [the MNED teacher] to continue – we don't know how she will continue," she said.[335] Additionally, an MNEC member interviewed by UNICEF mentioned the need of increasing "the ratio of teachers to students", as a key aim."[336] Apparently, young MNED teachers often complete a mandatory three-year contract, but are then obligated to stop, to look after relatives or raise families, or to find better-paid work, often by migrating. Others don't even make it through the three years.

Keeping EBEP teachers in their jobs often depends on their personal willingness and desire to serve

---

[334] Communities typically have to attain permits or informal permissions from EAOs for the use of logs and other natural materials for school construction. Logging is usually regulated, or in some cases banned, by EAOs, but exceptions are made for construction of community and public buildings. Commercial logging has been banned in KNU areas, but its forestry department has detailed protocols in its handbooks for granting permission to communities building schools and other buildings.
[335] Focus group discussion with head teacher and school committee leaders at mixed post-primary school one (November 2015).
[336] Jessica Aumann and U Thet Naing, "Working with Non-State Groups to Help All Children Get an Education," *UNICEF Myanmar blog,* April 8, 2015. Available at: http://unicefmyanmar.blogspot.com/2015/04/working-with-non-state-groups-to-help.html.

the community. According to an MNED middle school teacher, "After I graduated, I wanted to be a teacher and the school needed a teacher,… but if we weren't interested in the Mon culture then we wouldn't do it.… We want the kids to learn Mon, because we are Mon."[337] Another young teacher added, "It is because we are Mon that we are taking responsibility for our school."[338] Similarly, a study undertaken by Save the Children and UNESCO in Karen refugee camps in Thailand, including a survey of pre-service, in-service, and former teachers, found that "the primary motivation for teaching is less about a career choice or career path, and more about the intrinsic motivation of people within these communities to contribute to their community's development and/or the simple need of the community for teachers to fill their schools."[339]

EBEPs sometimes even find it difficult to find teachers who have the necessary language and literacy skills. A long-serving teacher in an MoE-MNED mixed school explained, "because we get such a small salary, it is difficult to retain our teachers, so we lose teachers every year.… I know a lot of people who could be good teachers of Mon language, but they ask me how much [they would get paid]. I tell them, and they say, 'no way!'"[340] In a Karen village in the East Daw Na region, the school committee explained that there were numerous people from the village who could teach Karen literacy well, but they could only teach summer courses, because they had to work as migrant laborers in Thailand most of the year. This village had to arrange through their church for Pwo Karen teachers to come from another area, but they were unable to teach Sgaw literacy to the mostly Sgaw children, and instead relied mostly on the Myanmar language.[341]

Some EBEPs provide pre-service or in-service teacher training. For example, the KTWG runs a teacher training college that provides nine-month, pre-service training courses and employs dozens of mobile trainers to travel throughout Karen areas to provide training twice per academic year. These trainers also provide training to school committees in some areas. A similar model has been adopted by other member organizations of the Eastern Burma Community Schooling Project (EBCS), which includes the RDFSS. Teachers in the Kaung Hat schools said they had benefited from this training.

However, most EBEPs lack significant resources to provide systematic training. High turnover also makes it difficult to train teachers in progressive stages, or even to ensure that all active teachers have been trained. During this research, a number of teachers interviewed said they had never received any formal training, but it is unclear how common that is. It should also be noted that a significant portion of MoE daily-wage teachers deployed to rural areas have also received little or no training.

Lack of funding for EBEPs also leads to deficiencies in basic school materials, textbooks, and furniture, and to poor maintenance of some schools. Both MNED and KED/KSEAG teachers interviewed for this study reported that supplies of textbooks, pens, and pencils from their EBEPs are unreliable, sometimes causing difficulties in the classroom.

EBEPs also often lack resources to support an adequate number of kindergartens, middle schools, and high schools. Numerous interviewees gave this as a reason that there is sometimes a local preference for the MoE, even where people would otherwise rather put their children through EBEP schools. According to parents in a Mon community that has both MNED and MoE schools, if children start in MoE kindergarten, they are less likely to change to EBEP schools.[342] Similarly, in these and other communities, parents often prefer to put their children through MoE primary school if they know that the nearest EBEP middle and secondary schools will be too far away.

---

[337] Focus group discussion with teachers at Mon middle school one (November 2015).
[338] Focus group discussion with teachers at Mon middle school one (November 2015).
[339] Costa and Murray (n.d.), p. 3.
[340] Focus group discussion with MNED primary school teachers from multiple MoE-MNED mixed schools (November 2015).
[341] Discussions in East Daw Na case village two (October 2015). Despite being organized through the church, these teachers receive stipends from KED/KSEAG.
[342] Focus group discussion with parents and teachers at Mon national primary school one (November 2015). Focus group discussion with parents and teachers at Mon national middle school one (November 2015).

Recommendations

EBEPs face the dual challenges of maintaining and strengthening their current service delivery models, for the sake of the hundreds of thousands of students who depend on them, and of developing strategies for their future roles in the context of political settlements. In the period prior to political settlements, EBEPs will likely depend primarily on continued commitments from the international donor community, and could be aided significantly by increased funding commitments from EAOs. In the longer term, particularly if political progress is made, options for public financing and official accreditation and regulation of EBEPs should be explored to ensure that the state is accountable for its education responsibilities, even if it is not the only provider.

Strengthening EBEPs in the near term

Until comprehensive political settlements to armed conflicts can be achieved, the education development strategies of EBEPs will likely continue to focus on remaining independent from the state. This means they will not be comprehensively included in public education funding mechanisms, and in many cases will often have to keep working in ways that do not depend on government registration, on travelling through government-controlled areas or on maintaining bank accounts in Myanmar. As conflicts are bound to ebb and flow, at least for the next five to ten years,[343] all actors looking to strengthen education in these areas should develop strategies accordingly.

Firstly, donors should commit to providing consistent and stable support to EBEPs. EBEPs should be viewed by the donor community as high-value partners in reaching some of the country's most remote and vulnerable populations in a conflict-sensitive way and in helping the country meet international and government targets for universal education. While government spending on its own education system increases – and will naturally continue to be supported by the international community – donors should understand that EBEPs will remain particularly dependent on external funding due to a lack of alternative sources.

The Myanmar Education Consortium (MEC) represents a crucial step in collective donor action in this regard. In 2016, the MEC has developed an updated strategy that "shifts [the consortium's] focus to strengthening ethnic and monastic systems, with a substantially increased focus on policy engagement and coherence between education systems."[344] In addition to MEC, other local and international organizations remain crucial supporters of EBEPs, especially those with well-established relations and working experience with EBEPs, such as World Education, Save the Children, Child's Dream, Partners Relief and Development and Hope International among others. World Education, in particular, has provided a "backbone" of administrative and core support to many EBEPs, including KED/KSEAG and MNEC/MNED for the last 10 years, and more recently RDFSS, particularly with funding from USAID.[345]

In particular, donors should focus ongoing support on two main aims:

- Increasing and stabilizing EBEP teacher salaries to bring them closer to those provided by the MoE.
- Developing long-term partnerships with EBEPs aimed at systems strengthening and strategic planning.

The first aim is an immediate priority to stabilize EBEP operations. Plans should be made to commit salaries for three or more years, so that teachers can be offered guaranteed contracts rather than

---

[343] It is quite possible that armed conflicts in some form or other will continue for longer than this, but stakeholders would not be reasonably expected to be planning that far into the future in any case.
[344] Myanmar Education Consortium (2016), p. 4.
[345] The bulk of this support is currently from the USAID-funded, IRC-led Project for Local Empowerment, in which World Education leads an education section.

being kept in a state of uncertainty. EBEP salaries should be raised, where possible, to bring them closer to those provide by the MoE.

The second aim relates to avoiding project-by-project or short-term program commitments and moving towards more holistic and consistent systems strengthening support to make EBEP systems more stable, robust, and effective. This implies working alongside partners to develop specific strategies over multi-year periods, and taking "all those who participate in the provision, financing, regulation, and use of learning services" into account when looking for areas in need of strengthening.[346] This is crucial to building up the capacity of EBEPs in a systematic way and allowing them to make longer-term plans for their development.

The MEC's 2016 program strategy includes a significant component for systems strengthening of EBEPs, aiming to create "institutional system[s] where all involved people are provided with incentives to use resources efficiently and to improve student performance."[347] The planned approach includes interventions in areas ranging from classroom process, to strengthening management, to evaluation improvements, and other key areas.[348] It also includes as a core component assisting EBEPs to undertake research and advocacy and engage with the MoE.

World Education has a similar approach, providing "organizational development" support to EBEPs that involves tailoring interventions to each EBEP partner's specific needs. Through such partnerships, World Education has assisted EBEPs with developing core capacities to manage finances, human resources, and information, to improve monitoring and evaluation practices, and to engage in collaborative external relations with MoE and other actors. World Education has also supported a number of research initiatives, including an upcoming study on the role of school committees in education management in KED/KSEAG-supported schools, representing a key step towards understanding its entire education system more holistically.

EBEPs have a wide range of needs that could be addressed through systems strengthening, ranging from those that can bring immediate benefits, such as increased funding of existing training and materials distribution projects, to those that can address more systemic issues, such as curriculum development, financing reform, and increasing opportunities for students to further their education. International partners should work to identify the right balance of these types of interventions, supporting existing, proven initiatives, while also working with EBEPs to identify new areas for systems development.

International aid community recommendation #5

Donors should commit to providing consistent and stable support to EBEPs for at least the next five years, with two main aims: increasing and stabilizing EBEP teacher salaries, and supporting long-term partnerships aimed at systems strengthening.

EBEPs, in partnership with trusted international actors, should make systems strengthening a central part of their organizational strategies in order improve service delivery and raise their status as important components of the country's education sector. As the government increases education spending and builds its technical capacity year by year, EBEPs will also have to work hard to improve the quality of their services in order to remain relevant to the future of the Union. While their ethnic national identities and their unique territorial access make them important politically and culturally, they must

---

[346] This is a quote taken from the definition of education "systems strengthening" provided in World Bank (2011).
[347] Myanmar Education Consortium (2016), p. 33, quoting the World Bank.
[348] Myanmar Education Consortium (2016), pp. 36-37. The strategy aims to improve student learning through various key themes including: (1) "directly strengthening classroom processes," through training and other support for teachers and curriculum and materials development; (2) "strengthening school leadership and management," through training head teachers and "education leaders" and improving information monitoring systems at the school and community level; and (3) targeting "over-arching system effectiveness," by enhancing information and monitoring and evaluation capabilities at higher administrative levels, and enhancing networks and linkages for collaboration and learning within systems.

ensure that they continue to prioritize the educational needs of communities. As recommended in Section 8, EBEPs can benefit greatly from alignment with certain government strategies in order to demonstrate their value and make their services more complementary to those provided by the MoE.

EAO/EBEP recommendation #5

EBEPs, in partnership with trusted international actors, should make systems strengthening central to their organizational strategies, particularly in the context of ever-improving government services.

International actors should collaborate extensively with EBEPs from the early stages of program development to ensure that programs are well suited to those EBEPs and their ways of working. Encouragingly, the World Education and MEC approaches firmly recognize that EBEPs have vast and varying needs, and thus they need to work closely with partners to identify the most valuable areas of intervention.[349] It is crucial that donors remain supportive of this general approach and allow programs to be developed in partnership with EBEPs from the beginning.

International partners must strive to fully understand local political situations faced by EBEPs, and give the EBEPs space to identify and manage potential risks. In many cases, EBEPs will be focused on developing their own systems, while donors may be more focused on bringing them into the state system. While we have noted the positive contributions that international actors can make to improving relations between EBEPs and the MoE, it is very important that donors help EBEPs to remain capable of providing education in situations of both conflict and peace, and not force them to change too quickly. Additionally, it is crucial that EBEP relations with the government develop naturally, based on genuine trust and political progress, and not be manipulated to match donor agendas.

Developing systems strengthening strategies will require rigorous analysis and an appreciation of the wider systems that enable EBEP education, including the various inputs from communities, religious institutions, local- and central-level EAO authorities, and the state. For example, current financing mechanisms are extremely complex and cannot be understood simply by looking at the central accounting books of the EBEPs themselves, as, in practice, each school has a wide variety of benefactors. Identifying the most critical gaps in resources, and where new inputs will be most effective, will depend on thorough research to understand the current systems.

International aid community recommendation #6

International actors should collaborate extensively with EBEPs from the early stages of program development onwards to ensure that programs are well suited to those EBEPs and their ways of working.

In the near term, EAOs should also try to increase budget allocations for their education departments, which are currently low in most cases. Increases should not be financed by simply raising taxes on local people, however, as this would add to the burden that communities already bear, and might just create unnecessary layers of bureaucracy. These increased allocations should be paid for by fees or taxes that don't fall on communities, such as a natural resource tax.

EAO/EBEP recommendation #6

EAOs should increase budget allocations for their education departments.

---

[349] Myanmar Education Consortium (2016), pp. 37-39.

Towards public financing

As argued in Section 8, the ultimate aim for all education stakeholders should be for the state to assume primary responsibility (and accountability) for ensuring that every child has adequate and affordable access to school, that the quality of education is consistent, and that recognized qualifications are provided. There are a number of ways this could be achieved while enhancing the roles of EBEPs and retaining the diversity that currently exists in the education sector. However, it must be recognized by all sides that significant political challenges remain, and that establishing sustainable arrangements for more centralized education management will ultimately depend on the broader political process.

Some EBEPs might envision integrating into the state system following a political settlement (e.g., one that moves towards federalism). Individuals from EBEPs might assume Union- or state/region-level roles in the MoE, or the state system might be reformed to include EBEPs' existing structures.

Alternatively, as in many other countries, it would also be perfectly natural for non-state education organizations to continue providing a full range of education services from outside the MoE, while receiving government funding and being subject to official regulation and quality control. Like Catholic schools in the UK, EBEPs might one day be accorded a status that guarantees them regular state funding and influence over policy, but with laws that protect their unique identities. Charter schools or autonomous school districts, as seen in many developed and developing countries, could protect EBEP autonomy while allowing them to receive state funds and subjecting them to appropriate levels of quality control.

Another way that the state could become responsible for financing other providers is if school committees were given an official role in choosing which actors their schools receive education services from. In a "roadmap" for healthcare reform released by the NLD's national health network after the party came into power, a greatly decentralized model for healthcare financing and accreditation is recommended. If realized, this model would see a government "single purchaser," such as the social security board, purchasing health services from a range of healthcare providers, including "ethnic health organizations."[350] Similar models should be explored for education.

Some EBEPs, including the MNEC/MNED, have expressed a tentative interest in receiving public funds for teacher salaries. The KED has suggested the possibility of receiving public funds for teachers in mixed schools in KNU-controlled areas, but specifically under an arrangement where they would manage their disbursement. Among those interviewed, some school committee members stated that the government should pay EBEP teachers to take the burden off communities, while others remain primarily concerned with retaining their school's independence.

Unsurprisingly, EBEP teachers in all three case studies asserted that they should receive full salaries from the MoE, particularly in mixed schools where they are working alongside MoE teachers, who currently receive much higher wages. According to an MNED primary school teacher in a mixed school, "[The government] should give salaries to our teachers, and to teachers from other ethnic groups too.... If the government would pay salaries, we could have a choice of so many teachers with good skills and experience."[351] Significant political hurdles remain, however, as the MoE will likely have reservations about allowing EBEPs (especially EAO-EDs) to manage public funds. EBEPs also have reservations that accepting support from the government would come at the expense of their autonomy.

Some progress towards appropriating government funds for EBEPs has occurred in Mon areas, where UNICEF has provided assistance through government channels to MNEC/MNED. In line with its "whole state" approach to supporting education,[352] UNICEF has facilitated the distribution of 94 school grants

---

[350] NLD National Health Network (2016), p. 27.
[351] Focus group discussion with MNED primary school teachers from multiple Moe-MNED mixed schools (November 2015).
[352] UNICEF, *South-East (Mon, Kayin, Tanintharyi)* (n.d.). Available at: http://www.unicef.org/myanmar/overview_25056.html.

to MNED Mon national schools, which were funded by the Netherlands but distributed through township education offices (TEOs). UNICEF also plans to include MNEC, and perhaps other EBEPs, in the development of Township Education Improvement Plans (TEIPs), and has helped the MoE provide 10,000 mathematics and Myanmar-language textbooks to Mon national primary schools.[353] In addition to the direct benefits produced by the grants, these activities have further strengthened coordination between MoE TEOs and their counterparts, MNED district administrators. Interviewees explained, however, that their ability to cooperate at this level is hindered by the lack of authority of TEOs to act independently of the MoE.[354]

The MoE might also be able to recruit EBEP teachers to teach in schools where they already serve, particularly mixed schools, and especially where they are already using MoE curriculum. In some KNU areas, KED/KSEAG-supported teachers have been hired as MoE daily-wage teachers at the recommendation of local KNU authorities. In some areas this might cause complications regarding which administrative hierarchy these teachers report to, and whether they are still subject to KED leadership. Nonetheless, if agreement can be reached at senior levels on how such teachers would be managed, this could provide a practical way to pay local community teachers a fair wage.

Establishing effective public financing instruments for EBEPs will take time, and will depend on careful negotiation between all parties to address the technical challenges and to build trust. MoE and EBEPs should use formal coordination mechanisms, recommended in Section 8, towards this end. In some cases, peace-process discussions might also be an appropriate forum. Pilot initiatives might be helpful to build closer relations and to experiment with channels for funding and mechanisms for distribution. Joint initiatives funded and facilitated by international actors, like the school grants scheme supported by UNICEF, could also help in this regard.

Even if government financing of EBEPs can be arranged, without a comprehensive and sustainable end to armed conflicts EBEPs will need to remain adaptable to potential conditions of renewed conflict. As the respective 17-year and 21-year ceasefires of the Kachin Independence Organization and the Shan State Progress Party have shown, ceasefires can always break down, even after many years that may have included periods of cooperation on social services. If public financing were to suddenly be cut, donors should be prepared to restore funds to EBEPs that are able to operate in conflict-affected areas and IDP camps.

Government and EAO/EBEP recommendation #12
Develop mechanisms for public financing of EBEP services.

International aid community recommendation #7
Explore options for supporting government and EBEP efforts to establish public financing mechanisms for EBEPs but remain prepared for disruption if there is renewed to conflict.

Another important means of channeling public funds to schools in areas where the MoE has limited access is through the monastic system, as has occurred in some of the Kaung Hat schools and others in the region also supported by RDFSS. Increasing the budgets available could allow MORA to identify many more schools in areas that are in desperate need of assistance, including many in conflict-affected areas where the MoE has limited access.

MORA should also explore options for providing equal funding to schools and teachers affiliated with

[353] Information provided by UNICEF at UNHCR operations meeting, September 10, 2015, Inya Lake Hotel, Yangon.
[354] Interview with senior MNEC leader (November 2015). Interview with two of MNEC's founders (November 2015). Discussion with MNED Thaton (Sahtom) district administrator.

other religions. In particular, many Christian organizations run extensive education programs, often supporting community schools.[355] However, religious organizations may too have reservations about becoming dependent on, or subordinate to, the state. Additionally, teachers and other interviewees working with the Kaung Hat monastic network also felt they should get higher wages, comparable to MoE teachers.

Government recommendation #16
Increased support could be provided through MORA to expand assistance to schools in areas that the MoE cannot access.

Towards official accreditation

Options should also be explored for accrediting EBEP teachers, schools, and training centers, so they can be fully recognized, and to allow for greater regulation and quality assurance. Whatever models are used, increased public financing of EBEPs will likely come with some degree of centralized regulation and oversight. As the NLD Health Network has recommended for the country's health sector,[356] this might be best achieved through the establishment of an independent accreditation and regulation body outside of the MoE. This body could then register and monitor schools, organizations, and training centers linked to different providers.

While EBEPs might be averse to government control and loss of autonomy, they are generally eager to receive greater official recognition of their credentials and services, which formal accreditation could provide. According to a senior MNEC leader, legal recognition is more important than gaining financial support. She explained, "We want them to pay our teachers' salaries, but more important than that, we want to be legally recognized, so it's not just about the subsidies."[357] EBEPs also need to appreciate that the state has a democratically mandated responsibility to ensure that children are getting a quality education that will provide them with maximum opportunities.

Nonetheless, the state should focus on building trust and respect, by demonstrating its capacity and willingness to support EBEPs and to recognize them as valued institutions, rather than attempting to bring them under rigid control too fast or attaching too many strings to financing and accreditation offers. As stated in recommendation #3, the first step should be to recognize the status quo by formally recognizing, in law and policy, that EBEPs are providers of basic education, thereby creating more space for them to work with government and other actors.

Developing the right mechanisms for accreditation and ongoing monitoring will depend on a slow process of trust building, negotiations, and genuine government efforts to understand current EBEP systems and strengths, not forcing them to immediately align with the government system. Closer alignment will ultimately depend on inclusive processes of strategy building and reform, to ensure that EBEPs and MoE have joint ownership of education sector policies and goals.

Government recommendation #17
Options for independent accreditation of EBEPs should be explored and discussed with them.

---

[355] Myanmar is officially a secular country, though the Ministry of Religious Affairs has long been geared primarily towards working with the Buddhist community and even actively promoting the religion.
[356] NLD National Health Network (2016), p. 21. The document recommends an independent accreditation body to oversee non-state health facilities, medics, and training centers.
[357] Interview with senior MNEC leader (November 2015).

EAO/EBEP recommendation #7
EBEPs should seek formal accreditation from a state-sanctioned body.

Bibliography

Amnesty International (2008). "Crimes Against Humanity in Eastern Myanmar". Available at:
    https://amnesty.dk/media/1937/crimes-against-humanity-in-eastern-myanmar.pdf

Bender, Penelope, Nadine Dutcher, David Klaus, Jane Shore, and Charlie Tesar. 2005. *In
    Their Own Language: Education for All*. Education Notes. Washington, DC: World Bank. Available at: http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/374241468763515925/In-their-own-language-education-for-all.

Buckland, Peter. 2004. *Reshaping the Future: Education and Postconflict Reconstruction*.
    Washington, DC: World Bank. Available at: http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/860731468138857154/Reshaping-the-future-Education-and-post-conflict-reconstruction.

Burton, Lisa Ann. 2013. "Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education in the Philippines:
    Studying Top-Down Policy Implementation from the Bottom Up." Dissertation submitted to the faculty of the University of Minnesota. Available at: http://conservancy.umn.edu/bitstream/handle/11299/152603/burton_umn_0130_13632.pdf?sequence=1.

Callahan, Mary. 2003a. *Making Enemies: War and State Building in Burma*. Washington:
    Cornell University Press.

Callahan, Mary. 2003b. "Language Policy in Modern Burma." In *Fighting Words: Language
    Policy and Ethnic Relations in Asia,* edited by Michael Brown and Sumit Ganguly, 143-175. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Cheesman, Nick. 2003. "School, State, and Sangha in Burma." *Comparative Education* 39 (1).

Committee Representing the People's Parliament. 1999. *"Commemorating the completion
    of one year since the establishment of the Committee Representing the People's Parliament elected in the 1990 Multi-Party General Elections."* Available at: http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs4/CRPP-Report.pdf.

Costa, Andrea, and Tim Murray. n.d. "Supporting Refugee and Community Teachers along
    the Thailand-Myanmar Border and Striving for their Recognition to Support Ongoing Peace Building Efforts." Paper presented at UNESCO conference entitled "Asia-Pacific Programme of Educational Innovation for Development (APEID)," October 29-31, 2014. Available at: http://www.unescobkk.org/education/apeid/apeid-international-conference/apeidconf14/papers-and-presentations/.

Dhammasami, Khammai. 2004. "Between Idealism and Pragmatism: A Study of Monastic
    Education in Burma and Thailand from the Seventeenth Century to the Present." DPhil Dissertation, University of Oxford.

DantDaLun. 2014. *Myanmar Education Consortium: Baseline Study Report.* Yangon:
    Myanmar Education Consortium. Available at: https://mecmigration.files.wordpress.com/2016/05/mec-baseline-study-report-final.pdf.

Felsman, Collin, and Donika Dimovska. 2014. *Private Sector and Development: Harnessing
    non-state education providers through innovative financing.* Washington, DC: Results for Development Institute. Available at: http://www.resultsfordevelopment.org/search /node/harnessing%20non-state%20actors%20type%3Apublication.

Furnivall, J. S. 1943. *Educational Progress in South-East Asia*. New York: Institute of Pacific Relations.

Furnivall, J. S. 1948. *Colonial Policy and Practice*. New York: New York University Press.

Glassman, Deborah, Jordan Naidoo, and Fred Wood, eds. 2007. *Community Schools in Africa: Reaching the Unreached*. New York: Springer.

Government of the Union of Burma. 1954. *Pyi Daw Tha Plan*. London: Hazell, Watson and Viney.

Hayden, Martin, and Richard Martin. 2013. "Recovery of the Education System in Myanmar" Journal of International and Comparative Education 2 (2): 47-57.

Human Rights Watch (2005a). "They Came and Destroyed Our Village Again': The Plight of Internally Displaced Persons in Karen State". Available at: https://www.hrw.org/report/2005/06/09/they-came-and-destroyed-our-village-again/plight-internally-displaced-persons.

Human Rights Watch (2005b). "Burma: Forced Displacement by Burmese Army Continues in Karen State: Rangoon Must End Forced Labor, Allow Humanitarian Access". Available at: https://www.hrw.org/news/2005/06/10/burma-forced-displacement-burmese-army-continues-karen-state.

Health and Education Advice and Resource Team (HEART). 2014. *Helpdesk Report: Complementary Basic Education*. Available at: http://www.heart-resources.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/complementary-basic-education-case-studies-evidence-resources.pdf.

Jolliffe, Kim. 2014. "Ethnic Conflict and Social Services in Myanmar's Contested Regions". The Asia Foundation. Available at: http://asiafoundation.org/publication/ethnic-conflict-and-social-services-in-myanmars-contested-regions/.

Jolliffe, Kim. 2015a. "Refugee decision-making processes, community-based protection and potential voluntary repatriation to Myanmar." Unpublished manuscript, commissioned by UNHCR. Available at: http://research.kim/works/refugee-decision-making-processes-community-based-protection-and-potential-voluntary-repatriation-to-myanmar.

Jolliffe, Kim. 2015b "Ethnic Armed Conflict and Territorial Administration in Myanmar". The Asia Foundation. Available at: http://asiafoundation.org/publication/ethnic-armed-conflict-and-territorial-administration-in-myanmar-full-report/.

Jolliffe, Pia. 2016. *Learning, Migration and Intergenerational Relations: The Karen and the Gift of Education*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Jones, Alan L. 1988. *The Monastic Schools of Burma and Siam During the Colonial Period*. U.S. Dept. of Education, Educational Resources Information Center. Available at: http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED302469.pdf.

Karen Human Rights Group - KHRG (1998). "WHOLESALE DESTRUCTION: The SLORC/SPDC Campaign to Obliterate All Hill Villages in Papun and Eastern Nyaunglebin Districts". Available at: http://khrg.org/1998/02/khrg9801/wholesale-destruction.

Karen Human Rights Group - KHRG (2008). "Village Agency: Rural Rights and Resistance in a

Militarized Karen State". Available at: http://www.khrg.org/2008/11/village-agency-rural-rights-and-resistance-militarized-karen-state.

Karen Human Rights Group (2009). "Cycles of Displacement: Forced relocation and civilian responses in Nyaunglebin District". Available at: http://www.khrg.org/2009/01/cycles-displacement-forced-relocation-and-civilian-responses-nyaunglebin-district#sthash.kjtgsU8s.dpuf.

Karen Human Rights Group - KHRG (2001). "FLIGHT, HUNGER AND SURVIVAL: Repression and Displacement in the Villages of Papun and Nyaunglebin Districts". Available at: http://khrg.org/2001/10/0103a/flight-hunger-and-survival-repression-and-displacement-villages-papun-and.

International Human Rights Clinic (2014). "POLICY MEMORANDUM: Preventing Indiscriminate Attacks and Wilful Killings of Civilians by the Myanmar Military". Human Rights Program at Harvard Law School: available at: http://hrp.law.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/2014.03.24-IHRC-Military-Policy-Memorandum-FINAL.web_.pdf.

Karen Human Rights Group – KHRG. 2016. *Hidden Strengths, Hidden Struggles: Women's testimonies from southeast Myanmar*. Available at: http://khrg.org/2016/08/hidden-strengths-hidden-struggles-women%E2%80%99s-testimonies-southeast-myanmar.

Karen State Education Assistance Group – KSEAG. 2015. *KSEAG Narrative Report 2015*.

Karen Teacher Working Group – KTWG. 2016. *Impact of the Daily-Wage Teacher (DWT) Policy on Education in Karen Areas*.

Khin Maung Kyi, Ronald Findlay, R.M. Sundrum, Mya Maung, Myo Nyunt, Zaw Oo, et al. 2000. *A Vision and a Strategy: Economic Development of Burma.* Stockholm: The Olof Palme International Center.

KRCEE, KnED, KED, KTWG, and KWO. 2015. *Refugee Student Transition: Policy Position and Program Recommendations.* Available at: http://data.unhcr.org/thailand/download.php?id=1251.

Kyaw Yin Hlaing. 2007. "The Politics of Language Policy in Myanmar: Imagining Togetherness, Practicing Difference?" In *Language, Nation and Development in Southeast Asia,* edited by Lee Hock Guan and Leo Suryadinata. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Kyed, H. M., and M. Gravers. 2015. "Integration and Power-Sharing: What are the Future Options for Armed Non-State Actors in the Myanmar Peace Process?" Stability: International Journal of Security & Development, 4 (1): 57, pp. 1-20.

Kyi Pyar Chit Saw, and Matthew Arnold. 2014. *Administering the State in Myanmar: An Overview of the General Administration Department*. Discussion Paper No. 6. The Asia Foundation and Myanmar Development Resource Institute. Available at: https://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/GADEnglish.pdf.

Lall, Marie, and Ashley South. 2011. *Education, Conflict and Identity: Non-State Ethnic Education Regimes in Burma*. Education Support Program Working Paper No. 54. Privatisation in Education Research Initiative. Available at: http://www.periglobal.org/role-state/document/education-con%EF%AC%82ict-and-identity-non-state-ethnic-education-regimes-burma.

Lenkova, Polina. 2015. *Conflict Sensitivity in Education Provision in Karen State.* Thabyay
Education Foundation. Available at: http://www.thabyay.org/uploads/2/6/7/4/26749033/
cs_ed_prov_karen.pdf.

Lintner, Bertil. 1990. *The Rise and Fall of the Communist Party of Burma (CPB)*. New York:
Cornell University Press.

Lorch, Jasmin. 2007. "Myanmar's Civil Society – a Patch for the National Education System?
The Emergence of Civil Society in Areas of State Weakness." *Sudöstasian Aktuell: journal of
current Southeast Asian affairs* 26 (3): 54-88.

Mansuri, Ghazala, and Vijayendra Rao. 2004. "Community-Based and -Driven Development:
A Critical Review." *World Bank Research Observer* 19 (1): 1-39.

Maung Aung Myoe. 2009. *Building the Tatmadaw: Tatmadaw Since 1948*. Singapore:
Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

MacKenzie, Pamela. n.d. *Multilingual Education among Minority Language Communities
with reference to the development of MLE programmes in India.* UK: International
Network for Development. Available at: http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HR-
Council/MinorityIssues/statements/experts/Pamela_McKenzie_long_paper.doc.

Mehrotra, Santosh. 1998. "Education for All: Policy Lessons from High-Achieving Countries."
International Review of Education 44 (5): 461-484.

Muta, Hiromitsu. 2015. *Regional Disparity of Educational Conditions in Townships and the
Effect of the Policy on Daily Wage Temporary Teachers – Statistical Analyses Based on Individ-
ual Basic Education School Data*. Research Paper prepared for the Republic of the Union of
Myanmar.

Mutebi, Alex M. 2005. *Muddling Through Past Legacies: Myanmar's Civil Bureaucracy and
the Need for Reform.* Singapore: Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy. Available at: http://
www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs3/wp62.pdf.

Myanmar Education Consortium. 2016. *Myanmar Education Consortium Program Strategy*.
January 2016.

Myanmar Ministry of Education. Early 1990's. *Focus on Education*. Yangon: Universities
Press.

Myanmar Ministry of Education. 1992. *Education in Myanmar*.

Myanmar Ministry of Education. 2015. *Education for All 2015 National Review.* Available at:
http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002297/229723E.pdf.

Myanmar Ministry of Education. 2015. *Teacher Education and Management Sub-Sector
Report No. 5*. July 2015 Consultation Version.

Myanmar Ministry of Education. 2016. *National Education Strategic Plan: Policy and
Programming Framework*.

Myanmar Ministry of Immigration and Population, Department of Population. 2015a. *The
2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census: The Union Report*. Vol. 2 of the 2014 Census

Report. Available at: http://myanmar.unfpa.org/node/4308.

Myanmar Ministry of Immigration and Population, Department of Population. 2015b. *The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census: Shan State*. Volume 3-M of the 2014 Census Report. Available at: http://myanmar.unfpa.org/node/4308.

Nag, Sonali, Shula Chiat, Carole Torgerson, and Margaret J. Snowling. 2014. *Literacy, Foundation Learning and Assessment in Developing Countries: Education Rigorous Literature Review.* London: Department for International Development.

National Education Law (2014). Available in English at: https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/100493/120566/F28507983/MMR100493%20Eng.pdf.

National League for Democracy. 2015. *National League for Democracy: 2015 Election Manifesto.* Available at: http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/NLD_2015_Election_Manifesto-en.pdf.

Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). 2015. Available at: http://www.mmpeacemonitor.org/research/ceasefire-documents.

NLD National Health Network. 2016. *Programme of Health Reforms: A Roadmap Towards Universal Health Coverage in Myanmar (2016-2030)*. Version 1.0.

Ohnmar Tin and Emily Stenning. 2015. *Situation Analysis of Monastic Education Sector.* Myanmar Education Consortium. Available at: https://mecmigration.files.wordpress.com/2016/05/mec-monastic-education-analysis-report-july-20151.pdf.

Pon Nya Mon. 2010. "Identity, Image and Ethnic Conflict in Burma: A Case Study of the Mon People." DPhil dissertation, Washington State University.

Pyoe Pin. 2014. "The Political Economy of Basic Education in Myanmar."

Rose, Pauline. 2007. *Supporting Non-state Providers in Basic Education Service Delivery.* Brighton, UK: Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (CREATE), University of Sussex. Available at: http://r4d.dfid.gov.uk/PDF/Outputs/ImpAccess_RPC/PTA4.pdf.

Rose, Pauline. 2009. "NGO provision of basic education: alternative or complementary service delivery to support access to the excluded?" *Compare* 39 (2).

Saha, Soubhik Ronnie. 2011. *Working Through Ambiguity: International NGOs in Myanmar*. Cambridge: Hauser Center for Non-Profit Organizations, Harvard University.

Salem-Gervais, Nicolas, and Metro, Rosalie. 2012. "A Textbook Case of Nation Building: The Evolution of History Curricula in Myanmar." *Journal of Burma Studies* 16 (1): 27-78.

Seargent, Inge. 1994. *Twilight over Burma: My Life as a Shan Princess*. United States of America: University of Hawaii Press.

San, Harry, and Htin Zaw. 2014. "Language Related Problems encountered by the primary level ethnic students in Myanmar." Presentation based on Nyein Foundation research, Sep-

Turner, Alicia. 2014. *Saving Buddhism: The Impermanence of Religion in Colonial Burma.*
	Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

UNESCO. 2003. *Education in a Multilingual World.* UNESCO Education Position Paper. Paris:
	UNESCO. Available at: http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001297/129728e.pdf.

UNESCO. 2013. *Education for All National EFA Reviews: Guidelines*. Available at
	http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002224/222445e.pdf.

UNESCO, EFA/GMR, OECD, UNICEF, and the World Bank. 2015. *Technical Advisory Group
	Proposal: Thematic Indicators to Monitor the Post-2015 Education Agen*da. World Education
	Forum. Available at: http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/tag-proposed-the-
	matic-indicators-post2015-education-agenda.pdf.

UNICEF and UNESCO. 2015. *Fixing the Broken Promise of Education for All: Findings from
	the Global Initiative on Out of School Children.* Montreal: UNESCO Institute for
	Statistics.

USAID. 2006. "Complementary Education." *EQ Review: Educational Quality
	in the Developing World* 4 (2). Available at:
	http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pnadm589.pdf.

Women and Child Rights Project (WCRP) and Human Rights Foundation of Monland
	(HURFOM). 2015. *Inaccessible and Under-Resourced: Concerns over Education in Rural Mon
	Communities*. Kanchanaburi, Thailand: HURFOM. Available at: http://www.rehmonnya.org/
	reports/Final-Edition.pdf.

World Bank. 2005. *In Their Own Language, Education for All*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.
	Available at: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/Education-Notes/
	EdNotes_Lang_of_Instruct.pdf.

World Bank. 2011. *Learning for All: Investing in People's Knowledge and Skills to Promote
	Development*. World Bank Education Strategy 2020. Washington DC: World Bank. Available
	at: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/ESSU/Education_Strate-
	gy_4_12_2011.pdf.

World Bank. 2014. *International Development Association Project Appraisal Document on
	a Proposed Credit in the Amount of SDR 51.8 Million (USD$80 Million Equivalent)
	and a Proposed Multi-Donor Trust Fund Grant in the Amount of USD$20 Million to the Repub-
	lic of the Union of Myanmar for a Decentralized Funding to Schools Project*. Washington, DC:
	World Bank.

World Bank. 2015. *Realigning the union budget to Myanmar's development priorities: public
	expenditure review.* Washington, DC: World Bank. Available at: http://documents.worldbank.
	org/curated/en/2016/03/26072851/realigning-union-budget-myanmar%E2%80%99s-devel-
	opment-priorities-public-expenditure-review.

World Education. 2016. "School Committees and Community Engagement in Education in
	Karen State" (working version).

Annex 1: Naypyidaw Principles for the Development of a Peacebuilding National Language Policy for Myanmar

Unity: by supporting all to learn Myanmar language and literacy, for common and equal citizenship.

Diversity: by supporting ethnic and indigenous communities to maintain, enjoy and transmit their languages to their children.

Cohesion: by promoting inclusion and participation for ethnic and indigenous minorities.

Education: by improving equitable access and participation, literacy, vocational and life skills, and academic standards.

Employment: by raising standards in Myanmar, English and mother tongues, where relevant, to help young people enter the competitive labour market including in trades and professions.

Service delivery: by supporting communication planning to make sure that public administration is communicating effectively with all citizens, especially interpreting and translation in health, legal contexts and social services.

International relations: in order to support trade, diplomacy and travel through widespread knowledge of English, and labour migration in the context of ASEAN mobility, and learning of strategic foreign languages.

Inclusive communication: by integrating support for visually and hearing impaired persons, and other communication disabled citizens.

Ethnic rights: by recognizing the unique cultures and traditions of Myanmar's indigenous people.

NOTE: Adopted Language, Education and Social Cohesion Facilitated Dialogue, Naypyidaw, Myanmar, 29-30 July 2014 and reaffirmed Language, Education and Social Cohesion Facilitated Dialogue, Naypyidaw, Myanmar, 19-20 March 2015 and by deputy minister for education.

Annex 2: Ceasefires signed since 2011

Ethnic Armed Actor	New Ceasefire	Previous Ceasefire	Relationship to Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA)
United Wa State Party	September 6, 2011	1989	Observer to some NCA talks. Non-signatory to NCA as of July 2016.
National Democratic Alliance Army (Mongla)	September 7, 2011	1989	Observer to some NCA talks. Non-signatory to NCA as of July 2016.
Democratic Karen Benevolent Army	November 3, 2011	1995 (ended in 2010)	Member of the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT). Signatory to NCA.
Restoration Council of Shan State	December 2, 2011	None	Observer of NCCT-government talks. Signatory to NCA.
Chin National Front	January 6, 2012	None	Member of NCCT. Signatory to NCA.
Karen National Union	January 12, 2012	None[2]	Member of NCCT. Signatory to NCA.
Shan State Progressive Party	January 28, 2012	1989 (ended in 2011)	Member of NCCT. Non-signatory to NCA as of July 2016.
New Mon State Party	February 1, 2012	1995	Member of NCCT. Non-signatory to NCA as of July 2016.
Karen Peace Council	February 7, 2012	2007	Member of NCCT. Signatory to NCA.
Karenni National Progressive Party	March 7, 2012	1994 (ended same year)	Member of NCCT. Non-signatory to NCA as of July 2016.
Arakan Liberation Party	April 5, 2012	None	Member of NCCT. Signatory to NCA.
National Socialist Council of Nagaland – Khaplang	April 9, 2012	None	Observer to some NCA talks. Non-signatory to NCA as of July 2016.
All Burma Student Democratic Front	August 5, 2013	None	Member of NCCT. Signatory to NCA.
Pa-O National Liberation Organization	August 25, 2012	None	Member of NCCT. Non-signatory to NCA as of July 2016.

Annex 3: Consolidated Recommendations

Below are all of the report's recommendations, that were provided alongside relevant analysis throughout Part III. The recommendations are listed here in the order they appear in the report, not in order of priority.

Recommendations for the government

Section Eight

Government recommendation #1: Ethnic Basic Education Providers should be seen as valued partners in reaching the government's education targets. Policies should be developed to enable and support EBEPs through active cooperation and avoid undermining their activities.

- Future reform strategies and plans should include dedicated components addressing how to enable and facilitate the work of EBEPs.

Government recommendation #2: Ensuring that EBEPs have a future as valued institutions within the Union should be seen as crucial to achieving peace and national reconciliation. This will boost confidence in ceasefires in the short term, and help lay the foundations for the "establishment of a genuine, federal democratic union."

Government recommendation #3: Provide legal recognition to EBEPs, without specific conditions or registration requirements:

- stating that EBEPs are providers of formal basic education;
- stating that EBEPs may receive funds from the government, domestic and international aid actors, and local communities;
- stating that the MoE should cooperate and coordinate with EBEPs in areas of overlapping coverage; and
- stating that the MoE and other government bodies should consult EBEPs on matters of national education policy and issues related to ethnic cultures, languages, and history.

Government recommendation #4: Foster more inclusive approaches to education planning and policy by recognizing other education providers as genuine and valued stakeholders.

- Other providers will be critical to achieving universal access to education, and their input is therefore essential.
- Ensuring that government plans are viewed as legitimate and jointly owned is critical to getting other actors to support them.
- Failure to include EBEPs in education planning and policymaking would exacerbate long-held grievances about the state's failure to include ethnic leaders in the affairs of the Union more generally, and particularly in the state-building process.

Section Nine

Government recommendation #5: Consult all existing education providers whenever deploying teachers or offering resources to schools in new communities.

- This should become a standard protocol for TEOs, MoE head teachers, and others reaching out to new communities.
- Ensure that the GAD is involved in the adoption of this protocol.

- This could be included in the legal provisions discussed in government recommendation #3.

Government recommendation #6: Always consult EAOs that have well-established authority in targe areas before dispatching MoE teachers or offering other support to communities.

- This is necessary for building trust, avoiding disputes with the EAOs, avoiding conflicts between communities and local EAOs, and ensuring the security of MoE teachers and other staff.

Section Ten

Government recommendation #7: The government should formally recognize and record any school that also receives EBEP support as a "mixed school."

- When the MoE begins supporting a school that is receiving EBEP support, it should explicitly recognize and document the school as a "mixed school" and start coordinating with the respective EBEP(s).
- The MoE should ensure that all existing mixed schools are recognized and documented as such.
- The government should also consider the inclusion of mixed schools in official MoE policy, and could mention them in the National Education Law or other laws.
- In mixed schools where EBEPs are teaching ethnic languages and other ethnic subjects, instruction should be conducted during school hours.

Government recommendation #8: Ensure that teachers serving in remote ethnic areas are able to do so professionally, and are able to develop good professional and social relations with their host communities.

- Extensive work is needed to ensure professionalism among MoE teachers, including daily-wage teachers, especially in rural settings where they will be embedded in tight-knit communities.
- The difficulty that MoE teachers have in developing good relationships with communities underscores the value of having local teachers serve in their own or nearby communities, and thus the importance of EBEPs, which could be better harnessed by MoE.
- The MoE should explore options for pre-service and in-service training of MoE teachers working in remote ethnic areas to help prepare them to live and work there. Training should include components on professional conduct, avoiding disputes, and fostering good community relations.

Section Eleven

Government recommendation #9: As part of the MoE's broader agenda for curriculum and assessment reforms, improve compatibility between EBEP and the MoE systems to promote MTB-MLE and to build a more diverse and inclusive education sector.

- An outcomes-based framework would give EBEPs more flexibility in their teaching methods when preparing children for MoE exams, and would provide more effective assessment of the capabilities of transferring students.
- Formal assessment should be introduced for "local curriculum" subjects to ensure that schools and students prioritize these subjects and that ethnic subjects are appropriately promoted.
- Subjects in the MoE national curriculum should also be taught and assessed in ethnic languages, ideally with alternate textbooks.
- The reforms recommended in the above two bullet points would also benefit mixed schools and MoE schools teaching ethnic literacy. They would encourage EBEPs to align their systems more closely with the MoE and to prepare students for MoE exams.
- In the future, a system could be established for the formal accreditation of qualifications offered

by EBEPs and other local entities, providing official equivalency to MoE qualifications and levels of attainment.

Government recommendation #10: Include EBEPs in the reform of curriculum and assessment frameworks as much as possible.

- This will provide the benefits of their experience, secure their support, and promote greater complementarity between systems.

Government recommendation #11: No child should be rejected from enrollment in basic education, including those previously enrolled in EBEP schools and those with poor Myanmar-language skills.

- MoE head teachers and TEOs must accept all prospective students into schools, and enrollment must never depend on informal fees or bribes, or on personal connections.

Government recommendation #12: Students transferring from EBEPs should receive additional assistance to improve their level of achievement and remediate any linguistic or academic weaknesses. Development of these programs should be based on research, but they might include:

- Initial assessments to determine what assistance is needed (e.g., an assessment of Myanmar-language abilities);
- Booster courses of varying lengths in Myanmar language and other subjects;
- Hiring teachers who can communicate in the first language of transferring students, particularly for classes with many transferees;
- Hiring classroom assistants, with local-language abilities, to assist classes that have many transferees, or to help underachievers;
- Utilizing mixed-school arrangements in areas of high numbers of transfers, particularly in cases of mass repatriation, return, and resettlement of displaced persons.

Government recommendation #13: Students transferring from EBEP schools should be placed in the grade most appropriate to their prior experience and most beneficial to their learning.

- More research is needed to determine if, when, and how it is useful to hold back students transferring from EBEP to MoE schools, and this will likely vary from EBEP to EBEP.

Government recommendation #14: In lieu of more comprehensive assessment reforms, ensure that assessment of ethnic subjects is given the same weight as other subjects by school administrations and students.

- Many interviewees called for grade promotion to be contingent on passing ethnic subjects as well as other subjects (though grade retention policies might need to be revised more generally).

Government recommendation #15: In lieu of a more comprehensive system for accrediting EBEP qualifications, the government should take steps to ensure that credible qualifications issued by EBEPs are recognized as official. Those issued by Karen and Karenni EBEPs, such as from schools in refugee camps are the best known, but there may be others that have similar credibility.

- This could be achieved by legislation or by a presidential notification.
- It must be communicated to employers through the media, and through public communications efforts in areas with large numbers of repatriating refugees or others with EBEP qualifications.
- This could be an initial, temporary measure, to be followed by further alignment and convergence of MoE and EBEP qualification frameworks in the future.
- More work is needed to identify other EBEPs offering credible certification that deserves official

recognition.

Section Twelve

Government recommendation #16: Increased support could be provided through MORA to expand assistance to schools in areas that the MoE cannot access.

- Such support should be offered to education providers linked to other religions too.
- Monastic teachers have complained that their salaries are too low and should be equal to the salaries of MoE teachers.

Government recommendation #17: Options for independent accreditation of EBEPs should be explored and discussed with them.

- Appropriate accreditation mechanisms will take a long time to develop, and will require careful negotiations with EBEPs as well as broader political progress. They cannot be established by simply instituting regulations.
- An independent accreditation body, like the one recommended for healthcare by the NLD Health Network, that can register and monitor schools, organizations, and training centers linked to different providers, might be a useful option.
- The government should focus on building trust and on enabling EBEPs, rather than attempting to bring them under rigid, centralized control.

Recommendations for ethnic armed organisations and ethnic Basic education providers

Section Eight

EAO/EBEP recommendation #1: EBEPs should work to improve coordination and cooperation with the government to ensure that MoE and EBEP services are complementary and coherent. EBEPs should recognize that the government now has a democratic mandate to serve the population, including in managing the education sector.

EAO/EBEP recommendation #2: Recognize that the MoE is responsible for leading the development of education strategies, and that EBEPs can benefit from aligning their agendas and strategies with the government's**.**

- The MoE is the largest education provider in the country, and the government has a responsibility to its electorate to improve the education sector.
- EBEPs will gain more cooperation and support from the state, and from major international development partners.
- EBEPs should not see alignment with some government strategies as an implication of their inferiority or a threat to their autonomy; they should see it as a strategically wise policy.

Section Eleven

EAO/EBEP recommendation #3: Become involved in and influence government reforms of curriculum and assessment frameworks, and support complementarity between systems.

EAO/EBEP recommendation #4: EBEPs have a responsibility to ensure that students are well prepared for transfers to MoE schools if this is a pathway they are likely to take.
- Preparation could include additional Myanmar-language schooling or assistance in preparing

for placement tests.

Section Twelve

EAO/EBEP recommendation #5: EBEPs, in partnership with trusted international actors, should make systems strengthening central to their organizational strategies, particularly in the context of ever-improving government services.

- As the government increases education spending and builds its technical capacity, EBEPs should recognize that they will also have to work hard to improve quality and remain valuable.

EAO/EBEP recommendation #6: EAOs should increase budget allocations for their education departments.

- This should not be achieved by increasing taxes on local populations, as they are already burdened with supporting education in their areas.
- Funds should come from fees or taxes that don't fall on communities, such as a natural resource tax.

Recommendations for the government and ethnic armed organisations or ethnic basic education providers

Section Eight

Government and EAO/EBEP recommendation #1: Establish formal coordination mechanisms at appropriate administrative levels.

- These could involve committees of key people from education providers and representatives from government and EAO departments.
- They could be structured differently from region to region, with both regional and township-level mechanisms to provide different benefits and levels of focus.
- Develop mechanisms to present community concerns and priorities to these forums for consideration.

Government and EAO/EBEP recommendation #2: Develop mechanisms for Union-level coordination to align education strategies, agendas, and priorities, as well as to allow greater space for lower-level engagement.

Section Nine

Government and EAO/EBEP recommendation #3: Through regional coordination, delineate areas of coverage where possible, while recognizing that many areas are inevitably areas of mixed coverage.

- This could then lead to local coordination arrangements for areas of particularly high overlap of coverage.
- Formalizing such agreements in the peace process would further build trust and make them more binding.

Government and EAO/EBEP recommendation #4: When new forms of support for a community school are proposed, the MoE, EBEPs, and the community should hold formal meetings to agree on services to be provided. Initial sessions should seek consensus on the support (including teachers) to be accepted from each system.

Government and EAO/EBEP recommendation #5: Consider options for more strategic coordination of services at appropriate administrative levels**.**

- Develop joint strategies that assign specific responsibilities to each education provider in its designated coverage area, and joint responsibilities in areas of mixed coverage.
- To facilitate coordinated planning, conduct joint mapping exercises to establish common maps and documentation of services and identify areas of limited or no coverage, and areas where services are duplicated.
- A practical starting point might be pilot projects in specific areas where relations between EAOs and the government are strong.
- Where possible, establish common goals to facilitate program development and the measurement of outcomes.

Section Ten

Government and EAO/EBEP recommendation #6: Establish formal guidelines and school-level steering committees for the administration of mixed schools.

- These steering committees could include the MoE, EBEPs, and the school community. Communities could be represented by school committees, long-serving local teachers, and parents.
- The steering committee should make consensus decisions on matters related to deployment and retention of teachers from each system, the hierarchical relationships between head teachers, school grants, use of curriculum, examinations, ethnic-language teaching hours and priority, rules and regulations for teachers and students, and smaller, everyday issues.
- Parameters and guidelines for these decisions could be established through regional level or township-level coordination mechanisms, as appropriate.
- Guidelines should be established to ensure that ethnic languages and other ethnic subjects are seen as equal to other subjects by MoE administrators and teachers.

Government and EAO/EBEP recommendation #7: MoE and EBEPs should start joint initiatives to develop more harmonious working relationships in mixed schools.

- MoE and EBEP teachers should be encouraged and assisted by their superiors to find compromises on their rules, regulations, and practices, and to avoid conflicts.
- MoE head teachers, in particular, should be instructed and, ideally, trained to gain the trust of local communities and EBEP teachers, and to manage their schools in ways suited to local circumstances.
- In particular, MoE teachers need to ensure that EBEP teachers feel valued and are considered equals.
- Joint consultations could be used to help policymakers develop effective ways to handle common areas of dispute.
- Joint workshops could be held where MoE and EBEP teachers are encouraged to discuss key problems and are taught methods of compromise and dispute resolution.
- Technical support could be provided by international aid actors based on human resource approaches in other countries.

Section Eleven

Government and EAO/EBEP recommendation #8: Undertake collaborative research and curriculum design projects to increase complementarity between education systems.

Government and EAO/EBEP recommendation #9: As soon as possible, establish these basic protocols,

to ease transfers between EBEP schools and MoE schools:
- Pro forma transfer slips issued by EBEPs that are recognized by MoE.
- Consistent policies on the use of placement tests.

Government and EAO/EBEP recommendation #10: Over the long term, pursue concerted coordination between government and EBEPs to develop more consistent and systematic protocols for student transfers.

Government and EAO/EBEP recommendation #11: The development of transfer protocols should be guided by new primary research and monitoring of student and school experiences, including:

- Comparisons of current MoE and EBEP curriculum and assessment criteria;
- Surveys of the difficulties faced by children transferring from each EBEP and at each grade into the MoE, including reasons for dropping out following transfer;
- Surveys of the difficulties faced by MoE schools and individual classes that receive large numbers of EBEP students;
- Comparative studies of transferees who are put back to earlier grades and those that are not;
- Surveys of the experiences of students transferring from MoE schools into EBEP schools and how challenges have been overcome;
- Studies of patterns and strategies for refugee and IDP return and resettlement, and how to manage EBEP-to-MoE transfers in this context.

Section Twelve

Government and EAO/EBEP recommendation #12: Develop mechanisms for public financing of EBEP services.

- Consider special arrangements to protect EBEPs' unique identities, priorities, national subjects, and levels of autonomy.
- Explore options for paying EBEP teachers' salaries comparable to MoE teachers.
- Developing the right instruments will take time, and discussions to this end should begin through formal coordination mechanisms.
- Pilot projects, including initiatives facilitated by international actors, could help to build trust and establish appropriate ways of working.
- Such arrangements will inevitably remain fragile, so all stakeholders should ensure that EBEPs are able to continue to provide education if conflicts break out.

International aid community recommendations

Given the influential role that the international aid community has on the strategies and agendas of the MoE and EBEPs, international partners should also read the above recommendations aimed at those actors, to help guide strategic directions and identify useful areas of assistance.

Section Eight

International aid community recommendation #1: As long as conflicts continue, supporting both the MoE and EBEPs is crucial to helping the country meet its education targets and to ensuring conflict sensitivity. EBEPs should be seen as particularly valuable partners in reaching some of the country's hardest-to-reach and most vulnerable communities, and in improving access to MTB-MLE.

International aid community recommendation #2: Continue to support coordination initiatives where participants deem them worthwhile, but encourage the MoE to take more initiative and responsibility.

- If the government can take the lead, international support in this area might become unnecessary.
- Peripheral support to these processes could be provided to assist with research and policy development.

Section Nine

International aid community recommendation #3: If the will is there among service providers, international actors could facilitate information sharing and joint strategic planning programs, including joint mapping exercises.

Section Eleven

International aid community recommendation #4: Develop programs to support collaborative research and curriculum design projects to increase complementarity between education systems.

Section Twelve

International aid community recommendation #5: Donors should commit to providing consistent and stable support to EBEPs for at least the next five years, with two main aims: increasing and stabilizing EBEP teacher salaries, and supporting long-term partnerships aimed at systems strengthening.

- The MEC, with its new program strategy, represents a crucial instrument for achieving this aim. World Education has also provided core support for EBEPs for decades, and has been crucial in providing "organizational development" for at least a dozen EBEPs.
- Other INGOs, including Child's Dream, Save the Children, and a range of religious and other organizations, continue to play critical roles in supporting EBEPs.
- The donor community should view EBEPs as high-value partners in reaching some of the country's most remote and vulnerable populations in a conflict-sensitive way.
- Donors should understand that EBEPs remain particularly dependent on external funding, due to lack of other sources.

International aid community recommendation #6: International actors should collaborate extensively with EBEPs from the early stages of program development onwards to ensure that programs are well suited to those EBEPs and their ways of working.

- EBEPs will likely need funds both for existing initiatives and for new areas of systems development.
- International partners should strive to fully understand the political situations faced by EBEPs, and allow them to manage their own risks. International support should not be overly focused on bringing EBEPs into the state system, and must ensure that EBEPs can operate in contexts of both conflict and peace.
- Rigorous analysis of the wider systems that enable EBEP education, including the roles of communities, religious institutions, EAO authorities, and the state, will be needed to identify the most critical gaps.