

MYANMAR EDUCATION CONSORTIUM

1. Background

Since the 2010 elections and the subsequent coming to power of a new parliamentary government, officials have made strong public overtures and taken positive action towards laying out a reform agenda for the education sector. President Thein Sein, in the first regular session of Parliament, encouraged lawmakers to improve the national education system. Since then, the Ministry of Education (MOE), with support from a range of stakeholders and Development Partners including donors, NGOs, and UNICEF, has initiated a Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR). This changing context is providing significant openings and opportunities but makes for a complex planning environment.

While solid data are still difficult to access, a picture is emerging of several barriers to education:

- Although EFA national action plan maps out main areas for improvement, to date, it lacks a comprehensive work plan and dedicated budget;
- Poverty and discrimination; while education is intended to be free there are both direct and indirect costs;
- Language: around 30% of children do not have Myanmar as their mother tongue¹;
- Gender: data suggest an overall parity but girls are the first to be removed from school for financial or other reasons;
- Disability: only 70 children have access to special schools;
- Conflict and natural disasters have a significant impact on children's ability to attend school;
- No formal mechanisms to reach out to school children who do not attend school due to age or other reasons.

2. Rationale for the Program

Given the current challenges and potential for increasing support to the education sector, the Myanmar Education Consortium (MEC) builds on a theory of change that will provide evidence-based voice to children, communities, parents and educators to demand change, seek innovative solutions to respond to the demand side, and look to

¹Immigration and Population Department, Ministry of Immigration and Population, *Myanmar Population Changes and Fertility Survey*, 1995.

implement at scale all through strong partnerships. The MEC is a program designed to increase the quality of and access to early childhood, primary and non-formal education programs being implemented by non-state actors in Myanmar.

MEC members will be able to fill critical gaps in coverage and address quality needs that will not only enhance learning impacts, but will keep students in school longer. More broadly, by reducing barriers to education and thereby increasing enrolment in school and improving the standard of education, MEC will have a marked medium to long term effect improving education outcomes. Increasing access to basic education will assist Myanmar to reach targets for both the Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All (EFA) initiative.

The **goal/impact** of the program is: increased number and proportion of children in Myanmar accessing and completing quality basic education.

There are five components to the MEC:

Impact: Increased number and proportion of children in Myanmar accessing and completing quality basic education.

Component 1:	Component 2:	Component 3:	Component 4:	Component 5:
All children are ready to be successful in school through quality ECCD learning experiences	Access to quality complementary basic education systems significantly improved.	Civil society engages in education sector policy debate.	Out-of-school children access quality alternative education programs.	Access to education in emergencies.

The **outcome** will be: Innovative, coordinated and quality driven community and complementary education services ensure more children and particularly the hardest to reach are ready to enter primary education and greater opportunity exists for children to gain quality learning in complementary education systems.

3. Beneficiaries

Over the four year period, MEC:

- Support schools and communities to establish 450 Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) centres that will cater to the needs of about 45,000 children.

- More than 1000 ECCD Caregivers will be trained that will improve their competencies in ECCD skills
- 61,000 students in grade 1 and grade 2 will benefit from transition to primary school interventions
- 11,000 out-of-school children will have improved access to quality alternative education programs

4. MEC Strategy:

To achieve its objectives, MEC will adopt the following strategies:

Collaboration with Broad-Based Network of Civil Society Actors

The MEC will foster the development of a broad-based coalition of non-state education actors. engage in policy debate and reform ensuring a more representative diversity of contributions. For the MEC, strengthening of civil society is both a means to an end - high quality service delivery – and, an end in itself -- a responsible and representative voice on important education matters.

The MEC will establish platforms to facilitate horizontal and vertical linkages that further coordinate civil society actors, systematically consulting with national, regional and international representatives of civil society. These consultations will lead to a communications plan that will include websites, social media, forums, meetings, email lists and a communications tree. In this way, MEC will become a focal point for communications, but not the exclusive convener.

Gathering and communicating critical information

MEC's Theory of Change links at the impact level with the UNICEF managed QBEP and will form the basis for MEC's M&E framework. This linkage of MEC to Myanmar's QBEP makes it crucial for the MEC to be "Managing for Impact" meaning that MEC needs to respond to changing circumstances and increased understanding by adapting the project so that it will more likely to achieve its intended impacts. The M&E System put in place for MEC will ensure

that the system helps primary stakeholders, implementing partners and project staff learn together in order to improve the MEC interventions on a continual basis. Policy dialogue in the education sector will be informed by the body of evidence generated from the M&E system of MEC. The evidence gathered through monitoring and research will enable MEC to be more effective in representing the voice at global, regional, sub-regional and national partnerships, networks and alliances.

Evidence Based Advocacy

Advocacy efforts will support a wider debate and dialogue on alternative and complementary education solutions for difficult-to-reach populations and settings to gain high level political commitment to the importance of promoting access to quality education for the most disadvantaged in country through: research and building the evidence base, information sharing and knowledge management, joint public awareness raising campaigns, policy dialogue and capacity building for people-centred advocacy. The advocacy strategy needs to be highly adaptive and flexible, to increase its effectiveness in the quickly changing institutional panorama and the political arena that Myanmar will display in the immediate and midterm future.

5. Funding:

As a multi-donor trust fund, the MEC will pool donor contributions, allowing extended impact while sharing risk between organisations. The current indicative budget of approximately \$50m over the first four years has approximately 50% committed funding at this early stage of program development. The multi-donor trust fund is seen as a mechanism for effective development programming and each organisations funds are leveraged by the contributions of other donors.

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